

FAHRENHEIT

451

FROM THE CLASSIC NOVEL BY
RAY BRADBURY

SCREENPLAY BY
FRANK DARABONT

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FADE IN:

IN SLO-MO, an object falls through frame -- a book. Rolling, tumbling. Dropping from sight. Soon:

Another book. And another.

Books. Falling. And soon:

Raining. It's raining books. Why?

Now comes a VOICE, softly, sharing his most quiet and precious thoughts:

MONTAG (V.O.)

I love the soot. I love the heat. I
love the moment of combustion. Most
of all, the smell of kerosene. Here
is what I know: "Fire is bright.

Fire is clean. It is good to burn."

(beat)

It is all I need to know.

CUT TO:

A KLAXON HORN BLARING. RED LIGHTS SPINNING. A fire alarm --

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

-- summoning to action:

FIREMEN, running, boots all a-scuffle, grabbing HELMETS off
pegs, yanking EQUIPMENT from storage lockers, cascading down
rows of brass poles through holes in the floor...

They swarm their beloved FIRE TRUCK, the Salamander, everybody
climbing up and taking positions on the running platforms,
dropping external seats and strapping in...

The ENGINES START, a turbine WHINE exploding to a DEEP BASSO
ROAR. Like a dragon waking up. Ready to breathe flame.

Headlights blaze to life. EMERGENCY STROBES turn the world
surreal. The Salamander moves out, the dragon leaving its
cave on massive multi-axle wheels...

EXT - FIREHOUSE/CITY STREETS - NIGHT

...and emerging into the night.

Following close behind the Salamander is a second vehicle,
the CONTROL VAN -- armored, black, unfathomable.

HOMELESS PEOPLE scatter from their path. Traffic pulls over.

ON THE MOVING SALAMANDER

Noise and fury. CAPTAIN BEATTY looks back from his seat, enjoying the expressions on the faces of his men -- tense, exhilarated. He sees GUY MONTAG grinning into the wind.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Good for you, Montag!

MONTAG

What, sir?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

That grin! The fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame!

MONTAG

I love it, sir!

Beatty turns forward again, smiling...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I know you do, son.

VOICE (V.O.)

Form up! Eyes front!

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT (TROOP INSPECTION)

...and SCORES OF POLISHED BOOTS CLAP LIKE THUNDER. SCORES OF POLISHED HELMETS, gleaming black and bearing the mark of 451, snap in one direction. SCORES OF FIREMEN, chiseled of stone, true believers all, stand ready.

Stepping before them, boots treading the silence with holy authority, is Beatty. A man of power. Of conviction. A man who knows his place in the world.

He stops. Takes them all in, his men of faith. He loves them more than he loves himself. In a voice that fills the hall:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

An emperor of ancient China said:
"History begins with me."

(pause)

He was wrong. History begins with
us.

CUT TO:

EXT - SALAMANDER - NIGHT (FIRE ALARM)

The Salamander rises hugely into view, cresting a street. NEIGHBORS are pouring from their homes to watch. SEARCHLIGHTS

probe from the sky as POLICE HOVERCOPTERS circle whisper-quiet overhead.

The Salamander stops with a HISS OF BRAKES. The control van veers past it, taking up a supporting position. POLICE VEHICLES are arriving to provide backup.

Firemen swarm from the Salamander, the night chaotic with FLASHING LIGHTS and running men.

Beatty leads Montag and the others up a squalid lawn toward a house. A MAN'S face, white and terrified, watches them approach through the cracked panes of a window.

MAN

(shouting, muffled)

Go away! You've got the wrong house!

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

Meanwhile, CONTROL PERSONNEL are studying the action on banks of MONITORS, recording everything. One monitor flashes an incoming message: "Warrant Authorization."

COMPUTER VOICE

Warrant is good. You have Supreme Court approval to proceed.

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

Beatty and his men arrive at the doorstep.

MAN

Go away, I said! There's nothing here!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Indeed.

(turns to his men)

There never is.

They rush the door with RAMS, blowing through it like a fist. They swarm in, trailed by Beatty --

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)

Let me hear it, you men!

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT (TROOP INSPECTION)

-- and their voices boom like cannons:

FIREMEN

FIRE IS BRIGHT! FIRE IS CLEAN! IT IS GOOD TO BURN!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

And why is it good to burn? What does fire do?

FIREMEN

FIRE SWEEPS AWAY THE CLUTTER OF THE PAST!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

And why is that good, you men? What does that provide?

FIREMEN

A BRIGHT AND SHINING FUTURE!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Let me hear it!

FIREMEN

A BRIGHT AND SHINING FUTURE!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Again!

FIREMEN

A BRIGHT AND SHINING FUTURE!

CUT TO:

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT (FIRE ALARM)

A HANDHELD SCENE of screaming chaos:

MAN

I told you there's nothing here!

The WIFE launches herself at the husband, slapping him, flailing and screaming --

WIFE

Idiot! I told you this would happen!
I told you!

MAN

Shut up! Shut up!

-- and the firemen separate them, restraining them both, her eyes landing on Beatty as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Madam?

WIFE

He's right...there's nothing here...nothing...

Beatty raises his PLASMA SCREEN CLIPBOARD, studies it:

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Mr. and Mrs....Mugniani? Did I
pronounce that right?

His eyes go to THREE SHRIEKING CHILDREN being herded into the
room by the firemen.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
And the three Mugniani children.
Victor, Paul...and little Emily...

WIFE
...no...don't hurt them...

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Madam, please. We're not savages,
after all.
(to his men)
Outside.

The family is dragged out, the woman SCREAMING as she's pulled
out the door...

WIFE
NOT MY HOUSE! NOT MY HOUSE!

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Montag? If you please?

MONTAG
Sir!
(turns to the men)
LET'S GO!

...and they spread throughout the house, tossing the place,
pounding on walls and listening for the hollow sounds...

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

...while the images are fed to the monitor screens in real
time from the firemen's helmet-cams, recording everything.

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

Beatty waits in the whirlwind, serene, taking it all in.

MONTAG

comes to a floor-to-ceiling display shelf lined with dishes
and bric-a-brac. He runs his hand up the side, trying to get
his fingers behind it. It's sealed to the wall.

MONTAG
Shelf!

He pulls an X-RAY WAND as two firemen rush to his side, also pulling wands. Montag activates his, playing a lavender light. He taps a button on his helmet, causing a clear RED VISOR to lower over his eyes --

MONTAG'S POV

-- which, in combination with the wand, gives an X-RAY IMAGE through the shelves and into the wall. He sweeps the wand, seeing vague shapes appearing like ghosts -- tall, slender, rectangular, hidden in the wall among the studs.

MONTAG

MONTAG

I got something.

FIREMAN #1

Me too!

MONTAG

(clicks his comlink)

Control?

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

We're seeing the ghost images in the wall coming across the monitors. CONTROLLER #1 taps his keyboard...

CONTROLLER #1

Hold on. Hold on.

...and a computer schematic forms on screen, outlining the shapes in glowing red lines. The computer extrapolates the image, lifting one of the objects out as an animated wire-form. It's a book. The computer revolves the image, opening the covers, riffling the pages.

CONTROLLER #1

You're confirmed.

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

Montag and the others jam pry bars behind the shelf, ripping it loose from the wall in an explosion of plaster and wood. It topples, revealing a hidden library, the space in the wall lined with books.

They start pulling out armloads of books, hurling them across the floor.

VARIOUS ANGLES

as the search continues. Firemen play wands on sofas...over floors...up walls...across the ceiling. Suddenly:

FIREMAN #2

Attic! I got a crawl space!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(glances up)

Attic. How original.

TIMECUT:

A PAIR OF ROARING CHAINSAWS rise up on long extensions and chew into the ceiling, spewing debris, cutting two long parallel grooves down the hallway...

...and the ceiling collapses, dropping awesomely into the hallway bringing a ton of books with it.

The dust doesn't even have time to clear before another section of the ceiling unexpectedly gives way --

-- and a YOUNG MAN plummets as well. He hits the floor hard, scrambles to his feet in the billowing plaster dust, wild with fear and adrenaline, swinging a baseball bat.

YOUNG MAN

BASTAAARDS! BASTAAARDS!

Montag gets hit in the arm and spins against the wall, clutching his bicep. The kid keeps swinging, scattering firemen as he flees down the hall and out the back door.

FIREMAN #4

(amped up)

Go after him?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

No, let the Hound deal with it.

(raises his plasma screen)

Montag? Injured?

MONTAG

No! I'm okay!

(to the others)

Let's keep going!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

That's the spirit...

(tapping his touch screen)

...hmmm. Our unexpected guest would be who? The nephew?

Beatty's clipboard brings up an image of the young man's face.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Ah, yes, here it is. Nephew. Joseph.

(as data scrolls)

Physiologicals...DNA...

Beatty inputs the data and enters a command: "Activate Hound."
He hits the send button with a flourish.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of
war.

MONTAG
(passing by)
What the hell does that mean?

CAPTAIN BEATTY
(smiles)
It means: "Good boy. Fetch."

EXT - SALAMANDER - NIGHT

The "kennel" at the rear of the truck opens, steel plates
fanning out to reveal darkness within.

We hear something stir...something metallic. A pair of eyes
activate, glowing red.

It emerges into half-light with a SOFT WHINE of servos and
gears -- the head of a dog rendered in alloy and chromium
steel. We hear a GROWL rising in its manufactured throat.

It leaps out, revealed fully as it hits the pavement on rubber-
padded paws. The MECHANICAL HOUND. A living Deco sculpture, a
chromium canine nightmare.

The neighbors shout, thrilling at the sight of it, some clapping
and whistling, others drawing back in giddy carnival fear.

The Hound takes off running like a heat-seeking missile.

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

Joseph, the nephew, is running, still clutching the bat. He
suddenly stops, hearing: A DISTANT HOWL. The Hound. It's coming
for him. The young man keeps going, gasping in panic...

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...while Beatty assesses the shambles of the house, kicking
through snowdrifts of books at his feet. He picks one up,
idly flips a page or two.

MONTAG
Beacon on the lawn?

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Yes, why not? Give the neighbors a
thrill. Good for public relations.

Montag grins, waving the others toward the door...

MONTAG

Scooper! Let's give 'em a show!

EXT - ALLEYS - NIGHT

...and Joseph runs, twisting and turning down the alleyways, looking over his shoulder as if the devil were in pursuit...

EXT - HOUSE - ON THE LAWN - NIGHT

A SCOOPER, a mini electric bulldozer, dumps a final load of books atop a "beacon" -- a round titanium-mesh platform that looks like a trampoline. Plenty of updraft.

As the Scooper backs away, we ANGLE TO:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Pumpers!

And double-timing into the shot are a DOZEN FIREMEN with kerosene pumpers on their backs, led by:

MONTAG

Dillman! You're on beacon! Rest of you, with me!

They run toward the house, snapping gas masks across their faces. Dillman veers off toward the beacon...

INT - HOUSE - VARIOUS ANGLES - NIGHT

...while Montag and the rest enter, spreading out. They begin pumping kerosene throughout the house, soaking the walls, the heaps of books, the furniture, priming it like a bomb...

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

...and still Joseph runs...breath exploding...feet pounding the asphalt...

EXT - SALAMANDER - NIGHT

...and the firemen back up to the truck to hang the pumpers on their frames. They unbuckle the straps, shrug free.

Six men (including Montag) turn as the other firemen help them into their special padding, their long coats of fire-retardant leather, their thick gloves, their blast helmets...

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

...and Joseph glances back, his worst nightmare realized as the Hound appears from the darkness, veering in pursuit...

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

...and we see Joseph through the eyes of the Hound, broadcast live over monitors in ghastly tones of night-vision green...

CONTROLLER #2

We have target acquisition.

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

...feet pound...rubber-padded paws pursue...

EXT - SALAMANDER - NIGHT

...and the six firemen back up to the truck again, shrugging now into the straps of the FLAMETHROWERS lining the vehicle.

Buckles are snapped. They lift the flamethrowers onto their backs -- twin tanks, ribbed copper hose, nozzles of chrome...

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

...and the Hound makes a flying leap, taking Joseph to the pavement in a snarl of glittering titanium teeth...

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

...and Joseph's screaming face comes over the monitor screens as the Hound savages him, chomping viciously down on his arm...

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

...and the Hound's HYPODERMIC TONGUE whines from its throat, plunging the needle deep into Joseph's flesh, the amber contents emptying as the plunger depresses. Soon Joseph stops screaming and goes dozey from the drug...

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...while Beatty receives the information on his plasma screen clipboard: "Suspect In Custody."

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Procaine. That should calm him down.

He turns, motioning "proceed."

MONTAG AND THE FIREMEN

approach six abreast, fully clad in protective gear, helmets gleaming, flamethrower nozzles held like weapons.

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)

Yes. Fire is bright. Fire is clean...

They stop in a row, activating their gas feeds with a SOFT HISS. Others rush in with igniters, providing the spark. Pilot flames are lit, billowing up from the nozzles like torches...

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)
 ...fire sweeps away the clutter of
 the past. It is harmony...serenity...
 and light. It is our credo...our
 religion...

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT (TROOP INSPECTION)

CAPTAIN BEATTY
 ...and we are its high priests. We
 say mass at flashpoint. Deliver our
 benediction at four hundred and
 fifty one degrees of Fahrenheit. We
 soothe the world with our nozzles
 of chromium steel, absolve its sins
 with our sermons of heat. And when
 the sermon is done, we've turned
 sorrow and lies to ash, like
 alchemists and magicians of old.

(beat)

Let me hear it again, you men!
 Inspire me!

Their voices boom again like cannons:

FIREMEN
 FIRE IS BRIGHT! FIRE IS CLEAN! IT
 IS GOOD TO BURN!

CAMERA ANGLES INTO the arrow-straight lines of firemen to
 settle upon Montag. Proud. Shouting loudest of all...

CUT TO:

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT (FIRE ALARM)

...and Montag steps onto the lawn, the other firemen falling
 into flanking positions at his side. They set their feet, aim
 their flamethrowers at the beacon --

--and begin to burn. WHOOOOOSH--BOOM! STREAMS OF FIRE shoot
 across the lawn and the beacon erupts skyward on a BALL OF
 FLAME. Everybody shies back, the bonfire lighting up the night,
 pushing everybody back with heat.

Captain Beatty sees the husband and wife in custody. His
 attention goes to the children, staring at the flames with
 tear-streaked faces. He crouches, gentle:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Here's a good lesson for you
children. You'll remember this.

(brushes the little girl's
cheek)

Be good citizens.

THE FIREMEN

turn to the house. Montag takes lead position, fires a
flamethrower blast through the front door.

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

There's an awesome beat as the kerosene fumes ignite, the
very air itself catching fire...followed by a stunning SERIES
OF BOOMING DETONATIONS hurtling down hallways and through
rooms, funnels of flame ROARING like living things, shattering
glass and peeling walls, eating piles of books.

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

The living room EXPLODES, blowing the windows out into the
street, staggering Montag back on a concussion wave of heat.

The other firemen join in, hosing the house with flame from
all directions. EXPLOSIONS punch through the roof, blow out
the walls, hurl enormous BALLS OF FLAME into the night sky.

MONTAG

backs away with the others, seared by the heat.

CAMERA CLOSES IN on him as he snaps his protective faceplate
up and wrenches his breather mask aside, wanting to feel the
heat on his goddamn face. Exhilarated. Worshipping the flame.

And as we COME INTO CLOSE-UP, we again hear his voice speaking
his most quiet and precious thoughts:

MONTAG (V.O.)

Four hundred and fifty one degrees
of Fahrenheit. This is where I live.
The rest is just waiting...and
kerosene dreams.

The flames billow into the sky, roiling smoke as we

FADE TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

It's dark. Quiet. Montag's freshly showered and wearing his
off duty uniform. He pulls his fireman's ID necklace from a
peg on the locker door, kisses the good luck pendant, hangs
the simple chain around his neck. The fireman's credo ("Fire

is bright, fire is clean...") is taped inside the locker, alongside a photo of his wife MILLIE.

He shuts the locker, grabs his gym bag...

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

...and moves through the firehouse. The late shift is settling in, some men on bunks, others engaged in quiet activity. He passes a poker game in progress. A few men mutter "good-night."

Montag pauses at the Captain's door, sees Beatty working at his desk in a pool of light. Beatty senses him, glances up.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Heading home?

MONTAG

Yes, sir. You?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Soon as I finish my report. You're mentioned. Damn fine work earlier, my boy. Well done.

MONTAG

Thank you, sir. Good night.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(smiles)

Good night. Sleep the sleep of the just.

Montag moves on. As he approaches the brass poles, he passes:

The Mechanical Hound. Lying in its firehouse kennel with its head on its paws. Waiting. Patient as only a machine can be.

Montag grabs a brass pole and plummets from view as we

CUT TO:

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

Montag walks with his gym bag. HOMELESS PEOPLE are clustered around trash can fires, milling like herd animals. Those that see him coming make sure to get out of his way. Firemen are clearly figures of authority to be feared and respected.

PLASMA VIDEO DISPLAYS are everywhere -- monitor screens on street corners, huge projections on the sides of buildings, ads playing on the sides of buses like living billboards. We have seen the future, and it ain't quiet -- everywhere you look, they're trying to sell you or convince you.

Montag heads up the steps to:

EXT - TRANSIT STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT

Several large public VIDEO DISPLAYS are playing the latest war news, showing a hallucinatory montage of night-vision smart bomb explosions set to stirring theme music. Montag stares at the images as he stands waiting for his train.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...while hours ago a stunning precision strike leveled half the enemy capital in retaliation for the cowardly attack last Wednesday that claimed the lives of 241 of our brave coalition Marines...

A MAG-LEV TRAIN arrives, gliding silently in. He gets on.

INT - MOVING MAG-LEV TRAIN - NIGHT

Even here the media barrage continues -- what years ago would have been silent advertising placards lining the car on both sides are, in this day and age, moving video and sound images. Buy this. Buy that. Hey, have you heard the latest? Be sure to tune in! The hottest infotainment! The best gossip!

Montag sits with the glazed expression of a veteran commuter, pretty much tuning it out. Some of his fellow PASSENGERS cast nervous looks his way, but Montag ignores it.

EXT - MOVING TRAIN - NIGHT

CAMERA PULLS AWAY from Montag at the window to reveal the train suspended from overhead tracks several hundred feet in the air, rocketing through canyons of downtown skyscrapers, one of many trains doing the same.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTLYING SUBURBS - NIGHT

It's quiet and sparse compared to the city, which dominates the skyline b.g. A few video displays flicker at deserted intersections. There's not a soul in sight, except:

Montag is walking home from his train stop, gym bag at his side. He slows, hearing something strange:

The sound of a CHILD SINGING.

He stops, perplexed. What the hell is a child doing outside, and at this time of night?

He moves to a low fence. The house beyond it is ramshackle but tidy, set back on a property overgrown and wild. As he approaches, the unseen child hears him and falls silent.

Montag peers over the fence, scanning the darkness. Nothing but bushes and trees.

MONTAG

Who's there?

Silence. Like breath being held.

MONTAG

Come out where I can see you.

(beat)

It's all right. I'm your neighbor.
I live a few doors down.

CHILD (O.S.)

I know. I've seen you walking home.

CLARISSE eases from behind a tree, her face beautiful in the moonlight. She's nine years old.

CLARISSE

You're that fireman.

