

NIGHTMARE TALENT AGENCY

Written by

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EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

Los Angeles steams in the crisp morning light. Heat lightening flashes but no rain follows. The sky brightens.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

WINSTON BEAUMONT, an average looking man in his 30's, steps from room 212 into a two-toned mint green hallway.

He wears an elaborate RAT SUIT, with a plaid checked vest. He holds the head under his arm.

A plain honey-blond in a cotton dress appears at the end of the hall. She walks to the door across from his, a pink and white box in her hands.

Winston leans against his door and watches her approach.

WINSTON  
Morning Riley.

RILEY  
(she looks down)  
Oh, hi.

RILEY drops her keys. He watches her pick them up.

WINSTON  
You've got some powder on you.

She looks at her dress. White powder stains form a delicate, almost intentional pattern.

RILEY  
It's flour. I like your vest.

She pushes into her apartment and closes the door. Winston stares a moment then shuffles down the hall.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Winston waves goodbye to a taxi driver as he steps to the curb in front of a tall building with elaborate double doors.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

A long, high arched lobby stretches out in front of Winston. A huge sign read "Finesse Features". He walks to a pair of elevators, one service and one ornate.

A group of well dressed men and women stand in front of the ornate doors. The men wear three piece suits, the women colorful dresses. They all hold scripts.

MAN 1

Oh my gods SHE's pregnant.

WOMAN 1

...from Nebraska, I think. I don't know, there's a lot of waving wheat and such.

MAN 1

Oh my GOD, she's pregnant.

WOMAN 2

Anything beats New York. All those elevated lines. A girl could get the spins.

MAN 2

At least you don't get the pipes. Even with the clove tobacco my head aches for days.

MAN 1

...she's PREGNANT

WOMAN 1

(waves her hands)

I had to smoke a pipe once. Christ, there was a lot of makeup on that job. The old biddy having the dream was 70 if she was a day.

Winston turns to a MAN LOUNGING in a chair behind him.

WINSTON

Doubles. They'd curdle cream with a glance if you let them.

LOUNGING MAN

If you say so. Got a cigarette?

Winston shakes his head. A scorching, vibrant, and kinetic PLATINUM BLONDE approaches the group.

GIRL 2

Vivian, it's about time. You're almost late.

MAN 3

(To the girl)

It's all that powder she wears.

VIVIAN

Not an inch of it on me, and there never will be. We in the know call it a natural glow.

Winston stares hard at her as their voices fade. She flirts with looking in his direction, but doesn't quite.

The far elevator lights DING. A uniformed operator pulls the door open.

SLICK OPERATOR

Going up.

Winston watches them file onto the elevator. Vivian is last, and does a little hop through the doors.

After a moment the elevator in front of him GROANS to a stop. A man in a shabby uniform opens the doors.

SHABBY OPERATOR

Going down.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Winston stares at the long shadow he casts. The shabby operator pulls the doors closed.

WINSTON

My silhouette is ridiculous.

The operator nods. Winston takes a crumpled pack of cigarettes out of his vest pocket and lights it.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

I haven't really slept in three months. Tried everything. Long walks, warm milk, cold showers. Women, every once and a while. Booze. You'd be amazed at how much time backs up on you when you don't sleep. You get piles and piles of the stuff. And you know what?

The operator gazes straight ahead. Winston exhales at him.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

You find out there's nothing you can do with it. Not a damn thing. Can't trade it in, can't sell it off. You just own it and that's that.

The operator waves the smoke from his face.

WINSTON (CONT'D)  
I was lying about the women, by the way. Not the booze though. Ever been drunk and not pass out? Now that's a lousy hobby. I bet you've never known a real hangover.

The elevator grinds to a slow halt a little below B1-0.

WINSTON (CONT'