Montag pauses, oddly captivated by the little girl. Seeing her is the last thing he expected.

MONTAG

You say that like it's scary.

CLARISSE

Fireman are scary. They come at night and burn down your house.

MONTAG

Only if you've broken the law. I'm sure you haven't. Have you?

She shakes her head gravely. Montag smiles -- he was joking, but the little girl's so serious he wants to laugh.

MONTAG

I didn't think so. So there's nothing to be scared of. Is there?

CLARISSE

I suppose.

MONTAG

What are you doing out so late?

CLARISSE

Making up songs.

MONTAG

Songs.

CLARISSE

(nods)

My uncle says I'm odd.

MONTAG

I'd have to agree.

A POLICE CAR appears, pinning Montag in its spotlight as he turns and shields his eyes. Clarisse ducks, unseen behind the fence, light spilling through the cracks in the boards. TWO COPS are faceless behind the glare:

COP #1

Identify.

MONTAG

Guy Montag. Fireman. District four.
Just heading home from my shift.

IN THE POLICE CAR

A dash-mounted PLASMA SCREEN echoes Montag's words, producing a wave pattern I.D. match. The screen brings up Montag's image.

RESUME MONTAG

COP #2

Have a good one.

The spotlight kicks off and the cruiser moves on.

CLARISSE

That's your name? Mr. Montag? I'm
Clarisse.

MONTAG

Clarisse.

Montag resumes walking slowly along the fence. Clarisse keeps pace with him on the other side.

CLARISSE

Do you like being a fireman?

MONTAG

Of course I do. What kind of question
is that?

CLARISSE

I'm just wondering. I never spoke
to a fireman before. Do you ever
read the books you burn?

MONTAG

No. That's against the law. Even
for firemen.

CLARISSE

But you still like it?

MONTAG

We protect people. Keep them safe.
People like you. Your mom and dad.
Your uncle.

CLARISSE

He was arrested once for being a
pedestrian.

MONTAG

He must have been doing something
aside from walking.

CLARISSE

No, just walking. My uncle's odd,
too. He says it runs in the family.

MONTAG

What else does your uncle say?

CLARISSE

He says once upon a time firemen
used to put out fires. Is that true?

Montag stops short, laughs.

MONTAG

No. He's making that up.

(beat)

You should go back inside. Your
parents will worry.

CLARISSE

They don't mind. They say it's safer
at night. Because of the curfews.
So I come out in the yard sometimes.

MONTAG

Why?

CLARISSE

It's nice at night, 'cause it's so
quiet. I like to smell things. And
look at things. Sometimes if you look
real hard, there's a man in the moon.

MONTAG

You mean the mining colonies?

CLARISSE

No, silly, a man. You can see his
face, there on the moon.

He stops, stares up at the full moon, but:

MONTAG

I don't see him.

CLARISSE

He's there. You have to look hard.

MAN (O.S.)

Clarisse!

A MAN emerges in the darkness, coming from the house.

MAN

Come away from there. You shouldn't be talking to strangers.

CLARISSE

It's our neighbor, Mr. Montag.

The man pauses, dappled in shadow, eyeing Montag with caution.

MAN

Please excuse my daughter. She's very young.

MONTAG

No harm done.

MAN

Come along, Clarisse. It's late.

He takes her hand and pulls her away. As they head off toward the house, Clarisse looks back:

CLARISSE

Mr. Montag? Are you happy?

MAN

That's enough now. Time for bed.

They vanish across the darkness of the lawn. Montag stands gazing after them, flummoxed by the encounter. Softly:

MONTAG

Am I happy?

He moves on...

INT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

...and enters in darkness. He deposits his gym bag, hangs his fireman's jacket, muttering:

MONTAG

What kind of question is that?

He proceeds into --

THE KITCHEN

-- where he pulls a Ready Meal from the freezer and pops it in the microwave. The microwave emits a three-second pulse...

MONTAG

Of course I'm happy.

...and he pulls the meal out, now piping hot. He pops the lid, blows on it, grabs a fork...

...and exits into the hallway, eating, careful not to burn his mouth. He moves up the darkened hallway toward CANNED VOICES and flickering light coming from the TV room.

MONTAG

Millie? Honey? I'm home...

THE TV ROOM

The room is a TV, the plasma screen walls creating a complete visual wrap-around. Some banal infotainment program is playing, peddling trivialities and flashy visuals to an empty room.

MONTAG

Off.

The room goes dark. Montag proceeds up the hallway.

MONTAG

Millie?

THE BEDROOM

Montag enters. It, too, seems empty. As he turns to leave, his foot hits something, sends it rolling across the floor.

It's a pill bottle. Empty. Montag stares down at it, trying to divine its meaning. He turns back into the room, sees:

A woman's pale foot lying on the floor past the bed.

He darts past the bed and finds MILLIE sprawled unconscious, vomit staining her mouth and pooling on the floor.

MONTAG

...oh, God...

He goes to his knees, checking her pulse.

MONTAG

Millie! Millie!
(shouting)
Dial medical emergency!

PHONE

Dialing.

Panicking, Montag pulls her to a sitting position and gets his fingers in her mouth, trying to clear the vomit.

MONTAG

Honey. Honey, it's me. Breathe.
Breathe.

RECORDED VOICE (V.O.)

Medical 911. All our lines are busy.
Please stay on the--

MONTAG

Cancel! Damn it!

Desperate, moving fast, Montag pulls Millie to her feet and slings her arm around his neck.

MONTAG

Dial Captain Beatty! Home number!

PHONE

Dialing.

CAMERA FOLLOWS HANDHELD as he pulls her to the bedroom door and walks/draggs her up the hallway...

MONTAG

C'mon, Millie. C'mon, baby. Can you
hear my voice?

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)

Yes? Hello?

MONTAG

Captain! It's Montag!

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)

Montag? What's the problem, you
sound strange...

Montag gets to the bathroom, pulls Millie inside...

MONTAG

I need help! It's my wife! She's
sick! I...I think she's overdosed
on levelers and I can't get through
on the emergency lines!

(to the sink)

Water! Cold!

...and the faucet starts. He leans her over the sink, splashing her face, sailing on adrenaline and panic as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)
 Hold on. I'll use my priority code.
 I'll be off the line a moment.

A CLICK. Montag keeps splashing her face, cleaning the vomit from her mouth. He lets her sag, lays her down on the floor...

MONTAG
 Breathe, honey, breathe.

...and starts giving her mouth-to-mouth, trying to clear her breathing passage. She's choking, floundering.

MONTAG
 Millie, goddamn it, BREATHE!

Another CLICK as Beatty comes back on the line:

CAPTAIN BEATTY (V.O.)
 Hang in there, Montag. Help's on the way.

CUT TO:

EXT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A WHINE OF TURBINES descends from above, rippling the air with heat signature exhaust. Montag rushes outside as a HOVER AMBULANCE drops from the sky and touches down.

INT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The MEDICS rush Millie outside on a gurney with Montag at their heels.

INT - AMBULANCE - NIGHT

The gurney is slid into the bay and the MEDICAL TEAM goes to work. Automated systems engage. Imaging scanners sweep her body. Needles descend on robotic arms, find her veins, pierce her skin to draw blood. Plasma screens activate as:

MEDIC #1
 Subject. Mildred Evers Montag. Okay,
 let's see some history here...
 (rapping the touchscreen)
 Piece of crap, c'mon.

Millie's info appears, scrolling. The medic works the touchscreen, everything moving fast:

MEDIC #1
 No pre-existing conditions...no
 medication allergies...

MEDIC #2
 Blood analysis?

MEDIC #1
Levelers, big-time. Plus a little
vodka. She's floating.

A probe is used to clear her trachea. A hose is fed down her throat, the stomach pump engaged. The contents of her stomach are hosed into a clear plastic bag as:

MEDIC #3
Get that adrenaline into her! Get
those scrubbers going!

More pumps activate. The blood starts draining from her body via tubes, then run through a system of spinning filters and re-deposited in her veins. Things start to calm as:

MEDIC #1
Okay, let the machine do its work.
Couple of cycles should do it.

MONTAG

is watching the whole thing through the rear doors of the ambulance. Medic #1 steps down and joins him.

MEDIC #1
Her vital signs are coming up. She'll
be all right.

MONTAG
Are we taking her to the hospital?

MEDIC #1
Nah, this is outpatient stuff, we
do it all the time. Recycle her
blood, she'll be fine. She'll sleep
like crazy, though, so don't let
that scare you. It's normal.

He moves off. Montag watches his unconscious wife lying there as the machines hum. The POLICE CAR reappears:

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE
RETURN TO YOUR HOMES. CURFEW IS IN
EFFECT. RETURN TO YOUR HOMES...

Montag turns, sees groups of NEIGHBORS watching from the sidewalks up and down the street. They turn and head back into their homes.

Montag looks to Clarisse's house. She and her family are watching from their porch. They're at a distance, but even from here Montag can feel the little girl's gaze as we

FADE TO:

INT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Montag awakens to find Millie's side of the bed empty...

HALLWAY

...and he emerges from the bedroom. The TV room is already on, but also empty. He continues up the hallway to --

THE KITCHEN

-- where he finds Millie making breakfast, pale and drawn, drifting like a ghost. PLASMA TVs are playing in here, too, drawing her attention as:

MONTAG

Morning.

MILLIE

Hey. You overslept.

MONTAG

(watching her carefully)

How are you feeling?

MILLIE

Hungry. I don't know why I'm so hungry. I'm starving.

(looks to him)

Did we have people over last night?

MONTAG

Yeah. Some people came.

MILLIE

I'm so hung over. I remember somebody talking to me. Saying something. I hope I didn't make a fool of myself.

MONTAG

Millie...about last night...

MILLIE

Why'd you let me drink so much?

I've got this taste in my mouth.

Ugh...did I throw up? Did anybody see?

MONTAG

Millie, listen...

Suddenly, a SOFT VOICE announces:

VOICE

Mrs. Montag. It's time for the Family. Mrs. Montag...

MILLIE

The Family's here. Let's talk about this tonight.

Hurrying now, she gathers her tray, pauses --

MILLIE

You okay? You look terrible.

-- and exits into the hallway. Montag follows her.

MONTAG

We should talk about this now.

MILLIE

Honey, it's the Family. And you have to get ready for work. We'll talk tonight.

She enters:

THE TV ROOM

MONTAG

No we won't. There'll be some other program on tonight.

Montag hovers in the doorway as she heads to her favorite chair, one that swivels 360 degrees.

MILLIE

I'm here!

ANNOUNCER

...welcome you again to the warm bosom of the Family. Bringing you love, life, commitment...all the things you treasure most...

MONTAG

Millie, please...

MILLIE

Honey, shhh. I never miss the Family, you know that...

We're suddenly surrounded on all sides by a beach. The digital clarity of the image is stunning, the enveloping 360 so convincing it's almost as if we've been transported there. The FIVE CHARACTERS on the plasma screens are life-sized, walking along the surf, talking earnestly:

BOB

I'm not trying to be controlling, but I am her father.

HELEN

I agree. This is a huge decision
that will affect her entire life.

HERBERT

But it's her life, let's not forget
that. We can't live it for her.

BOB

Of course. But we are a family, and
I feel it bears discussion. What do
you think, Millie?

The characters hit a cue-loop and stop, looking at Millie,
awaiting her answer. This is an interactive soap opera:

MILLIE

Yes. Yes, of course I agree. It
certainly bears discussion.

The characters resume walking.

BOB

Thank you, Millie. We can always
count on you to be the voice of
reason.

HELEN

Millie dear. You are such a comfort
to this family.

MILLIE

(beaming)

I'm always so happy to help.

BOB

Now, Jenny...about this marriage
proposal...what do we really know
about this fellow...

MONTAG

You took all the pills in your bottle
last night.

MILLIE

(distracted)

What?

MONTAG

Your levelers. You took them all.

On screen, the characters pause, looking again to Millie:

BOB

I'm sorry, Millie...did you say
something?

MILLIE

No, no...please continue.

MONTAG

You had to have your stomach pumped
and your blood recycled.

MILLIE

That's ridiculous. I wouldn't do a
thing like that.

HERBERT

(pausing)

What's ridiculous, Millie dear?

MILLIE

(to the screen)

Just ignore me. I'm talking to
myself. Please continue.

JENNY

He's from an excellent family, but
what does it matter? I'm so in love,
I've never felt this way before...

MONTAG

But you did. The bottle was empty.

MILLIE

That's not possible. I wouldn't do
that. Why would I do that?

MONTAG

Maybe you took a few and forgot.
Then took a few more.

MILLIE

That's stupid. I didn't. Why would
I?

MONTAG

I don't know. I'm asking.

MILLIE

I wouldn't. Not in a billion years.

She's distracted, trying to follow the discussion on screen.
Montag comes up behind her, trying to get her attention:

MONTAG

Am I lying to you? Millie? Is that
what you think? That I'd look you
in the eye and lie to you?

He puts his hand on her shoulder, but she slaps it away:

MILLIE

No! You're just wrong! You're being stupid, so stop it! Let me watch my program! I'm missing what they're saying!

JENNY

...most precious thing in the world. Don't you want for my happiness? Don't you, Millie? Don't you think I should have Tyler's baby?

MILLIE

Of course. Of course you should. I want you to be so happy.

JENNY

(tears glistening)

Oh, thank you, Millie. I love you so. It'll be perfect, you'll see.

HELEN

(to Bob)

Millie is the wise one in the family. She's never wrong.

HERBERT

I don't want to ruin anybody's happiness, but there's one thing we haven't considered...

MONTAG

(softly)

I gotta get ready for work.

Millie's no longer listening. Montag drifts from the room.

CUT TO:

EXT - STREET/CLARISSE'S HOUSE - DAY

A cold breeze rattles the autumn leaves across the pavement as Montag walks toward the transit station with his gym bag.

He slows in front of Clarisse's house, gazing over the fence across the wild tangle of yard. Curious about the house and the people who live there.

INT - HOUSE - UPPER FLOOR - DAY

Clarisse is attending home school, using a stylus on an electronic pad to do her lessons. Through the window, b.g., the tiny figure of Montag can be seen on the street.

Clarisse notices Montag out there, pauses the lesson.

EXT - STREET - DAY

Montag sees her appear at the window. She gives him a tentative smile and a wave. Hesitant, Montag waves back.

Clarisse motions "wait" and disappears from view. A moment later she reappears with a CAT, an orange tabby, and puts him on the inner sill. Montag watches, increasingly puzzled.

The cat patiently endures as Clarisse puts a little red cowboy hat on him with a rubber band strap, then slips his hind legs into little cowboy boots. Done, Clarisse stands the kitty up on its hind legs and "puppets" him in a goofy little dance.

The image is so absurd and unexpected, Montag can't help laughing. Clarisse smiles at his reaction, happy. Softly:

MONTAG

Now that's just...silly.

She makes the cat wave goodbye. Montag walks on...

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

...and we're plunged into a cauldron of NOISE: Firemen shouting as bets are made, insults traded. DILLMAN, LANDERS, PECK, ORMSBY, and a DOZEN OTHERS are clustered around six wire cages on the firehouse floor, each containing a LARGE SEWER RAT.

Before them stands the Mechanical Hound, waiting.

As the men jostle and shout, Dillman raises a cage to show everybody the aggressive, hissing rat within. The cage has a handwritten number "3" on it.

DILLMAN

Who's it gonna be? Horse number three? Let's see some money!

PECK

Look at that mean son of a bitch! That's him, that's my bad boy!

LANDERS

You're gonna lose your shirt, Peck!

PECK

Fifty bucks says you can kiss my ass!

LANDERS

A bargain! Your wife charges a hundred!

ORMSBY

Go on, Dillman, give it a whiff!

Dillman holds the cage out, letting the Mechanical Hound smell the rat. To a nose as finely calibrated as the Hound's, the rat's scent is as good as a DNA fingerprint. (The data appears on Ormsby's plasma-screen next to "Horse #3: Peck's Bad Boy.")

ORMSBY

Got it! Next!

Dillman dumps the rat out of the cage to join two others already in the "starting gate" -- a round bottomless holding pen on the floor. He reaches for the next cage while:

MONTAG AND BEATTY

sit on a cot apart from the others, speaking quietly:

MONTAG

Thank you for helping last night.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds. It's nothing.

MONTAG

I came close to losing her. If you hadn't intervened...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

And how's Millie? Okay?
(Montag hesitates)
Tell me.

MONTAG

She won't talk about it. She won't even admit it happened.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Maybe that's a good thing. If she doesn't remember, I doubt she intended to harm herself. That's what's got you worried, yes?
(Montag nods)

She probably just lost track. It happens. Never happened to you?

MONTAG

I don't take levelers.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Really? I never knew that. Montag, I'm surprised at you. It's the shortcut to bliss, haven't you seen the ads? Everybody takes levelers.

MONTAG

Do you?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(wry)

I like a little misery now and again.

(Montag laughs softly)

Ah, a smile, thank God. There's the old Montag. I was beginning to worry.

Dillman dumps the last rat into the holding pen, raises his arms to quiet the men:

DILLMAN

Welcome to Rat Dome! Six rats enter...one rat leaves! Mr. Ormsby, program the Hound for five kills in random order, if you please! Who will the lucky survivor be? Final bets, place your final bets!

(calls over)

Montag, you in?

MONTAG

Not tonight.

DILLMAN

(offering)

And we know our dear captain never wagers...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I prefer sure things to guesswork. But thank you, Mr. Dillman.

DILLMAN

In that case, the betting window is closed! Horses are at the gate!

A boisterous countdown begins:

ALL THE MEN

FIVE...FOUR...THREE...TWO...ONE!

Dillman kicks the holding pen over, freeing the rats --

DILLMAN

And they're off!

-- which scatter in all directions, men jumping and shouting as rats go zipping past their feet.

Ormsby hits "send." The Hound's eyes go infra-red. Pandemonium ensues as the Hound springs into action and streaks across the firehouse like a guided missile...

...and catches the first rat within seconds, snatching it up in its jaws and shaking its chrome head so fast that the rat flies apart in its teeth. (That rat's data entry turns red on Ormsby's screen.) The Hound veers and goes after the next rat, men running and shouting and jumping out of the way as:

MONTAG AND BEATTY

CAPTAIN BEATTY

It's not just the incident last night, is it? There's something else troubling you.

MONTAG

We don't seem to talk much at all any more. I feel like we've drifted, but...I don't know why. Or what to do about it. I try.

THE HOUND

makes another kill. Another entry on Ormsby's screen turns red. The men shout like spectators at a football game.

MONTAG AND BEATTY

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Perhaps I can make our human resources department available to you. Therapy, counseling...

MONTAG

Those benefits are for ranking officers only.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Well, I wasn't going to spill these beans just yet...

THE HOUND

kills another rat, veers after the next.

MONTAG AND BEATTY

CAPTAIN BEATTY

... but I've decided to nominate you as my replacement when I retire. That means promotion. Captain Montag, how does that sound? I'll suggest they advance you some of those benefits. With your record, and your promising future, I'm sure DHS will see things my way.

Montag is blown away by this news. Beatty leans in.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

You're special, Montag. Command caliber. That makes you a deeply valuable asset to this department.

MONTAG

I don't know what to say.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(smiles)

Someday, my boy, all this will be yours. Including the rats...

(his gaze shifts)

...oh, hell.

A rat zips under their cot, the Hound in pursuit. They leap to their feet as the Hound barrels between them, sending the cot spinning into the air to the delighted howls of the men.

We hear a SQUEAL as the fifth rat is killed. Its data entry goes red, leaving one. The Hound pauses, awaiting further instructions. Amidst the jeers and laughter:

ORMSBY

Too bad, Peck. That was your bad boy.

Peck bends down and sees the sixth and final rat pressed against the wall under a desk, panting in terror.

LANDERS

And the winner is?

ORMSBY

Horse #2, "Dillman's Delight."

DILLMAN

Ohhh, what a heartbreak! Sorry, boys, fork it over! I hate to say it, but I am the winnaahh...

PECK

Take your money and shut your pie-hole, Dillman.

Suddenly, the ALARM SOUNDS. The men react, scattering as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Gentlemen, fun's over! Kindly dispose of the winner.

Ormsby quickly enters a kill command. The Hound bounds across the floor and pounces on the last SHRIEKING rat as we

CUT TO:

EXT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

HUGE DOORS slide open, revealing the Salamander in a glare of lights. It rumbles out, SIREN WAILING. The control van follows.

CUT TO:

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

A three-story Victorian relic stands like a ghost from another era just outside the downtown financial district, skyscrapers looming in the misty sky b.g.

The vacant lots in this area have become Hoovervilles of the future -- shanty towns filled with HOMELESS PEOPLE living in tents and cardboard boxes. Cookfires are drifting smoke.

Searchlights suddenly blaze from the sky as HOVERCOPTERS appear. The homeless begin to panic as the SIREN of the Salamander comes swelling up the street.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE
(from hovercopter)
REMAIN CALM. THIS IS A ROUTINE FIRE
ALARM. REMAIN CALM OR RIOT TROOPS
WILL BE SUMMONED.

THE SALAMANDER

pulls up before the Victorian house. The control van veers past it, taking up position as police vehicles arrive to provide backup. Some of the homeless start drifting this way from their shanty towns, drawn by the promise of a fire.

Firemen jump down from the truck, marching across the stretch of dead lawn past a PAIR OF STONE LIONS. This house might have been a library once, a few hundred years ago.

The battering rams are readied as the men take positions at the door. Beatty knocks. For a moment there's nothing. Beatty is about to motion them to break the door down, but then:

A face appears at the window, ethereal and beautiful. It's an OLD WOMAN, her eyes luminous, her skin like worn silk.

She motions for Beatty to be patient. The face withdraws. A few seconds pass. We hear the door UNLOCKING from inside.

It opens, revealing the old woman. Her smile is enigmatic, as if she's merely receiving visitors.

OLD WOMAN
Good evening.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Madam. We have a warrant.

OLD WOMAN

Of course you do. Everything all nice and legal and proper. Nobody's rights shall be violated this evening, I'm sure.

(swings the door wider)

Please do come in. Mind you wipe your feet.

Montag and the others are trading glances. This is different.

INT - ENTRYWAY OF HOUSE - NIGHT

The firemen enter and spread out a bit, gazing up. We're in a grand entry foyer that soars three stories up, surrounded on all sides by landings. The staircase railings are carved wood, the lighting is Tiffany stained glass, the furnishings are as ancient as the house. A grandfather clock TICKS SOFTLY.

OLD WOMAN

I've been expecting you.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Have you indeed?

OLD WOMAN

For many years. I've often tried to imagine your face. Now I know.

Beatty raises his plasma-screen clipboard.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Name?

OLD WOMAN

You may call me Mrs. Havisham, if that pleases you. And I might call you Pip. Yes, that might be quite amusing.

(off his look)

Don't insult my intelligence. You know my name.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(checks his screen)

Mrs. Roland. I am Captain Beatty. We've received an anonymous tip...

OLD WOMAN

Is there any other kind?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

...which empowers us by law to conduct a search for books.

OLD WOMAN

And you shall find them, I'm sure.
In the walls. The attic. Under the
floors. Don't forget to check the
cupboards.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Montag. Have the men proceed, and
see the lady out.

MONTAG

Five teams of three! Carillo, Peck,
first and second floors! Dillman,
third! Landers, basement! Ormsby,
attic! Go!

The teams split up, double-timing. The old woman watches them
go. Montag offers his hand to escort her out.

MONTAG

Ma'am? Please come with me.

OLD WOMAN

I most certainly will not. Nor may
you coerce me. Isn't that right,
Captain?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Dear lady, let's have no foolishness.
Accompany the fireman, he'll see
you safely out. Please don't make
me insist.

OLD WOMAN

Insist all you like. I am perfectly
within my legal rights, as you well
know.

Montag throws Beatty a puzzled look. Beatty gives the old
woman an appraising look, motions Montag to wait.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

According to whom?

She pulls a book from her pocket, paging through it.

OLD WOMAN

Your own Homeland Security manual.
One of the few books not on the
burning list. I've read it many
times with great interest, especially
the section on your department.

(pauses to read)

"The fire department was established
in 1790 to burn English-influenced

(MORE)

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

books in the Colonies. The first fireman: Benjamin Franklin." Oh, I do so love history.

(keeps paging)

Let's see. Ah, here it is. I have it marked. Chapter twelve, subsection four. According to the Supreme Court decision granting the government full authority as regards the burning of books for purposes of national security, the accused -- that would be me -- has the right to remain present and bear full witness.

She closes the book and tucks it away.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

That's an extremely obscure and seldom-invoked right.

OLD WOMAN

Nevertheless, I invoke it.

(off Beatty's look)

They're your rules. You must abide by them.

A moment of stand-off. Beatty gazing at the woman. The woman unflinching. Montag uncertain, caught between them.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Montag. Scan the lady, if you please.

Montag pulls his x-ray wand, running it up and down the woman's body. Beatty clicks his comlink...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Control?

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

...and we see x-ray images coming over the monitors -- bones, veins, swirls of cloth. The computers give readouts and percentages: "Cotton Fiber, Elastics, Organic Material," etc.

CONTROLLER #1

No concealed weapons...no incendiary devices...

INT - HOUSE/GRAND ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

CONTROLLER #1

(over comlink, filtered)

...she's clean.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

You may stay until I order in the flamethrowers. That is when your right expires and you shall be removed for your own safety. Until then, Fireman Montag will remain at your side.

OLD WOMAN

That is satisfactory.

Montag shakes his head -- this is crazy. Beatty glances up as a VOICE comes over his comlink:

DILLMAN

(filtered)

Cap! You're not gonna believe this...

THIRD FLOOR

Dillman and his team are sweeping the hallway walls with their wands, mouths agape, the ghostly x-ray images revealing:

Books. And more books. Endless rows of them within the walls.

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

The controllers are watching, amazed. The monitors show x-ray images of books everywhere throughout the house. Softly:

CONTROLLER #2

Holy Christ. Look at 'em all.

INT - HOUSE/GRAND ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Dillman appears at the third floor railing above.

DILLMAN

They're everywhere. The whole house...

LANDER'S VOICE

(over comlink, filtered)

Landers, sir, confirming that. Must be thousands.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Get on with it.

AXES AND CHAINSAWS rip the walls...

CEILINGS are torn open with long pikes...

FLOORBOARDS are sundered with pry bars...

SHELVES are overturned, furniture smashed...

AN ANGLE

replays the opening image of our film:

In SLO-MO, an object falls through frame -- a book. Rolling, tumbling, dropping from sight.

Another book. And another. Books falling. And soon:

Raining. It's raining books. ANGLE TILTS DOWN to reveal the old woman watching the books falling all around her. She turns to Montag, meets his gaze. Softly:

MONTAG

Why do you want to see this?

OLD WOMAN

They're my books.

Montag catches a book as it falls, looks up to see:

FIREMEN

throwing armloads of books over the railings. They rain down, cascading, fluttering like birds. Montag takes the old woman by the elbow, guides her gently to a safer position...

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...while the Scooper dumps another load of books onto the beacon and backs away...

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...and boots come pounding as firemen enter with kerosene pumpers on their backs, fanning out.

ANGLE SHIFTS TO Montag watching the old woman. She's taking it all in, her expression inscrutable...

All around them, throughout the house, firemen soak the walls, the heaps of books, priming the house like a bomb...

The fumes are getting thick. Montag snaps his breather mask over his face, takes a few deep breaths. He pulls the mask away, offers it to the woman.

OLD WOMAN

No thank you.

She pulls a handkerchief, holds it over her nose and mouth. A few firemen are gathering at Beatty's side, pumpers empty. Montag, cued by a look from Beatty, clicks his comlink:

MONTAG

Gentlemen, wrap it up.

UPPER FLOOR

Dillman's pumper goes dry. He motions "let's go" to the others as he clicks his comlink:

DILLMAN

We're done here! Heading down now!

ENTRYWAY

Beatty turns to the old woman:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

The flamethrowers are next. It's time to leave.

She meets his gaze, her eyes watering from the fumes.

OLD WOMAN

You can't ever have my books.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(gently)

Books aren't real. Only the law is real. Come on now.

OLD WOMAN

I'd rather stay.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

You know I can't allow that. Suicide is also against the law.

MONTAG

Ma'am. This whole house is gonna go up. Come on. I'll walk you out.

OLD WOMAN

No.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I'm counting to ten. If you don't leave, my men will pick you up and carry you out. One...two...

MONTAG

It'll be okay. Just come with me.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

...three...four...

OLD WOMAN

Thank you anyway.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

...five...six...

MONTAG
(offering his hand)
Please.

OLD WOMAN
Go on. I'll be fine.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
...seven...eight...

OLD WOMAN
...shut the gate...

She reaches up, undoing her bun. Her hair unravels as she pulls a small, slender object from it...

OLD WOMAN
...nine...ten...

...and she holds the object out toward them...

OLD WOMAN
...a big fat hen.

...it's an ordinary kitchen match. Her thumbnail poised on the sulfur tip. The men draw back, stunned.

INT - CONTROL VAN - NIGHT

Panic erupts, voices shouting and overlapping:

CONTROLLER #2
--where the hell did that come from--

CONTROLLER #3
--get 'em out, get 'em out of there--

CONTROLLER #1
(on comlink)
--all personnel evacuate the building immediately! Suspect has a match...

INT - HOUSE - VARIOUS AREAS - NIGHT

FIREMEN react, horrified, breaking and running for the exits...

CONTROLLER #1
(on comlink, filtered)
...repeat, suspect has a match!
Evacuate the building now!

GRAND ENTRYWAY

...while the old woman backs Montag, Beatty, and the other firemen toward the door with her match.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
(calm, steely)
Gentlemen, you heard the order.
Evacuate.

The others rush out, but Montag stays. He and Beatty keep backing slowly toward the door as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Allow me to appeal to your reason.
Where's the sense in this?

OLD WOMAN
Where's the sense in anything? The
world's gone upside down.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
The world is fine, it's your mind
that's upside down. See what those
books have done to you?

MONTAG
Ma'am. This is crazy. You don't
want to do this.

OLD WOMAN
This is my home. And these are my
books. Get out. Now.
(as they hesitate)
GET THE HELL OUT!

Montag and Beatty back out the door...

INT/EXT - ENTRYWAY/PORCH - NIGHT

...onto the front porch. A VOICE comes over Beatty's comlink:

VOICE
(filtered)
The police have a sniper! Should we
take her out?

Beatty throws Montag a long-suffering look, clicks his comlink.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
That would defeat the purpose now,
wouldn't it? I'm certain Mrs. Roland
will see reason, once she's had a
chance to think it through. Isn't
that right, dear?

The old woman turns away, walking back to the center of the room, gazing around at the wreckage, the piles of books. Montag tries to go back inside to grab her, but Beatty puts a restraining hand on his arm.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Mrs. Roland? You've made your point.
Given everyone a good scare. Well
done. Time to come out now.

She turns, facing them. A long look passes between them as
her thumbnail tightens on the match head...

OLD WOMAN

Play the man, Master Ridley; we
shall this day light such a candle,
by God's grace, in England, as I
trust shall never be put out.

MONTAG

(a whisper)

Don't.

...and her thumbnail scrapes the sulfur tip, FLARING it to
life. Montag's eyes widen in horror --

-- and the match flare leaps into the air, a heartbeat of
white-hot ignition, the air rippling as it catches fire. For
a moment the old woman is surrounded by an aura of flame
swirling about her, lifting her hair and catching it afire,
making her eyes glow like coals --

-- and BOOOOM! The entryway EXPLODES, shattering windows, a
HUGE FIST OF FLAME punching through the front door and blowing
Beatty and Montag right off their feet, hurling them over the
railings and onto the lawn in a storm of debris. Some other
firemen are caught on the run, also blown off their feet...

INT - HOUSE - VARIOUS ANGLES - NIGHT

A firestorm surges up the stairs...races along the
walls...engulfing room after room...shattering the grandfather
clock with heat...consuming piles of books...

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

Montag pries his face off the lawn, sees Beatty sitting up
next to him with his pant leg on fire. Frantic, Montag helps
smother the flames as Beatty yells into his comlink:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Did everybody get out?

CONTROLLER #1

(filtered)

All links are active! Everybody's
fine!

Montag turns, gazing at the house through a pall of smoke and
swirling embers, and sees:

THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

An inferno within. A FIGURE appears in the flames. A burning woman. Staggering in the blast-furnace. Tripping and falling. Then gone in a rush of flame.

PUSH IN ON MONTAG

staring in horror.

FIREMEN

come running against a backdrop of flames, pulling Beatty and Montag to their feet, rushing them away as the house burns...

CUT TO:

EXT - ON THE MOVING SALAMANDER - NIGHT

Riding back to the firehouse. Faces grim.

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Gear is being cleaned and stowed. The mood is subdued, quiet.

Montag backs the Scooper off the firetruck, parks it. As he gets off, Beatty enters and activity comes to a standstill.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Most of you have never seen a suicide. They were far more common in the old days. Just understand there is no accounting for unstable minds. You all followed protocol and did your jobs well. Nobody here is to blame.

Glances are traded. Nobody feels good about what happened tonight. Softly:

MONTAG

I missed it. The match. When I scanned her.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Then it's your fault? I see. Or is it mine, for failing to instruct you to scan her hair? I was officer in charge, after all. Blame, if any, lies with me. My report will say so. But Montag. I was not the old woman who stood in a house primed with kerosene and chose to light a match. Nor were you. Nor

(MORE)

CAPTAIN BEATTY (CONT'D)
were any of us. That act of insanity
lies solely with her. Yes?

Montag nods. Beatty motions to the group.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
Let's put it behind us. That gear
isn't going to stow itself, is it?

The men disperse, activity resuming as:

PECK
(grumbling)
I dunno what we're all twisted up
over. Stupid old bitch could'a got
us all killed. I'm glad she burned.

LANDERS
Leave it alone, Peck. Give us a
break...

MONTAG

secures the Scooper, attaching the tiedowns, as Beatty comes
up behind him:

CAPTAIN BEATTY
All done?

MONTAG
I still have to recharge the fuel
cells.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
No. I mean, blaming yourself. All
done?

Montag hesitates, nods. Beatty starts to move off, but:

MONTAG
Master Ridley. That crazy thing she
said. Play the game, something,
something.

CAPTAIN BEATTY
"Play the man, Master Ridley. We
shall this day light such a candle,
by God's grace, in England, as I
trust shall never be put out."

Some firemen nearby pause, startled.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

A man named Latimer said that to a man named Nicholas Ridley as they were being burnt alive at Oxford, for heresy, in 1555.

(off their looks)

Oh, I'm full of bits and pieces. Most fire captains are, after doing it enough years. The nonsense sticks to your boots like chewing gum.

(to Montag)

But nonsense is all it is. Romantic, foolish notions that appeal to feeble minds and justify idiot behavior such as suicide.

(leans in, softly)

Go home, Montag. Hug your wife.

Beatty departs. Montag moves to the front of the Scooper to connect the hydrogen fuel hose...

...and stops. There, lying in the scoop blade, are TWO BOOKS that got left behind when the last load was dumped.

ORMSBY

(suddenly appears)

Need help?

MONTAG

Um...no. Got it. Thanks.

Ormsby leaves. Montag connects the fuel coupling, moves off...

CUT TO:

INT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

...and we find Montag sitting before his locker after a shower, toweling his hair. He looks numb. The place is emptying, locker doors shutting, voices drifting off, firemen heading home.

He becomes aware of Dillman down the row, lacing his boots. A look passes between them. It's clear both men are stunned, deeply shaken. Softly, so only Montag can hear:

DILLMAN

I can't get it out of my head. You?

Montag shakes his head. No, he can't. Almost embarrassed, Dillman grabs his gym bag and leaves.

Montag is left alone. He rises to his locker, lifts his fireman's necklace from its peg, drapes it around his neck.

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

Montag slides down the brass pole, moves through the shadows past the Salamander. This part of the firehouse is deserted.

MUFFLED VOICES can be heard from the floor above, followed by occasional bursts of raucous laughter.

Montag's drawn inexorably to the Scooper. He stops, peers into the scooper blade, sees the two books lying in shadow.

He's frozen, unsure. He reaches in and pulls one out. It's "Charlie the Choo Choo," by Beryl Evans. A children's book.

He pulls out the other one. "Lord of the Flies," by William Golding. Neither title means anything to him, but the books themselves have him transfixed.

Quickly, before he can change his mind, he shoves the books into his gym bag, heads for the exit...

ANOTHER ANGLE

...and as he rounds the corner, comes face to face with the Mechanical Hound. The beast is lying there, head resting on its paws. Montag freezes.

The Hound raises its head, looking like an exotic chromed Sphinx. Its glowing red eyes abruptly dilate wider with a soft WHIRRR. To Montag's astonishment, a LOW GROWL builds in the Hound's throat.

MONTAG

Easy, boy. Easy now.

Montag takes a nervous step back. The Hound rises and comes forward, sniffing the air...

Its titanium jaws open, gleaming. The hypodermic tongue distends, slowly at first, then flicking forward and back, forward and back -- snap, snap, snap! A drop of amber fluid flies off the needle tip, hits the floor.

MONTAG

Sit. Goddamn it, I said sit.

The Hound hesitates, backs off. Its haunches lower and the beast lies back down, but remains coiled like a spring.

MONTAG

Good boy. Stay. Stay.

The Hound stays. Montag circles past it, out the door...

CUT TO:

EXT - TRANSIT STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT

The latest war news is playing on the VID SCREENS. Images of floating HOVERTANKS skimming desert sands in some far off land. Muzzle blasts. Explosions. Stirring theme music.

PAN TO Montag waiting for his train. A PAIR OF BEAT COPS in their urban armor are crossing the platform toward him. They see his fireman's uniform, pass him with a nod. He nods back.

CUT TO:

INT - MOVING MAG-LEV TRAIN - NIGHT

Montag rides the train, paranoia growing. People seem to be staring at him. He turns away, looks out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT - MONTAG'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Montag walks home, gym bag in hand.

In the far b.g., a POLICE CAR appears, cruising slowly into the intersection. Montag glances back and keeps walking, praying the car will continue on through the intersection.

But no, the police car turns, coming this way. Montag keeps walking, slowly, forcing himself to appear nonchalant. But the moment he turns the corner...

THE NEXT STREET

...he breaks into a full run. Feet pounding the pavement, gym bag flying at his side.

He drops the gym bag. Shit! He skids to a stop, grabs it, goes darting down the next intersecting street.

A moment later, the police car appears around the corner. The pedestrian they were tailing is gone. The car accelerates toward us, LIGHTS FLASHING...

THE NEXT STREET

...as Montag comes running, hearing the police car racing up toward the intersection behind him.

He dives for cover behind some trash cans lining the sidewalk, squeezing into the shadows between the cans and a fence.

The police car swerves into view around the corner. Slowing.

SPOTLIGHTS blaze to life as the vehicle comes creeping up the street toward us, probing the shadows.

TIGHT ON MONTAG

as the lights grow brighter, nearer. He's gasping to catch his breath. Suddenly:

CLARISSE (O.S.)

(whispering)

Don't breathe so loud. They have
microphones.

Montag turns his head. The fence he's squeezed up against is Clarisse's. He can see her eyes through the cracks in the boards -- she's crouched on the other side.

The car draws parallel with them, the dazzling glare of the spotlight probing from the other side of the trash cans.

The car stops. Faint, ghostly RADIO CHATTER spills into the night. We hear murmurs:

COP #1

I got sound and motion. Something
back there.

Montag's frozen, trying not to move or breathe. Suddenly, from the other side of the fence comes a MEOW. Clarisse's cat skitters along the fence in the shadows.

COP #2

Goddamn cat.

The car moves on, spotlight plying the shadows. Montag watches it disappear down the street. In whispers:

CLARISSE

Why are you hiding?

MONTAG

I did something tonight. Something
very stupid.

CLARISSE

What?

MONTAG

I took some books.

No response at first. He shifts his head so he can see her more clearly through the slats in the fence. She's watching him, her face like a porcelain doll's in the moonlight.

CLARISSE

Did you? Did you really?

MONTAG

It was stupid. I shouldn't have done it. And I shouldn't have run just now. I'm a fireman, they wouldn't have searched me. I'm not thinking clearly. I have to think.

He hugs the gym bag to his chest, mind racing.

CLARISSE

Are you scared?

MONTAG

I'll just give them back. Better yet, burn them. That's right, that's what I should do. Just tear out the pages and burn them myself.

CLARISSE

Yes. That would probably be best.

(pause)

Can I see them?

He hesitates, opens the gym bag, pulls out the books. She reaches through the slats, fingertips brushing the covers.

CLARISSE

"Charlie the Choo Choo."

MONTAG

If they ever found out...if they knew I had them...

CLARISSE

I won't tell.

Montag's shocked. Her words, so simple, have unlocked a door...as if she, of all people, had given him permission.

MONTAG

You won't?

CLARISSE

Not anybody. Not ever.

He peers at her through the slats.

MONTAG

Really?

She nods, her expression grave. Montag doesn't know what to say. He looks down at the books, makes a decision.

He eases "Charlie the Choo Choo" through the slats. Clarisse's breath catches in her throat. She takes the book, almost afraid to touch it. She looks to him, unable to believe it.

MONTAG

Make sure nobody finds that. I mean
ever, ever. Okay?

She draws the book toward her, but hesitates.

CLARISSE

It's not a trick, is it? You won't
come and burn our house, will you?

MONTAG

No. I won't. I promise.

(beat)

Clarisse. I'm really glad you're my
friend. Really glad. Okay?

CLARISSE

Okay.

And then she's gone, off into the shadows. Montag shoves "Lord
of the Flies" back in his bag, leaves his hiding place...

CUT TO:

INT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Millie's asleep in the dark. Montag eases onto the bed, still
fully dressed, spoons up next to her. He's uncertain, scared,
needing to hold her. She stirs, groggy, half-asleep, as:

MONTAG

We burned a woman tonight.

MILLIE

You...what? You did what?

MONTAG

An old woman. She had a match. We
didn't see it until it was too late.

MILLIE

So...she killed herself. She was
crazy. A crazy old woman.

MONTAG

Yeah, I guess that's right. A crazy
old woman.

MILLIE

You had me confused.

(rolls away)

Poor Guy. You must be tired. Try
and get some sleep.

She drifts off. Montag holds her a while, then eases to his
side of the bed, mind going a mile-a-minute.

THE BATHROOM

Montag enters, locks the door. He pulls "Lord of the Flies" from his gym bag, examining it with fascination. He opens it, riffles the pages.

MONTAG

Paper. Ink. Words. So what?

He sits, using the toilet for a chair, starts reading the very first page as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - BATHROOM - DAY

The ANGLE hasn't changed, but we find Montag sprawled on the floor in an exhausted sleep, the book lying nearby.

Sudden POUNDING wrenches him awake. Millie's muffled VOICE is heard through the door:

MILLIE (O.S.)

Guy, answer me! Are you all right in there?

MONTAG

Wha--yeah...yeah, m'all right...

He sits up, trying to get his bearings, reeling from being jolted from a deep sleep.

MILLIE (O.S.)

What are you doing in there? Open the door!

His eyes focus, remembering where he is, sees the book lying on the floor. He grabs it and rises, fighting panic.

MONTAG

Uh-huh, 'kay, just a minute...

MILLIE (O.S.)

No, now! I mean it! You've been in there all morning! You got me worried sick...and I have to pee!

He jams the book in his waistband, hides it with his untucked shirt. A quick glance in the mirror -- yup, he looks like hell. He opens the door. Millie muscles past him and makes a beeline for the toilet, sitting to pee...

IN THE HALLWAY

...as Montag moves into the hallway, heart still pounding.

MILLIE (O.S.)
Were you in here all night?

MONTAG
Yeah. Sorry. I was throwing up.
I've come down with something.
(beat)
Would you call Captain Beatty and
tell him I'm not coming in?

The DOORBELL RINGS. He starts up the hallway to answer it...

MILLIE (O.S.)
You can tell him yourself. That's
probably him.

...and he stops in his tracks, fully awake now, staring at
the front door.

MONTAG
What?

We hear the TOILET FLUSH. Millie exits the bathroom, sees
Montag standing there. The DOORBELL RINGS again.

MILLIE
He called twice this morning, said
he was coming over. You gonna answer
it?

He turns, pushes past her toward the bedroom.

MONTAG
No. Tell him I'm sick. Tell him to
go away.

MILLIE
What? I can't tell him that! He's
your boss!

MONTAG
Tell him I'm in bed! I've got chills!
Fever! Just do it!

Off her stunned look, he enters --

THE BEDROOM

-- where he pulls the book and shoves it under his pillow.

He glances through the half-open bedroom door as he peels off
his clothes. He can see Millie at the far end of the hallway
b.g., talking to Beatty at the front door.

She brings him this way. Montag jumps into bed. Moments later,
Beatty enters, trailed tentatively by Millie.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Sorry to hear you're sick.

MONTAG

I wanted to call. Ask for the night off.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

By all means, take it. Your health is important.

Beatty pulls up a chair, sits at bedside, eyeing Montag.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Mrs. Montag. Do take good care of our boy. Lots of rest, lots of fluids. We want him hale and hearty.

She circles the bed, playing the good wife, putting on a show of making Montag more comfortable, straightening the bedding...

MONTAG

That's fine, honey, thanks.

...but she keeps on fussing, cowed by Beatty's presence as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I was worried about you. You and Dillman. You two seemed to take it the hardest. You know, he didn't go home last night.

Montag's distracted and edgy -- now Millie's fluffing the damn pillows.

MONTAG

Honey, it's fine, okay? Dillman? What about him?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

He's gone missing. His wife says he never showed up.

(off Montag's look)

We've notified the police. I do hope he's okay.

Montag's getting panicky as Millie tries to get at his pillow to fluff it...

MILLIE

Honey, move your shoulder.

MONTAG

Millie, leave it! It's fine!

...and she suddenly freezes, hand under his pillow, shock creeping into her face. She can feel the book. Quietly:

MONTAG

Honey, the pillow's fine. We're talking. Please stop fussing.

She pulls her hand away, face slack, trying not to betray anything. Beatty's watching them both as:

MILLIE

Okay. How about some tea?

MONTAG

That'd be great.

MILLIE

Captain? For you?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Splendid, thank you.

She moves stiffly to the door and exits. Beatty seems to stare right through Montag, then:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I know what's going on.

MONTAG

Oh?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Some firemen see a woman burn and think, "well, that happened." They go home, have dinner, show up for work the next day. It's not so easy for others. Some firemen can hit a snag from time to time. A crisis. Doubts. Questions. It's ingrained in the job. That's why I'm here, to help you through it, if I can.

INT - TV ROOM - DAY

Beatty slots his security card into the TV port.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Request clearance for private uplink.

VOICE

State name, rank, and division for voice recognition.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Beatty, Tiberius, fire captain, Phoenix Division.

VOICE

Uplink approved. Stand by.

Beatty motions for Montag to sit. Montag, in his robe, takes center seat. Beatty remains standing.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Where did it begin, you ask, this thing we do? How did it start?

The TV room comes to life. We're surrounded by images, Montag and Beatty seemingly transported into the events on screen:

Book burnings. Many of these images were once black & white, but have since been digitally enhanced and colorized.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

They used to teach this stuff in the Academy. Gave the rookies a good grounding in fundamentals. Not so much anymore. Shame.

As they watch:

Bolsheviks burn decadent capitalist literature.

The Nazi faithful hurl armloads of books onto raging bonfires, sending geysers of embers swirling into the air.

Southern Baptists torch truckloads of Elvis and Beatles records, spicing the mix with armloads of "Catcher in the Rye," "Slaughterhouse Five," "Lolita."

A veritable orgy of flame. Vonnegut. Wilde. Bradbury. Rowling. Ellison. Shelley. Shaw. Heretics being burned at the stake.

TIGHT ON MONTAG

gazing straight ahead. The images surround him on all sides, flames flickering across his face and tattooing pinpoints of fire into his eyes. From Montag's face, WE BOOM UP TO:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

It's nothing new, Montag, what we do. Admittedly, in the past, it's been unfocused. Haphazard. Disharmonious. Various special interest groups trying to get the better of other special interest groups whose special interests they disapproved of. Opinions flying like hand grenades. Books wielded like stone clubs to smash one another over the head with. Pundits flinging their precious thoughts like apes flinging feces through the bars of a cage.

Dizzying images of mass rallies. Stalin. Hitler.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Every so often a book would come along and turn the world on its ear. Marx and his manifesto. Hitler and his *Kampf*. Before you know it, it wasn't just books being burned. It was people. Not just a crazy old woman with a kitchen match, but by the millions. Entire cities.

(to the TV)

Show me London. Dresden. Tokyo.

Click, click, click -- images of cities being consumed in massive firebombings.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Hiroshima. Nagasaki.

Mushroom clouds suddenly rise before Montag's eyes like suns being born. Beatty's pacing, watching, circling Montag.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Books are dangerous, Montag. Lethal in their power. The book burners had the right idea, of course, but they never burned right. They burned to prove some selfish point, not for the greater goal of harmony and the good of mankind. And then...then came the start of this century. And the beginning of clarity.

Images of 9-11 are shocking in their ferocity. The Twin Towers burn, tumble, collapse...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Books were fine once upon a time, back when there was plenty of room, in the days of horse and cart. But the world became far too vast, too complex, too dangerous. Our agendas could no longer conflict, not if we were to survive. Pulling together for a common goal, that's what was required. Books and divisive philosophies need not apply. I won't stomach them for a moment, nor should you. The stakes were, and are, far too great.

Millie enters with tea. Beatty takes a cup. The screens depict increasingly futuristic forms of warfare in a wide variety of lands. Floating hovertanks. Smarter and smarter bombs.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Peace, Montag. Harmony, Montag.
Security, Montag. Happiness.

(to Millie)

That's what everyone wants, isn't it, dear? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Don't you? Doesn't everyone?

MILLIE

Yes. Yes, they do. I'm...I'm happy.

Flustered, Millie offers the tea tray to Montag. He takes his cup and she hurries out.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

That's us, Montag. The Happiness Twins. The Dixie Duo, you and I. We stand against those who want everyone unhappy and divided. I don't think you realize how important you are to the survival of our society. Recite the first two articles of faith from the fireman's manual.

MONTAG

"One, books erode the fundamental precept of our democracy, which is that all men are created equal. Two, books are a reflection of one man's ego, and thus by their very nature are antisocial and combative."

CAPTAIN BEATTY

My God's better than your God. My morality is superior to yours. I disapprove of your life, your choices, your culture, your politics, your smell. A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. So? Into the incinerator with it. All men made equal. All men made happy. Blacks don't like "Little Black Sambo?" Burn it. Whites are ashamed of "Uncle Tom's Cabin?" Scorch it. "Johnny Got His Gun" demoralizing our troops and hindering the war effort? Render its ashes unto Caesar, lest the empire fall.

(sits, faces Montag)

We've been at war since before you and I were born. You did your military service as required, and with distinction. So did I. So must we all do our parts -- no ifs, ands,

(MORE)

CAPTAIN BEATTY (CONT'D)

or maybes -- or we shall lose
someday. Our country, our people,
our way of life -- that's what's at
stake.

(to the room)

Enough.

The screens go dark, silent. Beatty pulls out his lighter,
flicks it on-off, on-off. Admiring the flame. He looks at
Montag with a twinkle in his eye.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Tell you a little secret. I've read
a few books in my day. I had doubts,
too, as a younger man. Questions. I
had to know what I was about.

He draws a cigar from his inner pocket, applies the flame.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

And the more I read, the more I did
know. I came to know the face of my
enemy and the truth of my calling.
Books, dear Montag, say nothing.
They're good for one thing. The
application of heat. Four hundred
and fifty one degrees Fahrenheit, to
be precise.

He puffs the cigar to life.

MONTAG

So...if a fireman were to...
accidentally...not really intending
anything...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Take a book home?

Montag nods. His mouth is dry.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

A natural error. Curiosity alone.
We don't get anxious or mad. We let
the fireman keep the book for a day
or two. If he hasn't burned it by
then, well...we simply come and
burn it for him.

(off Montag's look)

Fire is bright, and fire is clean.
Feel better, my boy. I hope to see
you back before too long.

Beatty rises and exits past Millie hovering in the doorway.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Thank you for the tea.

MILLIE

Bye.

They stay frozen: Montag in the chair, Millie in the doorway.

They listen as Beatty goes to the front door and exits.

Montag turns, looks to Millie. She's seething.

MILLIE

Goddamn you.

She darts from view toward the bedroom. Everything that follows is HANDHELD, continuous:

Montag jumps up, out of the TV room, down the hallway, into the bedroom, where Millie's ripping the bedding away, hurling it to the floor, grabbing the book, colliding with Montag as he tries to calm her, but she's beyond that, hysterical...

MILLIE

Are you crazy? Are you insane? What is wrong with you?

MONTAG

Millie, please, listen--

MILLIE

Get away from me!

...and she's up the hallway, into the bathroom, slams the door in his face. WE HOLD ON Montag in the hallway as:

MONTAG

Millie!

MILLIE (O.S.)

Leave me alone!

MONTAG

What are you doing in there?

MILLIE (O.S.)

Not listening to you! Go away!

MONTAG

(beat, trying to be calm)
Millie. Honey. Please don't hurt the book.

MILLIE (O.S.)

You bastard! I'm burning it!

MONTAG

You're what?

MILLIE (O.S.)

I got a lighter from the kitchen!
I'm burning it!

MONTAG

Millie, don't! I mean it!
(pounds on the door)

Millie!

No response. Montag backs up a step and delivers a brutal kick. The door bursts open, lock splintering the jamb.

CAMERA FOLLOWS into the bathroom, jarring and chaotic, Millie at the sink, stunned and fearful, book blazing up in her hand. He snatches the flaming book from her, slaps the flame out.

Montag's clenched, furious, tightly reined. We've never seen him pissed before, but it looks like he could do some damage. He pulls off the charred dustjacket, flings it.

MONTAG

You call this a burn? It's a joke.
Kerosene and a flamethrower. That's
how you burn.

(riffing pages)

Or rip 'em out and burn 'em one by
one. That what you want? Is it?

MILLIE

Yes! That's what I want!

CAMERA FOLLOWS Montag from the bathroom, down the hallway...

MONTAG

'kay, fine, but it's not the only
thing we should burn around here.

MILLIE

(at his heels)

What are you talking about?

MONTAG

If we're gonna burn, let's do it
right! Start with that room, those
goddamn talking walls!

...and into the TV room, trailed by Millie.

MILLIE

Listen to you, you're not making
sense! It's that book that's done
it to you, that book...it's not
real! Books aren't real!

MONTAG
(indicates room)
And this is?

MILLIE
It is! It's got light, and sound,
and people laughing and talking and
saying my name...

MONTAG
I say your name, Millie. I say it
all the time. Do you hear it? Or
just the goddamn "people" in the
walls? Them, your "family."
(closing on her)
Do they love you, Millie? Do they
hold you at night and listen to you
sleep? Do they lie awake and worry
about how many pills you took, is
that why they say your name?
(shouting)
OR IS IT BECAUSE YOUR NAME'S
PROGRAMMED INTO OUR GODDAMN TV?

MILLIE
(crying, helpless)
I don't know what you want from me! I
don't know what's happening to you!

Montag pauses, calming, getting a grip. His own rage has
stunned him, left him shaking.

MONTAG
You weren't there. You didn't see
her. The woman we burned.

MILLIE
The crazy woman?

MONTAG
She didn't seem crazy.

MILLIE
She was! And she's made you crazy
too, with this, this thing...

She grabs the book from his hands. He stares at it, emotions
teetering and torn.

MILLIE
Did you read this?

MONTAG
Last night. The whole thing.
(MORE)

MONTAG (CONT'D)

(off her shock)

I...didn't understand it. I mean,
it seemed simple enough, but...I
couldn't figure out the reason for
it.

MILLIE

There isn't one! Captain Beatty was
right! There's nothing in it! Nothing
to understand!

CAMERA FOLLOWS her out the door, up the hallway, Montag at
her heels...

MONTAG

Where you going?

MILLIE

The kitchen incinerator!

MONTAG

Millie, no!

...and he tries to grab her but she fights him off, slapping
wildly, hysteria and terror breaking like a wave...

MILLIE

I'M NOT LISTENING TO YOU! I'M NOT!
THEY'RE GONNA COME AND BURN US,
GONNA BURN EVERYTHING, BECAUSE OF
YOU, BECAUSE YOU'VE GONE CRAZY!

...and she keeps going but Montag grabs her around the waist,
grappling as she screams, and they trip, fall to the floor...

TIGHTER ANGLE

...where the fight goes out of her and she goes limp under
his weight, her rage giving way to helpless tears:

MILLIE

They're gonna come burn us. I live
here too. Please.

MONTAG

Millie, shhh, it's okay.

His grip goes gentle, caressing now, stroking her hair. She's
weeping, twisting away from his touch, not looking at him.

MONTAG

They're not gonna burn us, okay? I
swear. Shhh.

MILLIE

They are. They are. Why are you doing this?

TIGHT, TIGHT TWO SHOT

as he whispers in her ear, desperate:

MONTAG

Millie. I sometimes feel like I've forgotten something important. Something I was supposed to hold onto really tight...but I lost it, without thinking, like a kid loses something, and I forgot I ever even had it to start with...

MILLIE

That's stupid. You're stupid, you're not making sense.

MONTAG

You remember where we met, Millie? How long ago? Do you remember what I said? Do you remember what you said? What you were wearing? Or have the pills taken all that away? Can you remember?

MILLIE

Course I remember. Stupid jerk.

MONTAG

Tell me.

MILLIE

No. Go away.

Montag eases off, seeing the truth. She doesn't remember. He takes the book gently from her hand and sits up, his back against the hallway wall.

MONTAG

Yesterday, I saw a woman burn herself, and I thought, my God. What's in these books that could make a person do that? Is it because she's crazy? Or because she isn't? I deserve to know that.

(looks to her)

I love you, Millie. And I want you to help me. If the book says nothing, we'll burn it together. Okay?

Millie also sits up, her back against the opposite wall. (Two facing profiles.) He opens the book, starts to read:

MONTAG

"Chapter one. The Sound of the Shell.

(beat)

The boy with the fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of rock and began to pick his way toward the lagoon. Though he had taken off his school sweater and trailed it now from one hand..."

CAMERA CLOSES IN TIGHTER AND TIGHTER on Millie in profile as Montag's voice drones on, her head bowed, tears slipping off her nose. She's trembling, trying to hold very still.

MONTAG

"...when a bird, a vision of red and yellow, flashed upwards with a witch-like cry; and this cry was echoed by another..."

Millie rises abruptly from frame, goes down the hallway past Montag, vanishes into the TV room, slams the door.

HOLD ON Montag. Listening. The TV goes on, turned way up loud.

Montag sags, the breath draining from his body, the life seeming to go out of him as:

THE BOOK (SLO-MO)

slips from his hand, tumbling toward the floor...

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

...and the book lands before us, normal speed, whacking a table top. ANGLE UP TO:

Beatty, seated in a poker game, surrounded by firemen. He looks up from the book to:

MONTAG

I found this in the Scooper.

CUT TO:

INT - INCINERATOR - NIGHT

PILOT FLAMES BLOOM with a gentle hiss. The door opens, revealing Beatty and Montag, faces awash in the glow. Montag lays "Lord of the Flies" inside, cranks the jets. An ERUPTION OF FLAME leaps up, engulfing the screen...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

...and FLAMES engulf the screen, transitioning from fire to fire on the dissolve, roiling in SLO-MO. The fire sweeps aside, revealing Montag and his flame thrower, finger on the trigger, face caked with soot.

ANGLE WIDENS as he moves through a surreal, flaming landscape, igniting piles of books, laundry on lines, makeshift tents.

Other firemen are revealed as we WIDEN, also burning. Jets of fire streak across frame. FIREBALLS billow into the sky.

THE HOMELESS

are leaving with what they can carry, lines of ragged people being walked through checkpoints. Some Mechanical Hounds are there, sniffing them all to make sure no books get through.

MONTAG

pauses. At his feet are piles of debris -- a child's armless doll, a dented metal teapot. He kicks some crap aside, and:

Books. Hidden hastily beneath. Just part of the garbage.

Montag glances around. Nobody can see him out here in all the confusion and smoke. He grabs the books, stuffs them inside his coat. Gone like a magic trick, poof, just like that. He moves on, laying down a blast of FLAME as he goes...

CUT TO:

INT - MONTAG'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

...and we find him in the bathroom, reading late into the night, a few books at his feet...

CUT TO:

INT - AN OLD MANSION - NIGHT

...and he comes up a corridor, shouting instructions as walls are ripped out. And as he turns the corner he performs another magic trick, scooping books from the torn-out walls and making them disappear. He keeps moving, nerves steady -- as with any life of crime, once begun, it gets easier every time...

CUT TO:

INT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

...and the books grow in number as the hours grow late...

CUT TO:

EXT - BACKYARD OF OLD MANSION - NIGHT

A search-line of FIREMEN led by Montag crosses a weedy yard past crumbling stone statues and mute tile fountains, sweeping the ground with IMAGING DETECTORS. The screens begin FLASHING.

Montag turns, hollers, motioning for the Scooper...

TIMECUT:

...which rips up a huge mound of dirt and backs away, the falling dirt revealing packets of books wrapped in heavy plastic, buried here for countless decades...

Montag hollers for the pumpers and men scurry off. As they go, he comes forward, crouches to the dirt...

...and digs out a single book, ancient and ornate, wrapped in heavy plastic sheet...

CUT TO:

INT - MONTAG'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

...which he carefully slices with a razor, peeling it away to reveal a beautiful Bible, stunningly old and rare...

INT - MONTAG'S ATTIC CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT

...and Montag pokes up through a small trapdoor, lays down the Bible...as ANGLE PULLS BACK to reveal the crawlspace dotted with stacks of books, dozens of them...

CUT TO:

INT - BUILDINGS, VARIOUS - NIGHT

...and BLASTS OF FLAME are unleashed and unleashed again, sailing up corridors, up staircases, through rooms; exploding, writhing, funneling, roaring...

CUT TO:

INT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

...and again we find Montag reading. The bathroom has become his late night refuge. CAMERA CLOSES IN on his face...

...and we hear a SOFT KNOCK. His gaze snaps up.

MONTAG

What?

MILLIE (O.S.)

Something outside. I'm scared.

Montag wraps his book in a towel, slips it under the sink. He rises to the door and opens it a crack, revealing:

MILLIE

First I thought I was dreaming. It was outside the window, moving around in the flower bed. Then I heard it scratching at the door. I think it was some kind of animal. Like a dog.

Montag joins her in the hallway and holds still, listening.

Is that a sound out there? A trash can lid? The wind?

He moves through the dark house to the living room, Millie lagging fearfully behind.

He goes to the window, eases his fingers through the blinds, opens them a crack. There, outside in the moonlight:

MONTAG

(whispers)

It's a Hound.

Millie's breath catches.

MILLIE

They're coming for us. They're gonna burn us.

MONTAG

No. It's moving off.

(beat)

We send them out sometimes on slow nights. Check out the neighborhoods. Let them sniff around. It's random.

She stares at him, not convinced.

She turns without a further word, disappears to the bedroom. Montag peers out again, perhaps not so convinced himself...

CUT TO:

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Montag wakes to darkness, Millie beside him. He lies for a long moment, staring at nothing, wondering what woke him.

He becomes aware of a RISING ORANGE GLOW in the room. He sits up, the glow intensifying on his face. He jumps out of bed, rushes to the window...

...where leaping flames are reflected in the glass.

CUT TO:

EXT - MONTAG'S STREET - NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS Montag running barefoot in his pajama bottoms, coming up the sidewalk, elbowing through knots of spectators, passing a firetruck...

He stops, and CAMERA COMES AROUND TO REVEAL:

Clarisse's house in flames. Fireballs rising. Men on the lawn with flamethrowers.

He hears a YOWL and looks down as an orange cat streaks by, disappearing through the legs of the crowd.

FIREMAN #1

Sir, please move back to the barricades!

MONTAG

(flashes his ID tags)

Montag. District four. I live a few houses down.

FIRE CAPTAIN

(looks over)

Some neighbors you had. Just never know, I guess.

He's idly paging a book in his hands. Montag glances down and, with a jolt, realizes it's "Charlie the Choo Choo."

The captain moves off, tosses it onto a roaring pyre of other books.

MONTAG

Are they in custody?

FIREMAN #2

Drove off five minutes before we got here. Probably saw the Hound sniffing the neighborhood. Don't worry, cops'll get 'em.

He moves off. Montag is left staring at the flames.

CUT TO:

INT - MONTAG'S KITCHEN - DAY

Montag watches as Millie lays breakfast on the table. The tension between them is thick. Finally:

MILLIE

Get rid of the books. I mean it.

CUT TO:

EXT - STREET - DAY

Montag stands staring at Clarisse's house, collar turned up against the chill. It's quiet now, not a soul in sight. Little of the house remains. Charred timbers and ashes.

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - DAY

Arriving for work, Montag gets waved into Beatty's office:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I was skimming the city reports
from last night.

(nods to his computer)

Had some excitement out your way?
Just a few doors down, was it?

(Montag nods)

Rang up Jeffers at third district.
He said you showed up barefoot in
pajamas. Ready to pitch in and lend
a hand, were you?

MONTAG

Always, Captain. You know that.

Beatty, affable, turns his screen so Montag can see it. The plasma image shows the faces of Clarisse's family. Father. Mother. Cousins. Beatty taps down, idly scanning...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

This file goes back generations. A
long line of misfits and oddballs.
They were even homeschooling the
daughter, you imagine? Stunning,
the crap they got away with, wearing
the masks of normal people.

(beat)

Ever meet them?

A loaded question, posed casually. Montag knows it, too. He keeps his tone conversational:

MONTAG

Waved to the man over the fence
once. And the little girl...

Clarisse's face appears on screen.

MONTAG

...that's the one. Said hello to me
one night. She was odd.

(off Beatty's look)

Said there was a man in the moon.

Beatty blinks and laughs, nonplussed. Montag exits...

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

...and we find him later at a desk amid the quiet activity of the firehouse, studying the same report that Beatty had pulled up earlier. Checking out Clarisse's family. He pauses as:

A new face comes up. The name: "David Faber." Uncle.

The photo's a mugshot. The man's got quite a rapsheet. Montag scans down the list of arrests, words flashing onscreen:

Antisocial. Unpatriotic. Agitator. Anarchist. Political undesirable. Worst of all: "Convicted of harboring books."

MONTAG

Current whereabouts?

The computer responds instantly with an address.

CUT TO:

EXT - TENEMENT - DAY

DAVID FABER ventures out into an dismal, overcast day. He turns up his overcoat collar and crosses the street.

ANGLE SHIFTS TO Montag. He steps off the curb to follow.

CUT TO:

EXT - CITY PARK - DAY

Faber's alone at a chess table, the top faded and old, playing solo. Every so often he tosses some crumbs to the birds.

He becomes aware of Montag some distance away. Faber gives him a glance or two, tries to ignore him.

Montag comes this way. Faber tosses the last of the crumbs, sweeps his chess pieces into a bag, gets up to leave.

MONTAG

Mr. Faber? Wait.

FABER

(quickness his pace)

I haven't done anything. I'm trying to live my life. Please leave me alone.

MONTAG

I want to talk to you!

FABER

Talk to my probation officer, I
report to him every other day.

MONTAG

Please--slow down!

FABER

(stops, turns)

Look, Mr. Fireman, sir -- I did my
time, okay?

(shows his barcode number
tattoo)

Five years in the re-education camp.
I've paid my debt to society. So...

He keeps going, Montag dogging him:

MONTAG

You're Clarisse's uncle.

FABER

I'm her father's uncle. What's it
to you? What do you know about
Clarisse?

MONTAG

We were friends. She talked about
you.

FABER

Oh, please...

MONTAG

She told me you got arrested once
for being a pedestrian.

FABER

Proves nothing. Says so in my file.

MONTAG

And you told her that firemen used
to put out fires a long time ago.

FABER

They did. Still proves nothing.

MONTAG

Look, Mr. Faber, I--

Faber whirls on him, shouting:

FABER

It's not enough you people burned
them out and set them on the run?

(MORE)

FABER (CONT'D)

They're gone and I have no idea where! Same as I told those other men last night, the ones with the warrants! And now you know! So, please, just let me go my way!

Faber hurries off, leaving Montag standing there...

CUT TO:

INT - FABER'S TENEMENT - LATE DAY

...but Montag's not giving up. He enters the building. It's overcrowded and squalid. KIDS are yelling in the hallways, laundry is strung from the landings.

He passes loud music, loud TVs, loud arguments spilling from various apartments. Some people notice him, a few doors slam.

He goes past a young, tired-looking WHORE in her doorway, her robe hanging open, smoking and checking him out.

WHORE

Hey, baby, looking for company?
(calls after him)

I love firemen! Do you right!

Montag comes to the stairs and finds a MAN sitting in a chair with a shotgun across his knees -- the building's day guard. Montag shows him his Fire Department I.D.

MONTAG

Faber?

INT - FABER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Faber's in his strappy t-shirt, riding a stationary bicycle. It's not a workout -- the bike's connected by electrical leads to a series of old car batteries that Faber is charging.

A KNOCK at the door. Faber gets off the bike, breathing hard, toweling sweat from his face.

FABER

Who is it?

MONTAG (O.S.)

We met in the park.

FABER

Veys mir. Look, I told you, unless you have a warrant--

MONTAG

I do.

Faber sighs, opens the door, peers out.

FABER

Show me.

Montag raises his gym bag into view.

FABER

Looks heavy. For a warrant.

MONTAG

Just give me a few minutes, okay?
Please. This visit's unofficial.

FABER

Do I have a choice, I asked? I'm
guessing not, I answered. Okay, Mr.
Pest. You intrigue me.

(swings the door open)

Enter freely and of your own will.

Montag enters. Faber crosses to the sink:

FABER

Pardon my sweat. Close to dinner
time. I was charging the batteries
for the stove.

(grabs a glass)

I offer you something? An aperitif?
A glass of slime from the tap?

MONTAG

No thanks.

Faber pours himself some water.

FABER

Well then. Formalities are done.
Who are you, what do you want?

MONTAG

I'm Montag. Your nephew's family
lived on my street.

FABER

Oh, you're that fireman, the one
down the street. Ah. You turned in
the alarm, of course.

MONTAG

No. I told you, Clarisse was my
friend.

Faber goes to the table, sits.

FABER

And so you'd like to know where they are, check up on her, see she's safe. And I'm supposed to fall for that. I have to say, you guys used to be more clever than this.

MONTAG

I don't want to know where they are. I just...if you ever get the chance, please let her know how sorry I am and that it wasn't me.

FABER

That's all?

(Montag nods)

I won't get the chance. But your sentiment is duly noted. We done?

Montag moves to the table, lays his gym bag before Faber.

FABER

A loaf of bread? A jug of wine?
Dirty gym clothes? I give up.

Montag unzips the bag, pulls out something thick and heavy.

Faber's eyes widen as he realizes what it is -- the ancient, ornate Bible Montag dug out of the ground. For a long moment the man forgets to breathe, deeply stunned.

FABER

And this is?

MONTAG

For you.

FABER

For me. I see.

(clears his throat)

The Revised Testament, government approved version, is one of the few books not on the burning list. This, however, appears to be New Testament, done by hand prior to the invention of the printing press. It's very old and beyond rare, which means the Pope himself would gladly light the match. I'm sorry, but I can't accept your gift, seeing as how very illegal it is.

Montag starts pulling more books from his bag, stacking them on the table. Faber's eyes start to glaze.

FABER

What the hell is this?

MONTAG

I can't keep any of it. I was hoping you could find a home for them.

FABER

Too bad one of them isn't a dictionary, we could look up the word "entrapment." Along with the word "sucker."

(off Montag's look)

How stupid do I look? You're trying to get me burned out! Not to mention sent back for re-education, only this time for life! Having been there, I'm compelled to say no. But don't think I didn't appreciate the attempt. It was very amusing.

(rises, shooing him)

Gather your things and go. Out, out, out. Thanks for the laugh.

Montag stands up, thinks a moment. He then stuns Faber by opening the Bible and ripping out the first page.

FABER

What are you doing?

Montag pulls a lighter from his pocket, clicks it. A tiny jet of BLUE FLAME leaps up. He holds up the page and ignites it.

The page curls and burns before Faber's eyes. He watches the ashes swirl toward the ceiling as:

Montag rips the second page out, holds it up. Faber's aghast:

FABER

What--are--you--doing? Are you crazy?

MONTAG

(mutters)

You and my wife.

Montag applies the flame. The second page burns. More ashes swirl. He reaches for the third page...

FABER

No, no, wait--

MONTAG

I told you I can't keep it. That leaves us two choices--

FABER

--us, us? How'd this turn into us--

MONTAG

--you take the books, or I do my job. This is what I do. Watch.

And he rips the third page out, raises it, brings the lighter close. The page starts to blacken and burn.

MONTAG

Up it goes.

Faber stifles a scream. He lunges and grabs the page, slapping it to the table, smothering it.

FABER

Goddamn it, stop! Just stop it!

He snatches up the Bible and backs away, clutching it to his chest.

FABER

Idiot! Sadist! This could be the last Christian Bible in this hemisphere!

MONTAG

Are you Christian?

FABER

I'm a Jew!

MONTAG

Then what do you care?

FABER

I care, I care! It's us, it's who we are, it's who we were!

(off Montag's look)

That's why this world sucks, kiddo! We don't know who to be anymore, because we don't know where we came from or how we got here, or the mistakes we made along the way! It's all been erased and we've forgotten how to even ask the damn questions! All we know is what they tell us, that parade of shitwits on TV, that's become our excuse for truth!

Pause. Faber looks down at the Bible in his hands. Softly:

FABER

Look at these pages. How many believers spent their lives going blind in some dark abbey copying them by hand...so you can burn them in seconds?

He can't resist -- he raises it to his nose, inhales.

FABER

God. I can smell the centuries.

(beat)

Go ahead. Call in your alarm. I'm not giving this back.

Montag meets Faber's defiant gaze. He's seen that look once before, in the eyes of an old woman holding a kitchen match.

MONTAG

I have more books at home. A few dozen in my attic. I'll bring them to you the next few days. Unless you decide to turn me in, of course. Guess I'll just have to trust you.

Faber stares at him, stunned, as we

CUT TO:

EXT - TENEMENT ROOF - DUSK

The roof is a jumble of electricity-generating windmills spinning on the breeze, plus a maze of chicken and rabbit coops. The view is spectacular in the gathering twilight, air traffic whizzing, the last traces of sunset filtering amazing colors through the poisoned air.

FABER (O.S.)

What's a book? Just a person who lived, that's all. Somebody who wanted to tell you something and cared enough to write it down.

BOOMING DOWN, we find Faber and Montag seated on a low stone wall separating one level of the roof from another. Faber's got one of Montag's books in his hands, turning the pages:

FABER

Good books, bad books...they're just voices asking to be heard. They're us.

MONTAG

My wife says books aren't real.

FABER

She's right, thank God! You can shut 'em up, you can close 'em, you can say "hold on a moment!" They piss you off, you can even throw 'em across the room. But in all my years I have never been able to

(MORE)

FABER (CONT'D)

reason with a TV set. Ever try to argue with a four-wall plasma screen room with a zillion channels and surround sound? Can't be done! All you can do is submit!

(to the sky)

I surrender! Tell me what kind of toilet paper to use, I'll do it!

Montag laughs. Faber rises, agitated:

FABER

You can laugh, kiddo, but there's your truth. From the Jesuit priest who burned the great Mayan library so the natives would only have Jesus to think about, to the invading armies who burned the Library at Alexandria three times -- three times -- there's always some schmuck who wants to take away your right to think for yourself.

MONTAG

History begins with me?

FABER

My God, a quote yet. Yes, O Learned Sage, history begins with me.

(hefts the book)

And don't bother showing up with your own ideas, just take the ones we give you. Or we'll accuse you of treason. Heresy. Burn you. Bury you in mass graves. Kick your ass.

Faber draws closer, hands the book to Montag.

FABER

It's not even about books. It's about control. The people who run things keeping themselves in power by making sure nobody knows enough to ask uncomfortable questions. Keep the TVs going and the trivia flowing! Who's dating who, who's wearing what, will the pop star get married, will she get divorced, what's happening on "The Family" this week? A river of meaningless shit flooding our brains twenty four hours a day until we've got no brains left! That's power, kiddo. On a mass scale. Intractable, entrenched, unassailable. And, I'm sorry to say, it sums up the lie your life has been.

Faber's suddenly feeling shaky. He turns, gazing out over the city, trying to steady himself.

MONTAG

You all right?

FABER

You kidding me? I'm terrified.
Lightheaded. I can't believe I'm
even talking to you.

(feels his own forehead)

I didn't have enough trouble. Mr.
Lunatic shows up. Idiot me, I open
the door and say come in. What do
you want, Mr. Lunatic? Speak!

MONTAG

(rises)

I thought we could help each other.

FABER

(laughs)

Don't bullshit yourself, kiddo. It's
unseemly. You're a book-burner who
woke up one day and realized you
aren't quite the mindless robot they
told you to be. You've fallen from
grace, you poor sap, and now you
want absolution. All those heretics
you've burned at the stake. Whitman.
Thoreau. Dickens. Well, I don't do
absolution. Try the Catholics.

(heads for the coops)

Anyway, you're a little late. Where
were you twenty, thirty years ago?
Back when I had piss and vinegar to
spare?

MONTAG

Maybe you still do.

FABER

That was then. I've since had my
ass handed to me once or twice. All
I wanna do now is sleep through the
night.

INSIDE THE COOP MAZE

Faber comes down the tunnel of cages, unlocks one. THREE
CHICKENS squawk as he gathers eggs into a kitchen towel.

FABER

Charlotte. Emily. Anne. Thank you,
my darlings. Another night I don't
starve because of you.

Montag appears on the other side, peering through the mesh as Faber moves down the row to another cage.

MONTAG

Everybody knows there's a resistance movement. You were a part of it. I'm not saying you still are. I'm just saying maybe you know somebody who knows somebody.

FABER

Why? What do you think the resistance is, some well-oiled army ready to rise up and smite the wicked? It's little old ladies and people like me, hiding books in the shadows and shitting a brick every time the doorbell rings.

Faber emerges from the tunnel of cages, rejoins Montag.

FABER

That's all it's ever been. We're like those monks in the Dark Ages, hiding books so the kings and popes can't burn 'em. Hoping someday knowledge might be welcome again.

MONTAG

I can get you those books.

FABER

Is that what this is about?

A formation of high-level BOMBERS go streaking across the sky, tearing the stratosphere with sound. Faber looks up.

FABER

See the news this morning? We started using nukes. Pakistan's glowing. Genie's out of the bottle again, kiddo. Think we'll survive the summer? Me, I wouldn't bet on getting through the week. And you're worried about books.

A look passes between them.

MONTAG

You've been pissed off all your life, old man. You gonna quit now?

Faber weighs this madness, sighs.

CUT TO:

INT - BASEMENT OF TENEMENT - NIGHT

Dank and musty, lit by a single bare bulb. Faber's puttering in semi-darkness, going through various drawers and toolboxes, fingers rooting piles of screws, nails, parts.

He finds what he's looking for, holds it to the light, blows dust off -- it's a "seashell," a tiny earplug/transmitter.

FABER

You think I'm old. Hope this thing still works.

(hands it to Montag)

Stick it in your ear.

Montag slips it into his left ear, finds a comfortable fit.

Faber pulls out a transmitter the size of a pack of cigarettes and a corresponding headset. He clips the transmitter to his belt, plugs in the headset, puts it on. Softly:

FABER

Hear me?

MONTAG

(startled)

Yeah. In my head.

FABER

And I can hear you. They built 'em good back then. Now listen, no more showing up at my door. From now on we're never seen together and we never talk on the phone. We stay in touch only with this...

(taps his headset)

...like two tin cans and a string.

MONTAG

Understood.

FABER

(beat)

Good luck, Mr. Fireman. Try not to get me burned.

CUT TO:

INT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

STEADICAM brings Montag into the firehouse, past men polishing the truck, past others performing maintenance duties, past the brass poles, past the Hound.

It all looks surreal to him. He's seeing it with different eyes now. He steps to the timeclock, hand on the scanner...

MONTAG

Montag. Clocking in.

...and as he turns, ANGLE SHIFTS TO REVEAL:

Beatty standing there. Blocking his way. Smiling.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

You're late.

Before Montag can utter a word: WHONK!WHONK!WHONK! The fire alarm. Deafening.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Well, nevermind, just in time! Thank goodness, it's just not a fire without you!

(turns, yelling)

GO, GO, GO!

VARIOUS ANGLES

Firemen running, boots all a-scuffle, grabbing HELMETS off pegs, yanking equipment from storage lockers, cascading down brass poles, swarming the Salamander, strapping in...

EXT - FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

...and emerging into the night, firetruck and control van, HORNS BLARING AND LIGHTS FLASHING.

ON THE MOVING SALAMANDER

A dizzy blur of motion and lights. Beatty looks back, checking the faces of his men.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Montag, where's that grin?

MONTAG

Sir?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

The fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame! Isn't this what we love? Isn't this what we do best?

EXT - SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A HOVERCOPTER is circling as the Salamander comes rumbling up the street. The firetruck stops.

CAMERA CLOSES IN as the firemen unbuckle, some of them jumping down, others pausing uncertainly...

CARILLO

Sir? Is this our jurisdiction?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

No worries. I've cleared it through channels.

...and Beatty glances back as CAMERA CONTINUES PAST HIM, closing on Montag. He's at a loss, trying to comprehend:

MONTAG

We...we've stopped in front of my house.

REVERSE ANGLE

Montag's house sits on its quiet street. The firemen start to assemble a bit awkwardly, not sure what's going on, but:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

At ease. We're dispensing with protocol. Tonight is a special occasion. Tonight we do things just a little differently.

(glances up to Montag)

Isn't that right?

Feeling like a man in a dream, Montag steps down and walks forward to face Beatty.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(announcing to all)

No pumpers! No kerosene! No pretty beacon on the lawn! Tonight we get a special treat! A display of dedication and skill nonpareil! One man! One flamethrower!

(locks eyes with Montag)

Mr. Ormsby! Mr. Landers! Bring one down, if you please!

Ormsby and Landers heft a flamethrower off its mount and bring it down from the truck, hustling it over as:

The front door of the house bursts open and Millie hurries down the walk, dressed for travel and dragging a suitcase.

MONTAG

She turned in the alarm?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Don't blame her, Montag, not for your stupidity.

Montag, stunned, meets her as she reaches the curb. She's all cried out, looking back at the house:

MILLIE

Everything gone now, everything.
Poor house. Poor family. All gone.

Montag steps close, desperate, hoping for some glimmer of tenderness or redemption.

MONTAG

Millie. I love you.

She looks him in the eye and:

MILLIE

(softly)
I hope you die.

She brushes past him as Beatty remands her to the TWO COPS on the scene:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Officers. A domestic dispute. Would you please see after Mrs. Montag? Take her where she wants to go?

As Millie is helped away, Beatty snaps his fingers at Ormsby and Landers. They sling the flamethrower onto Montag's back, tightening straps and snapping buckles as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Don't look so shocked. You didn't leave her much choice, did you? Poor thing was terrified. It was the third alarm she called in. I ignored the first two, told her to be patient. Said you'd come around. What a sad disappointment you are. How are those straps, secure? Let's get that pilot lit.

Montag activates the gas feed. Beatty himself applies the igniter. A gentle flame blooms.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Now. Let's finish what you started.

They march toward the house, Beatty and Montag, as the others watch. Beatty turns back, calling to them...

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Break out some windows! Let's get some cross ventilation!

...and in that moment, Montag sneaks the "seashell" from his pocket and slips it in his ear.

INT - FABER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Faber reacts as his transmitter activates with a small red light and a BRIEF TONE. He grabs the unit, slips on the headset with a smile.

FABER

What's on your mind, kiddo?

INT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Montag, of course, can't reply. He enters the house with Beatty, gazing around to find that Millie's taken the books from the attic and strewn them all over the floor.

FABER'S VOICE (O.S.)

(filtered)

Hello? Hello?

MONTAG

I can't believe this is happening to me.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Funny how that works. Everybody thinks, everybody is absolutely certain, that nothing will ever happen to them. Others die, I go on. Others get caught, not me. Consequences? Never. Except sometimes there are. And by the time they catch up, it's too late.

INT - FABER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TIGHT ON Faber, heart sinking as he listens.

FABER

Montag. I'm listening. I don't know what's happening, but I'm here.

INT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

WINDOWS START BREAKING from outside, glass exploding across floors. CAMERA CLOSES IN TIGHTER AND TIGHTER ON MONTAG as:

CAPTAIN BEATTY

You're a well read man, how about a few well-chosen quotes? No? Allow me. "Day of wrath, O day of mourning! See fulfilled the prophet's warning! Heaven and earth in ashes burning!"

(bellows)

DO IT!

Montag hits the trigger and FIRES A BLAST OF FLAME into the living room, igniting the furniture. WHOOOOOOSH!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

AGAIN!

WHOOOOOOSH! The living room walls now catch, sending up sheets of fire. Books on the floor ignite.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

That's the ticket, well done! You can't tell me that didn't feel good! All your sins washed away with good cleansing fire! Onward, Montag! Lead the way!

Montag leads Beatty down the hallway into:

THE TV ROOM

It's on, of course. "The Family" is playing.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Something here you'd like to burn? The sorrow of past regrets? The stench of failure? That blow-dried imbecile and his chattering hag?

Montag pulls the trigger. The FIRE BURSTS FORTH, hitting the screens and imploding them. The vacuum sucks fire in and belches it out again, plastic igniting as the babble of the Family gives way to the HIDEOUS SHRIEK OF MELTING SPEAKERS.

THE BEDROOM: Montag stares at the bed he shared for years with his wife. WHOOOOOOSH! Up it goes, a funeral pyre...

THE KITCHEN: WHOOOOOOSH! Table, countertop, appliances -- gone...

THE HALLWAY: A flaming corridor. Beatty and Montag retreat to the front door, Montag laying down BLASTS OF FLAME...

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...and they emerge coughing, dark with soot, as the house behind them burns. They turn to watch.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(gentle)

Bad dream's over. Fire and smoke.

INT - FABER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

FABER

Montag? Can you run? Can you try to get away?

EXT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MONTAG

There's no running away from this.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

No.

IN THE CONTROL VAN

The Controllers are watching their monitors. Suddenly, FLASHING LINES appear on screen, BEEPING, searching...

CONTROLLER #1

I've got a signal. Some kind of bandwidth.

CONTROLLER #2

Source?

...and the crosshairs converge on Montag.

CONTROLLER #1

Son of a bitch is transmitting.

MONTAG AND BEATTY

MONTAG

How long have you known?

CAPTAIN BEATTY

From the start. Montag, you idiot.
Our Hound smelled the books on you.

He raises his plasma screen clipboard, punches in a playback command, turns it so Montag can see. On it, a recording:

THE HOUND'S POV: We've seen this moment before -- Montag comes around the firetruck the night he took the first two books, freezing in his tracks as he encounters the beast.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

(enters new command)

So I checked the surveillance cams.
Lo and behold.

A new image pops up. From a hidden ceiling cam, we see Montag pulling the first book out of the Scooper blade. Beatty freezes the image, tracking it in for a TIGHT CLOSEUP.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

"Charlie the Choo Choo?" You threw
it all away -- your career, your
marriage, your life -- for goddamn
"Charlie the Choo Choo?"

Controller #2 hurries up from the control van, pulls Beatty aside, whispers in his ear. Beatty gives him a look.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Really?

The man nods. Beatty sends him off, turns back to Montag. There's a new look in Beatty's eye -- hungry, vengeful.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I gave you every chance. Tried to woo you, reason with you. I even sent the Hound to sniff around your house at night and throw a scare into you. Even that didn't work...

(cocks his head)

...though it did get your neighbors burned out and on the run. Yes, your fault. All your fault.

(closing on him)

You dense...arrogant...traitorous...ungrateful little bastard.

Beatty stuns Montag by hauling off and slapping him hard across the ear (the one with the seashell in it). WHAP!

INT - FABER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

-- and the sound makes Faber jump, wrenching off his headset as if he'd been slapped himself --

EXT - MONTAG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CAPTAIN BEATTY

After all I did for you. After the kindness I showed.

WHAP! Another slap across the same ear. Montag clutches the side of his head in agony --

CAPTAIN BEATTY

I vouched for you. Put my professional standing on the line for you. This is how you repay me? And betray me?

WHAP! Beatty slaps him a third time -- only this time uses his other hand. The blow rocks Montag's head, and:

The seashell flies from his ear, skittering onto the pavement.

IN THE CONTROL VAN

Controller #1 enters a command:

CONTROLLER #1

Jamming transmission now.

BEATTY

strolls to the seashell, scoops it off the pavement.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Your pal Faber?

(off Montag's shock)

Of course I know! I've been tracking your every step! There are cameras on every street corner of this city, you moron! And Faber's been under surveillance from the moment his nephew went on the run!

(raises his clipboard)

We have you talking to him in the park! Entering his building! Chatting on the roof! Want to see? Or are you willing to take my word for it?

MONTAG

Faber! Run!

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Go ahead, yell. He can't hear you. We've jammed the transmission.

(closing in)

The next thing Mr. Faber knows, the police will be kicking his door in. Want to go over there, just to see the look on his face? Oh, dear, I almost forgot. You'll be in custody yourself. For treason and sedition.

(stops before him)

If you're through making a fool of yourself, you're under arrest.

Beat. Montag stands pinned in Beatty's gaze. And then:

CLICK. He works the safety catch on the flamethrower. The flame billows up with a gentle hiss.

Beatty goes stiff, eyes widening slightly. And he smiles.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Well, that's one way to get an audience. Hold a gun on a man and make him listen to your speech. Well, speech away. What'll it be this time? Why don't you belch Shakespeare at me? "There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats, for I am armed so strong in honesty that they pass me as an idle wind, which I respect not!" How's that? Go ahead, you trembling little prick. Pull the trigger.

Montag is trembling. Softly:

MONTAG

We never burned right.

CAPTAIN BEATTY

Hand it over, Montag. You're done.

Beat.

WHOOOOOOOSH! An ERUPTION OF FIRE leaps out and hits Beatty square in the chest, a searing fist of flame that grips him, envelops him, drives him back, blows him off his feet.

Beatty sails through the air on a booster of fire, a blazing, shrieking scarecrow. He lands on his back in a flaming heap, arms flailing and legs drumming...and then goes still.

A hush falls. For an extended moment the scene is a tableau, everybody frozen, faces slack with unspeakable shock.

IN THE CONTROL VAN

They can't believe what they just saw on their screens.

AERIAL VIEW FROM HOVERCOPTER

Circling the scene below, monitors recording everything.

MONTAG

stands with the murder weapon in his hands, just as stunned as everybody else. He's looking at his hands as if they'd acted on their own volition, as if they weren't even his.

He looks up. Firemen are backing away, a few turn and run.

Montag knows there's no going back. Ever. He embraces his moment of insanity, sets his feet --

MONTAG

RUUUUUN!

-- and begins to burn. WHOOOOOSH! Firemen scatter, running clear as an ARC OF FLAME sweeps up and down the Salamander, engulfing the firetruck, turning it into a blazing pyre.

Montag turns, swiveling the nozzle toward the control van...

...and WHOOOOOSH! FLAMES envelop the forward half of the van. The controllers scatter from their posts and evacuate out the back doors, running into the night as:

Montag circles around, BLASTING FIRE into the now empty van. Monitor screens EXPLODE, spewing glass.

He turns again, SCREAMING now, primal, stripped bare, hosing the firetruck again, burning everything, burning all.

The flamethrowers lining the truck start EXPLODING on their mounts, one after another, sending FIREBALLS into the sky.

The hovercopter veers off, fleeing the explosions.

BOOOOM! The fuel tank blows, lifting the Salamander into the air and slamming it awesomely back down again, now a tangle of shattered, flaming wreckage.

And then all is still. Montag stands, alone now, the street around him in flames.

In a daze, he walks over to his murdered captain. The body's still burning. Montag scans the pavement, finds:

The seashell. It's a bit scorched, but seems intact. He picks it up, holds it to his ear with a shaky hand. He hears STATIC, intermittent sound -- a voice?

MONTAG

Faber? Faber? Can you hear me?

The Mechanical Hound lunges from the flaming wreckage of the firetruck, trailing fire as it streaks across the pavement.

WHAM! The beast hits Montag like a train, taking him off his feet. He hits the pavement hard, the seashell goes flying.

The Hound starts savaging him, Montag bashing it with the flamethrower nozzle, trying to drive it off.

The beast clamps down on his thigh and the hypo tongue shoots out, jabbing hard into Montag's flesh. Montag SCREAMS as the plunger depresses and the amber fluid starts to flow. But only half the dose is emptied, because Montag rams the flamethrower nozzle into the Hound's mouth and:

WHOOOOM! A BLAST OF FLAME erupts, driving the beast back, blowing it off its feet. Flaming fluid spatters everywhere.

Montag's on fire, rolling across the pavement, trying to smother the flames. He yanks the small extinguisher off his arm and hoses himself with retardant, putting himself out.

He sits up, sees the flaming Hound coming for him again. He lets the thing have it in the face with ANOTHER BLAST OF FIRE, driving it back --

HOUND'S POV

-- and the flames damage the Hound's optics, its image of the world jittering to snow as FLASHING WORDS appear: "Warning. Optic Damage. Warning. Optic damage."

MONTAG

watches the Hound spinning in circles, burning and blinded, enraged, lashing out in all directions.

Montag rolls over, tries to get to his feet. He collapses, SCREAMING, his leg useless from the dose of procaine.

He throws the quick-release buckles and shrugs the flamethrower off. Trying again, he manages to get halfway to his feet, hobbling across the pavement to the seashell. He scoops it up, jams it in his ear, fleeing the scene.

MONTAG

Faber! Run! Get out! They'll be there any minute!

INT - FABER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Faber's frantic, tweaking the signal, trying to hear.

FABER

You there? You hear me? Montag?

MONTAG'S VOICE

(filtered)

--et out--r-partment--ow abou--you--
ere--ny minu--et ou--now--

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

On the run, hobbling:

MONTAG

It all went wrong! You have to get out, understand? They're coming for you! You have to run!

FABER'S VOICE

(filtered)

--nderstand--ndersta--t--hear you--
are you--abou--you--pla--at--

Static. Montag crashes through a backyard, through the laundry line, over a low fence. Dogs start BARKING. Lights come on.

CAMERA FOLLOWS as he keeps going, getting dopey, the procaine hitting his brain. He's crossing an open field, some bushes and trees. He shakes his head, trying to clear it...

...and stops, the world swimming before his eyes. He's seeing double, triple. He crawls into some bushes and collapses there, rolling onto his back, staring at the sky.

SIRENS are wailing somewhere. Hovercopter SEARCHLIGHTS probe in the distance. Suddenly, the signal clears:

FABER'S VOICE
(filtered)
--ntag? Montag?

MONTAG
Yes? Yes? I hear you.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MONTAG'S AND FABER'S LOCATIONS:

Faber's in his overcoat, racing down the back stairs of his building, careening from landing to landing:

FABER
I'm leaving. I'm getting out.

MONTAG
(processes that)
Good. That's good.

FABER
Are you okay? Can you tell me where you are?

MONTAG
Um...not so good. Not so good right now. Where? Um. No. Not really.

FABER
You don't know where you are? Are you hurt? Can you walk?

Faber dashes out the back door and into the street, getting lost among the pedestrians. He glances back. POLICE CARS are pulling up at his building b.g. He missed them by moments.

FABER
Montag? Montag?

Montag's lying there, staring at the sky. He starts to laugh.

MONTAG
It's there. I see it.

FABER
What?

MONTAG
Clarisse said so. It's there. There is a man in the moon...
(laughs)
...or. Could be drugs.

FABER
Montag! You have to think clearly!
Focus!

MONTAG

Um, okay. Focusing. Right.

FABER

There's an abandoned district east of downtown. Across the river from the power plant. You know it?

MONTAG

Power plant? Yeah...

FABER

Across the river from the plant!
Old round building, 10th and Savoy!
If I can't come to you, kiddo, you
gotta come to me! C'mon, you can do
this! 10th and Savoy!

Montag sits up painfully, trying to clear his head.

MONTAG

Yeah, yeah, 10th and Savoy. Shut up
already.

Montag takes a final, longing look at the moon...and with every ounce of willpower he's got, pushes to his feet...

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

...while Faber clicks off his transmitter, comes around the corner -- and stops, gazing up in shock.

REVERSE ANGLE

reveals a GIANT STREET MONITOR on a building. On it, five stories high, is the footage of Montag killing Beatty taken from the hovercopter. CROWDS are gathering to watch as they show the event again and again, along with all the lurid, late-breaking details.

Faber looks around. Every monitor in the city's showing it.

CUT TO:

EXT - TRASH FIELD - NIGHT

Rubble everywhere, like the surface of the moon. The city looms before us. Montag enters frame, limping toward it...

CUT TO:

EXT - FIELD - NIGHT

...while far behind him, twigs are snapping. Something comes through the bushes, emerges into the moonlight:

The Hound. Scorched and semi-blind, eyes stuttering. It's limping, gears and servos grinding with every step. But the damn thing still works -- especially its nose. It sniffs the spot where Montag was sprawled, presses on...

CUT TO:

EXT - CITY - ABANDONED DISTRICT - NIGHT

Deserted streets. Montag limps along a brick wall upon which a long scrawl of graffiti is spray-painted.

He comes around a corner, gazes up. There, looming above us, is the ROUND BUILDING at 10th and Savoy -- a ten-story cylinder of brick, grimy as hell, ringed with windows and fire escapes, hemmed in by other buildings just as ancient and decrepit.

INT - BUILDING - NIGHT

Montag enters through a broken doorway. The place is trashed. Rats squeak and scurry. He works his way through darkness...

MONTAG

(softly)

Faber?

...and a DARK SHAPE lunges from the shadows.

It's a HOMELESS MAN -- huge, bearded, malevolent. He's got an iron pipe in hands, poised to attack.

HUGE HOMELESS MAN

You the fireman?

Montag nods cautiously...

INT - MAIN ROTUNDA - NIGHT

...and is led into the rotunda. GROUPS OF HOMELESS are huddled in the shadows around small cookfires, glaring suspiciously.

The huge homeless man taps him, directs his attention up.

CAMERA ANGLES UP to reveal that the interior of the building is open all the way to the ceiling ten floors above -- each floor is a round landing encircling the open shaft up the middle. A face appears high above, peering down -- Faber.

FABER

Thank God.

CUT TO:

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

The Hound sniffs along the same graffitied wall. It pauses at the corner, looks up...

HOUND'S POV

...and the image of the round building flashes and stutters, flashes and stutters...

CUT TO:

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

...while a BEEPING SIGNAL FLASHES on a screen over a SATELLITE VIEW of the city. A POLICE DISPATCHER is intently monitoring the signal as his CAPTAIN leans into frame.

DISPATCHER

Been tracking this for a few minutes now. Signal's faint. In and out. It's Beatty's Hound.

POLICE CAPTAIN

Pinpoint it before you lose it. And I mean to the square yard.

The dispatcher clicks the image down closer and closer...until the round building is prominent in frame.

CUT TO:

INT - ROUND BUILDING - SEVENTH FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT

Faber helps Montag along the curved landing past long rows of tall sheet-covered shelves, the smoke from the cookfires drifting up from below. Montag's leaning on Faber, limping.

Faber pulls him into a dark cubby hole between shelves. The area contains a cot, a few chairs, a sleeping bag, some tin pots and pans are on a crate. Montag sits heavily on the floor.

FABER

You gonna make it?

MONTAG

My head feels clearer. Leg hurts like hell.

FABER

But can you travel?

(off Montag's look)

I caught your act on the news. Me and a few billion other people. You're more wanted than Dillinger.

Faber starts pulling clothes from an old foot locker, rooting through them, tossing some to Montag.

FABER

Lose the uniform. These are old and disgusting, but you'll be less conspicuous.

MONTAG

(sniffs the clothes)

Where we going?

FABER

Far away as possible.

(off Montag's look)

There are some people, south of the city, up in the mountains...

Montag painfully starts peeling his uniform off.

MONTAG

What kind of people?

FABER

People. The kind that ran out of luck. Like us.

MONTAG

They live in the mountains?

FABER

Better than prison or re-education camps. You'll like these folks, they've got books. Lots of books.

(tosses more clothes)

In case we get separated, follow the river out of the city. Always stick to the river. Got that? C'mon, get those clothes on...

EXT - ROUND BUILDING - NIGHT

AERIAL VIEW of the building, a beautiful establishing shot. As OUR ANGLE SLOWLY DESCENDS...

...a FLITTER enters frame, dropping almost quietly from the sky. Followed by another. And another. A string of flitters descending toward the roof like drifting seed pods.

A flitter is a one-man flying exoskeleton with four ducted turbofans, two above and two below -- picture a flying suit open at the front that you step into. Each one is piloted by a SWAT TROOPER, armored and helmeted, face invisible behind a gleaming black visor. (Each flitter also has a pair of automated GATLING GUNS mounted on the sides.)

The flitters touch down one after another, gentle as kisses, instantly taking off again as each trooper jumps clear.

The flitters now become pilotless drones that begin circling the building, onboard systems going fully automatic, computers and gyros humming. IMAGING SCANNERS activate, methodically sweeping the building...

ON THE ROOF

...as the troopers scurry across the roof, weapons at the ready, moving with scary precision and hand signals. They assemble, crouching in a circle formation, waiting...

ON THE GROUND

...as SWAT APC VEHICLES encircle the building on the ground, also sweeping with imaging scanners. TROOPS come pouring out of the vehicles, down alleys, taking up positions...

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

...as the SCANNER IMAGES come through on the monitors:

DISPATCHER

(on headset)

We have movement throughout the building, mostly first floor, but scattered throughout all levels. At least four dozen unfriendlies by my count. Check your handhelds...

EXT - BUILDING ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The troopers on the roof check their plasma palm-screens as a schematic of the building appears. TINY GLOWING DOTS indicate the people inside.

EXT - BUILDING - HIGH ABOVE AN ALLEY - NIGHT

A flitter is drifting sideways, tracking movement inside. As it comes near, its onboard plasma screen shows TWO HUMAN FIGURES IN HEAT REGISTER SHAPES moving along together...

INT - SEVENTH FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT

...which are Montag and Faber hurrying down the long row of sheet-covered shelves. Montag's new clothes are pretty shabby, but at least the coat is warm.

MONTAG

What was this place?

FABER

Believe it or not, it was a book depository once. In fact...

He indicates the covered shelves. With a look of disbelief, Montag reaches up grabs a sheet, pulls it off. A whole row of eight-foot high shelves are revealed, lined with books.

MONTAG

You're kidding.

FABER

Been trickling in here for decades.
Probably the biggest stash in North America.

Montag continues down the line, stunned, pulling off more sheets, revealing more books. He looks around, sees the various levels lined with covered shelves. Books beyond counting.

FABER

Some people and I were trying to work out a plan once to get 'em out of the city. Never could figure out how to move so many books, though, not with all the surveillance. Then I got arrested, and nothing ever came of it. That was years ago. And here they sit.

Faber glances over, sees a book, pulls it off the shelf -- a paperback of "David Copperfield."

FABER

Oh, nice. Take this one. For the trip. One of my favorites.

Montag slips the book into his pocket with a smile, pulls down the next sheet, revealing:

The flitter is outside one of the huge windows just on the other side of the shelves, hovering there, peering in. Montag's stunned, frozen. Faber can't see from his angle:

FABER

What?

The gatling guns abruptly swivel up and lock into place.

Montag lunges, slamming into Faber as:

BRRRRAAAAAAAPPP! The window and the surrounding walls EXPLODE inward in a hurricane of masonry and glass. Montag and Faber hit the floor, the bookshelves above their heads vaporizing in a cloud of paper and wood...

ON THE ROOF

...while the troopers, still in their circle formation, FIRE BOLTS straight down into the tarpaper at their feet.

They turn, running out to form a wider circle where they FIRE different bolts into the roof -- unlike the first, these are rappelling bolts. They quick-snap steel cables leading from their chest harnesses, getting ready...

IN THE BUILDING

...as silence falls. Montag and Faber look up from the floor, ears ringing, stunned. Montag crawls a few feet, peers around what's left of the book shelf.

A huge section of exterior wall is gone. The flitter's out there, scanning and hovering. Locking in.

Montag grabs Faber, pulls him to his feet, runs.

BRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAPPP! BRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAPPP! The flitter tracks them sideways, the wall disintegrating to dust in the onslaught.

Montag and Faber run along the landing, books and shelving exploding and vaporizing down the line behind them, churned into clouds of confetti, erupting out over the railing, snowing down to the floors below --

GROUND FLOOR

-- where doors EXPLODE off their hinges, people SCREAMING and scattering as troopers swarm in, laser-sighted assault rifles sweeping to and fro in the darkness. BURSTS OF GUNFIRE erupt --

SEVENTH FLOOR

-- as Montag and Faber dive to the floor. The flitter's gatling guns sweep over their heads and past them, ripping on down the row of bookshelves...

OUTSIDE

...and the flitter pauses, ceasing fire, coming back again to scan for its target...

INSIDE

...as Montag and Faber hug the floor, thinking the flitter's gone, deafened by the GUNFIRE ECHOING through the building from below. A frozen moment as their eyes meet:

MONTAG

I'm sorry.

FABER

Don't. I haven't felt this good in years.

(a harsh laugh)

I'm scared shitless.

MONTAG

Come on! Let's find a way out!

They lunge to their feet, start to run, but:

SLOW MOTION

BRRRRRAAAAAAAAAAPPPPPPP! The flitter's gunfire chews through the bookshelves again, churning up a tornado of debris...

...as Montag spins, grabbing Faber's hand...

...and the gunfire hits Faber, blowing him off his feet, knocking him sideways in a hazy red mist, ripping him out of Montag's grasp, propelling him through the railing...

...as Montag spins, jerked off balance, also crashing through the railing...

...and Faber sails out over the seven story drop inside the building, floating now in a halo of debris...

...and Montag plummets, grabbing the collapsing railing as he vaults out over the drop...

...and Faber falls away from us, drifting away like a dream, down and down through the concentric circles of the landings toward the ground floor far below...

RESUME SPEED

as Montag jerks to a stop, holding on to the shattered railing above his head for dear life, legs kicking wildly above the same sickening drop that Faber just took.

The railing is disintegrating in his grasp, lurching, tearing loose. He looks down, sees the sixth floor landing below his feet. He tries to swing himself in, kicking as his toes barely scrape the edge of the railing below...

...and the railing he's holding rips loose. Montag plummets --

-- but hooks the sixth floor railing with his arms as he falls, slamming to a hard stop, SCREAMING as a few ribs break. He holds on, dazed with shock and pain, trying to find the strength to pull himself up and over, while:

ON THE ROOF

The troopers tuck their heads and detonate the inner circle of bolts -- a RING OF SMALL EXPLOSIONS kicks up...

IN THE BUILDING

...tearing loose a 20-foot diameter circle of the roof which drops awesomely into the building, plummeting past Montag...

ON THE ROOF

...and the troopers rush from their positions, jumping through the smoking hole...

IN THE BUILDING

...and dropping down in a controlled freefall on their harness rigs, laser sights sweeping the air.

Homeless people break cover on various landings, running for their lives. The troopers OPEN FIRE as they plummet on their cables, nailing evacuees on the run, shooting at anything that moves.

Montag hauls himself up and over the railing onto the sixth floor landing. He staggers to his feet and darts off behind the bookshelves into the shadows as the troopers drop into frame from above, their GUNFIRE chewing the area...

HANDHELD

Montag runs, a breathless plunge through madness, turning this way and that, hearing yells and screams, barely avoiding the troopers pounding up the stairs and sweeping the building, FLASHES OF GUNFIRE stuttering and lighting up the shadows.

He comes to a window. His only way out. He grabs an old metal chair, swings it, bashes out the window. CAMERA FOLLOWS HIM out onto a fire escape six floors above the ground...

...and his nemesis the flitter descends into frame before him, gatling guns swiveling up and locking into place.

Montag freezes, nowhere to go, knowing he's dead, and:

WHIIIIIIIRRRRR! The gatling guns spin, out of ammo.

Montag's stunned. Hearing VOICES behind him. A heartbeat of decision, and:

He jumps from the landing, slams into the flitter, arms wrapped around one of the lower turbofan ducts, hanging on for dear life as the flitter bobs and spins, off balance, gyros struggling as it goes twisting out of control, sailing across the street toward the face of the building next door...

INT - BUILDING NEXT DOOR - NIGHT

...and CRASHING AWESOMELY in through a window, dragging Montag with it, a storm of glass, Montag bouncing free as the machine goes banging/cartwheeling off across the floor, plowing through a wall and vanishing, gyros screaming as it keeps trying to fly.

Montag rises, dazed and bleeding, looks out the demolished window. Across the street in the round building, the battle still rages, GUNFIRE FLASHING and echoing within.

He turns away, horrified. CAMERA FOLLOWS as he limps through the shadows, looking for a way out...

EXT - ALLEY - NIGHT

...and bashes through a basement-level window. He crawls out, hugging the shadows as a hovercopter SEARCHLIGHT sweeps by. He can still hear sporadic gunfire from the block over.

Montag runs down the alley, vanishing into the night...

CUT TO:

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

The dispatcher's listening on his headset as the reports come in. He turns, causing shock in the room:

DISPATCHER

We lost him.

All eyes go to a MAN IN A SUIT in the shadows. This is no cop, but a DHS OFFICIAL -- a man of scary power. He steps forward. We don't see his face clearly, but the monitors in the room are reflected in his glasses.

MAN IN SUIT

We're on a live feed. Half the world
is watching. No way do we "lose" him.
(checks his watch)

He dies in ten minutes. Do it.

EXT - CITY - NIGHT

More populated here, a Times Square feel. Montag limps along in the flow of PEDESTRIANS, trying not to be noticed.

EXT - CITY - DIFFERENT AREA - NIGHT

SWAT APCs screech up, followed by a Fire Department CONTROL VAN. MEN jump out, circle to the rear, open the doors. THREE MECHANICAL HOUNDS bound out, racing off in a pack...

AERIAL VIEW

...and we're watching from a HOVERCOPTER as the Hounds streak across the street below us.

PILOT'S VOICE

(heavily filtered)

Air Nine to Command. There go the
Hounds. Tracking now.

The AERIAL VIEW TILTS, following the Hounds...

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

...while Montag limps on. He sees a COP CAR cruising this way, ducks into a crowd watching storefront VIDSCREENS:

ANNOUNCER

...authorities now predicting a
swift conclusion to the manhunt.
Citizens are urged to get involved.
Watch for this man! Guy Montag!
Traitor! Cold-blooded murderer!

A PHOTO OF MONTAG pops up. RACK FOCUS to the real Montag in the midst of the crowd. He moves uneasily among them, cap pulled low, as the vid screens keep blaring:

ANNOUNCER

(touches his earpiece)
Going live now to Dow Phillips on
the scene...Dow, what's happening
there?

A REPORTER pops up, broadcasting live via minicam:

REPORTER

Steve, this was the scene just
moments ago at Civic Center...

Montag turns to see NEW FOOTAGE POP UP: the three Hounds leaping from the van and racing off.

REPORTER

And they're off! Three Hounds --
count 'em, three! -- have been brought
in to deal with the situation! Now
that's unprecedented, but then so is
this crime, which has shaken this
city to its foundations...

Montag's heart goes into his throat. He keeps moving...

THE HOUNDS

race through the streets, ignoring traffic, scattering
pedestrians...

THE HOVERCOPTER

blasts over the city, turbofans SHRIEKING...

POV FROM AIR

of city streets whizzing below us. The Hounds veer off in a
new direction...

PILOT'S VOICE
(heavily filtered)
Changing direction. Heading west.

TRAVELING POV FROM GROUND

of the hovercopter above us. TILT DOWN TO a SWAT APC speeding through the streets with LIGHTS AND SIRENS...

APC TROOPER'S VOICE
(heavily filtered)
Copy that. Heading west.

EXT - STREETCORNER - NIGHT

...as STREETCORNER VIDS give us the breathless play-by-play over an AIR-TO-AIR SHOT of the police hovercopter...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...yes, our Eye In The Sky hovercam's coming through very clearly. You can see the police hovercopter there...and the Hounds below...

...the VIDSCREEN IMAGE ANGLES DOWN, shaky, to the Hounds racing along the street. Montag steps TIGHT INTO FRAME F.G., tearing his gaze from the vids and gazing up toward the sky.

ANNOUNCER
We're told they've changed direction now. Heading west. Toward the river.

Montag's heart sinks. There are hovercopters all over the city. Which one is pursuing him? He forces himself to wait for the light to change, desperate not to attract attention to himself, sweating bullets all the while.

PUNDIT
Steve, these Hounds are amazing technology, with a sense of smell a hundred thousand times keener than a real dog's. This gives them instant DNA recognition, which means they can identify a human being simply by smell...

The light changes. Montag crosses with the crowd...

THE HOUNDS

running, a blur of chrome, a thunder of rubber-padded paws...

MONTAG

walking faster now, jostling in a flow of pedestrians, hearing SIRENS, tossing terrified looks behind him...

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

All eyes on the monitors: an aerial view sweeping over the streets below. Faces tense.

EXT - STREET CORNER - NIGHT

A CITY BUS is turning the corner, passing by us with its side vidscreens blaring --

ANNOUNCER

...we'll be patching over any moment now to Police Command, the nerve center of the hunt, live as it happens. I'm told we can even expect a live feed from the police hovercopter itself...

-- and it wipes from frame, revealing Montag hurrying toward us. He pauses, looking up, hearing a hovercopter getting closer. Still forcing himself not to run, he steps off the curb, moving out across a wide empty boulevard alone...

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

...as the AERIAL VIEW on the monitor screen shows:

A FIGURE crossing a wide empty boulevard below us. Caught in the open. Turning and looking up.

MAN IN SUIT

There.

POLICE CAPTAIN

(on headset)

Target acquired. Repeat, target is acquired.

INT - TV STATION - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER

(listening on earpiece)

This just in! Authorities believe they have spotted Montag! Still waiting to patch through to that police hovercopter...

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

Montag spinning around, panicking, trying to see where his pursuers are coming from, streetcorner vidscreens blaring:

ANNOUNCER

...yes, yes, it's confirmed! Montag has been spotted! Where's our live feed?

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

Everybody riveted to the screens as:

MAN IN SUIT

I want some nice close shots. I
want to see his face.

DISPATCHER

I need those overlays now!

WHIP PAN TO another console, where a TECH is generating DIGITAL
3D SCANS of Montag's face -- side view, front view.

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

A MAN is crossing a wide empty boulevard alone -- not Montag.
Some homeless guy with a pint bottle in a paper bag. He keeps
turning around, looking up, more and more nervous about the
hovercopter up there. Is it following him?

Suddenly, the SEARCHLIGHT stabs down, pinning him in a halo
of glare. He stands frozen, stunned, shielding his eyes...

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

...and ONSCREEN we see the homeless guy below us, gazing up,
taking a few nervous steps back. FLASHING COMPUTER LINES
converge on his face, locking in...

DISPATCHER

Switching to overlay now.

...and the man's face is replaced with a perfectly animated
DIGITAL OVERLAY of Montag's face...

POLICE CAPTAIN

Going live?

MAN IN SUIT

Wait. Put a gun in his hand.

The tech enters a fast command. FLASHING LINES converge again,
putting a digital pistol in the fake Montag's hand.

MAN IN SUIT

Now. Go live.

INT - TV STATION - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER

We've got our feed! Going live now
to the police hovercopter!

WHIP PAN TO A STUDIO MONITOR as the live aerial image pops
up, the fake Montag backing away, face clearly visible...

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

...while the real Montag runs, his terror complete, the city spinning dizzily around him...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We're live! There he is, there's
Montag! That's him! He's running!

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

...while the homeless man also runs, panicking now as the hovercopter buzzes him.

Suddenly, the Hounds veer into view, streaking toward him.

He cuts and runs in another direction, sheer panic now, the beasts pursuing him up the street.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

He's running! He's got a gun!

The Swat APC screeches into view up ahead, cutting him off, the troopers in the turrets aiming assault rifles...

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

...as the real Montag slows, heart pounding...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

He's hemmed in! There's nowhere he
can go!

...and he limps TIGHT TO CAMERA, gazing up.

CAMERA COMES AROUND TO REVEAL a vidscreen on the side of a building. The live feed. A man with a pistol and Montag's face is running. Screaming. The Hounds are catching up...

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

MAN

I AIN'T DONE NOTHIN'! I AIN'T DONE
NOTHIN'!

...and the Hounds leap, taking him down, ripping at him in a flurry of titanium teeth, savaging him, dragging the body...

INT - POLICE COMMAND CENTER - NIGHT

...as everybody watches on the monitors. Softly:

MAN IN SUIT

Ah. Happy ending.

EXT - CITY STREET - NIGHT

As Montag watches, the image goes to a LIVE HANDHELD SHOT of the Swat team running in with rifles poised, surrounding the body, the Hounds now backing off...

ANNOUNCER

Montag is down. You can see the troopers converging. We're awaiting word.

(pauses, listening)

Ladies and gentlemen, Guy Montag is dead. A vicious criminal has been brought to justice. A grave crime against society has been avenged. And you saw it here...live.

MONTAG

stares at the vid, stunned. He turns away, sickened, looks across an empty plaza at:

The river. The stone retaining walls are right there. All he has to do is walk to it.

He starts across the plaza, limping and exhausted.

As he nears the river, it's dawning on him that he's free. He's done it. He's going to make it out of the city.

And then something makes him stop. A sound? An instinct? He turns. Slowly. There, across the plaza:

Beatty's Hound. Scorched chrome and gleaming teeth. Still tracking him. Eyes dilating. Stuttering. Locking in...

HOUND POV

...as Montag stands frozen...the image flashing and stuttering...flashing and stuttering...

THE PLAZA

Montag cuts and runs, making for the river wall.

The Hound launches itself across the pavement to intercept, gears grinding but fast as hell.

Montag gets to the wall, no time to jump, grabs up a pipe and spins to defend himself as the beast leaps --

WHAM! Montag nails the Hound with a terrific blow, sends it tumbling. The beast lands on its feet, paws scrabbling for traction, lunging again. Montag drives it back with a desperate flurry of blows, hitting it again and again --

MONTAG
LET ME GO! GODDAMN YOU!

-- and the Hound snatches the pipe from Montag's grasp, crushing it with his jaws, metal grinding, whipping its head and hurling it clattering away across the ground.

Montag tries for the wall. The Hound leaps, hits Montag. They both go over, momentum carrying them into freefall...

They fall endlessly, Montag holding the beast by the throat, keeping its teeth at bay. SPLASH! They hit the river --

UNDERWATER

-- and sink into the dark waters, still locked in combat. The Hound is inches from Montag's nose, snarling and snapping, trying to take his face off...

...but Montag wrenches free. The Hound lashes in utter demonic fury, for there's one thing Hounds can't do -- float.

It sinks away beneath Montag's feet, vanishing into the dark brackish depths, jaws still snapping...

EXT - RIVER SURFACE - NIGHT

...and Montag breaks the surface, gasping in great lungfuls of air. It's all he can do to keep from drowning as the swift current carries him away into the night...

DISSOLVE TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

leaves the city behind and takes us further and further along the river into the wilderness...

...with Montag clutching a gnarled old log like a shipwreck survivor, too weak to do anything but hold on, the current carrying him along under the stars...

...ever toward the mountains, where a faint smudge of rosy glow promises a coming dawn...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - RIVERBANK - PRE-DAWN

Montag and his log are swept gently into a tangle of other debris, coming to a stop. He's unconscious and shivering, his hands like white claws holding the log in a death grip.

We're looking at a man at the end of his last frayed rope. This would be, literally, his last gasp. Except:

FIGURES ENTER FRAME. Rough-hewn. We won't yet see their faces. They gather at water's edge, peering down at Montag. Two of the men wade into the water, pulling the log closer, prying him free, handing him up toward the others.

Montag is dragged onto the riverbank, though he's not even aware it's happening. He's out of it, shaking with hypothermia and fever...

CUT TO:

EXT - WILDERNESS - DAWN

...and now he's wrapped in skins, being dragged along on a rough wooden litter, head whipping with feverish dreams...

FLASHCUT INSERT

...where a nightmare Hound lunges into camera, a blur of teeth and eyes and procaine tongue...

MONTAG

...and Montag CRIES OUT, flailing at phantoms as they drag him further and further into the mountains...

FADE TO:

INT - TENT - LATE DAY

Very quiet here. CAMERA PANS a spill of waning sunlight across the floor, coming to:

Montag. He's wrapped in bedding up to his chin. A cool damp cloth on his forehead.

His eyes flutter open, trying to focus. He's coming back to us. As coherency returns, he looks around...

...and sees a LARGE MAN hunkered across the tent, staring at him with piercing eyes and a wild tangle of beard. His name is GRANGER. He looks like he's been squatting there for hours.

GRANGER

So. You live. You've been out all day, I was beginning to wonder.

Montag tries to speak, but can't manage it just yet. Granger glances to a LITTLE BOY.

GRANGER

Go on, get the others.

The boy scampers from the tent. Montag becomes aware of a nonsense elderly woman, MAGGIE, as she leans over and gives him a sip of water.

MONTAG

Thank you.

PEOPLE start entering, finding places, hunkering down. Montag finds faces staring at him, not all of them friendly -- WILSON, SYKES, MORALES, PEMBERTON, ROYCE. Whispers are exchanged, as:

MORALES

Maggie?

MAGGIE

Hypothermia almost did him in. And being in that filthy river all night with all these cuts...I had to pump him full of antibiotics.

SYKES

As if we had plenty to spare. We should have left him where he was.

WILSON

Murdered him, you mean?

SYKES

Just let the river have him. That would have been enough.

WILSON

Amounts to the same thing.

GRANGER

That's not the way we do things. Not who we are. You know that.

SYKES

What I don't know is that we can trust him.

PEMBERTON

That broadcast. The manhunt. Could have been faked. A ploy.

SYKES

He could be a plant. They might be looking to crack down on us. Of course they'd have to find us first. What better way?

GRANGER

So you do think we should kill him.

Granger unsheathes a bowie knife, passes it to Sykes.

GRANGER

Go on. You feel most strongly about it. He's all yours.

Sykes holds the knife awkwardly, meets Montag's gaze. Montag glances to Granger, notes his twinkle of amusement as:

GRANGER

Go on, hell. I'm hungry. Dinner's waiting.

SYKES

Dammit. You know that's not what I mean. We can just leave him behind.

VOICE (O.S.)

No, I say do it. Kill him.

Montag looks up as another man enters the tent. Recognition dawns in Montag's face as CAMERA COMES AROUND to reveal:

DILLMAN

Son of a bitch owes me money. I bet he didn't bring it.

MONTAG

Dillman? Dillman?

Dillman comes over, crouches down. Takes Montag's hand.

MONTAG

You're alive.

DILLMAN

More than I can say for you. Caught your act on the late show. Good reception up here on the handhelds. Wow, some climax. Three Hounds and everything. Great special effects.

(leans in)

You could'a just left town like I did.

MONTAG

You could've invited me.

They share a smile. Beat. Dillman turns to the others.

DILLMAN

I know this man. He's a good man. Whatever you do to him, you do to me. If he's left behind, I'll be with him. That's the way it is.

PEMBERTON

Your loyalty is admirable. But.

(glances to Granger)

Is it enough?

The question lingers in the air. And then:

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

He gave me a book once.

All eyes go to the tent flap. Clarisse hovers there, peering in, shy but self-determined. Montag is quietly overcome with emotion at the sight of her. She meets his eyes and smiles.

CLARISSE

That's Mr. Montag. He used to be a fireman.

Looks are traded in heavy silence...

EXT - CAMP - MAGIC HOUR

...and Montag is brought from the tent, Clarisse and Dillman at his side. There are tents, pack mules, campfires. PEOPLE are going about their business, a nomadic tribe of sixty or more. Montag draws his share of stares and curious looks.

Montag pauses, seeing a man before him. The face is familiar, it him takes a moment to realize -- it's Clarisse's father. They stare at each other for a long moment. Softly:

MONTAG

I met your uncle. He saved my life.
I liked him very much.

FATHER

Me too.

Beat. Clarisse's father offers his hand. They shake.

EXT - CAMP - MAGIC HOUR

Various groups are eating around the campfires. We find Montag with Granger and the others:

GRANGER

We're breaking camp after dinner.
Heading further up into the
mountains. Always better to travel
at night. Are you up to it?

MONTAG

I'll keep up.

GRANGER

Winter's coming on. We'll hook up
with a few other groups like ours.
We know some abandoned mineshafts,
some of 'em go pretty deep. They're
not comfortable, but they keep us
alive when the snow falls. We'll
spend the winter there, hibernating
like bears.

MONTAG

And catching up on your reading?

(off their looks)

Faber said you had books. A lot of books. Is that where they are, up in the mines?

ROYCE

Did he say mines? Or minds? Oh dear, a pun.

A few groans. Montag looks around at their faces, confused.

MONTAG

I'm...sorry. I don't understand.

GRANGER

We have books. Yes, you could say that. But not the kind you think. We hid them away where nobody could ever find them. Or burn them.

(looks around)

Go on. Introduce yourselves.

Morales leans forward, speaking to Montag:

MORALES

There was a desert wind blowing that night. It was one of those dry, hot Santa Anas that come down through the mountain passes and curl your hair and make your nerves jump and your skin itch. On nights like that every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen. You can even get a full glass of beer at a cocktail lounge.

(extends his hand)

Raymond Chandler. The Simple Art of Murder. Pleased to meet you.

Montag shakes his hand, still confused, as another man speaks:

ROYCE

No one would have believed, in the last years of the nineteenth century, that human affairs were being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own...

And now other voices join in, coming from all around him, the words mingling and overlapping:

PEMBERTON

Listen. Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941...

WILSON

...the man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed. The desert was the apotheosis of all deserts...

MATHESON

...on those cloudy days, Robert Neville was never sure when sunset came, and sometimes they were in the streets before he could get back...

MAGGIE

...the seller of lightning rods arrived just ahead of the storm. He came along the street of Green Town, Illinois, in the late cloudy October day, sneaking glances over his shoulder...

SYKES

...there was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim, Dim being really dim, and we sat in the Korova Milkbar making up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening...

Montag's looking around, nonplussed. He glances to Dillman, who starts laughing at the look on his face.

DILLMAN

Say hello to the books.

GRANGER

Don't judge us by our covers.

(taps his head)

Each one of us. A book. With the pages locked away where they can never be burned.

(leans over, clasps

Montag's hand)

I answer to the name I was given, Harold Granger. But I have a secret name. Walter Miller, A Canticle for Liebowitz, published 1959. We have

(MORE)

GRANGER (CONT'D)

many secret names here. Look around.
There's H.G. Wells. Mary Shelley.
Jonathan Swift. Lincoln. Shaw.
Darwin. Also Matthew, Mark, Luke
and John.

(beat)

Tell me, fireman. What's your secret
name going to be?

MAGGIE

He had this on him. Still damp, but
it'll dry...

She tosses the paperback of "David Copperfield" to Granger.

GRANGER

Ah. David Copperfield. Dickens.
Good one. But thick. You'll have
your work cut out for you.

Granger tosses the book. Montag catches it. Off his look, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - MOUNTAIN SLOPE - NIGHT

The tribe comes slowly up the slope of a mountain pass by the
light of a full moon, ragged knots of people and pack animals.

Thirty miles behind them is the city, spread out below in an
ocean of lights.

MONTAG (O.S.)

"Chapter one. I am born. Whether I
shall turn out to be the hero of my
own life, or whether that station
will be held by anybody else, these
pages must show..."

Montag appears, coming toward us, the paperback in his hands.
He's got a penlight on it, speaking the words aloud:

MONTAG

"To begin my life with the beginning
of my life, I record that I was
born, as I have been informed and
believe, on a Friday, at twelve
o'clock at night. It was remarked
that the clock began to strike, and
I began to cry, simultaneously..."

His voice trails off. A SOUND has been building, unnoticed at
first, but now loud enough to make him stop and look up.

People all along the slope are also pausing, also gazing up.

A SHRIEKING SOUND is tearing the sky, turning the world hushed and eerie.

Montag sees glowing VAPOR TRAILS forming in the stratosphere high above, lit by the moon.

Streaking overhead. Toward the city.

And then, from a great distance, a WAILING SOUND drifts from the city, rising and falling. CIVIL DEFENSE SIRENS.

INT - HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Millie's in bed, watching TV, half dozing. She rises, hearing the SIRENS. She's drawn toward the window, wondering what on earth that sound is...

EXT - MOUNTAIN SLOPE - NIGHT

Montag sees one of the vapor trails break out of formation, separating from the others and descending now in gentle arc toward the city, drifting as silently as thistledown.

A PINPOINT OF LIGHT begins to glow brighter and brighter at the head of the falling vapor trail, glimmering and halating, almost like an angel being born.

Montag and the others watch in wonder, still not making sense of what they're seeing...

INT - HOTEL - NIGHT

Millie comes to the window, gazing out at the city. A BRILLIANT GLOW builds from the sky, descending to earth. She looks up, her face becoming childlike, enchanted...

EXT - MOUNTAIN SLOPE - NIGHT

...and Montag suddenly realizes:

MONTAG

(softly)

Oh my God...

GRANGER

(also realizing)

DON'T LOOK AT THE LIGHT! DON'T LOOK
AT THE L--

Light. Flashing into existence over the city like a silent sun, or the bang at the beginning of creation, stunning and beyond comprehension. The world turns white before us like a million flashbulbs going off at once, turning the people and animals on the mountain slope into silhouettes, mules bucking, men and women falling and throwing themselves to the ground.

Granger is caught looking at the detonation, screaming and clapping his hand over his eyes...

THE CITY - EXTREME SLOW MOTION

...as a wave of holy white fire sweeps through the canyons of concrete and steel, shattering buildings like crystal vases, taking bridges off their moorings, turning the river to steam, toppling towers, ripping trains off their tracks, melting glass and beam and rivet to slag...

INT - HOTEL - NIGHT (SLO-MO)

...and Millie never has time to scream as the glare blows through the window and sends her sailing on a wind of white fire, the walls collapsing and taking flight, a flaming bedside lamp hurtling through frame...

EXT - MOUNTAIN SLOPE - NIGHT

...and Montag pulls his face off the ground as the initial glare subsides enough to see, staring in horror, the ROAR of the detonation now rolling across the mountains like a thousand claps of endless thunder...

MONTAG

(a whisper)

Millie.

THE CITY - EXTREME SLOW MOTION

...and the fire expands ever onward, pushing before it a tidal wave of perfect pristine technology now reduced to flaming debris in the roaring heart of a nuclear furnace, all the great works of humankind now undone...

EXT - MOUNTAIN SLOPE - NIGHT

...and Montag gets to his feet, staring in awe.

A HUGE MUSHROOM CLOUD is erupting from the glare, rising into the sky.

People around him are huddled, sobbing, disoriented. A few others also get to their feet, watching.

The shockwave of wind arrives, turning the mountain slope into a momentary hurricane, trees whipping in a frenzy, knocking some people back off their feet. Montag covers his face with his hands, protecting his eyes. As the wind begins to dissipate, he hears:

DILLMAN (O.S.)

Montag! Montag!

Montag looks down the slope. There, far below, stands Dillman. His arms are spread wide, his face turned toward the mushroom cloud, his teeth bared in a grimace of what may be either sheer terror or joyous exultation. Let's face it -- in this moment, Dillman's gone just a little bit insane:

DILLMAN
(bellowing)
HISTORY BEGINS WITH US!

Montag turns, sees people shaking and crying, dazed with shock. Pemberton's running by, wild-eyed and incoherent. Montag grabs him, spins him around. One lens of the man's eyeglasses is cracked down the center.

MONTAG
Which way are the winds blowing?

PEMBERTON
Wind? What? I...I don't...what?

GRANGER
West. Prevailing winds are west.
The fallout will blow away from us.

Montag sees Granger on the ground, hands shaking before his sightless eyes. He lets Pemberton go, comes over.

MONTAG
Granger?

GRANGER
I'm blind, fireman. I saw the light.

Montag crouches, offers his hand, gentle:

MONTAG
I'll lead you.

Granger takes Montag's hand, squeezes it. His other hand finds Montag's face, fingers seeking.

GRANGER
Lead? Yes, why not? The fireman
will lead.

SYKES
Lead? Lead where? What are you
talking about?

Others are gathering. Clarisse appears, helping Montag get Granger to his feet.

MONTAG
The mines. You said they were deep.

GRANGER

Pray they are. It's going to be a
long winter. Longer than we thought.

Montag glances around. A lot of faces are suddenly looking to him, seeking answers or reassurance. Their fear and uncertainty surround him.

MONTAG

You heard him! Gather your things!
Help the injured! Grieve later!
We've got a long way to go! Move!

They do. People up and down the slope prepare to move on, gathering their things, helping the injured.

Montag glances to Clarisse. She's clutching Granger's arm, ready to help guide him.

MONTAG

turns, taking one last look at his city, a hot wind still rippling his clothes.

THE MUSHROOM CLOUD is rising higher and higher, godlike above the fading glare, a roiling pillar of fire bellowing into the heavens.

DISTANT FLASHES begin appearing here and there on the horizon. More nuclear explosions, but much too far away to see.

AS CAMERA CLOSES IN on Montag, we hear him speaking his most quiet and precious thoughts for the final time...

MONTAG'S VOICE (V.O.)

Fire is bright. Fire is clean. Fire
sweeps away the clutter of the
past...and provides a bright and
shining future.

...and as we END ON A FINAL TIGHT CLOSEUP, we see tiny pinpoints of nuclear fire reflected in his eyes...

MONTAG'S VOICE (V.O.)

It is good to burn. This is what I
have been taught. This is what I
know.

(beat)

It is all I need to know.

FADE OUT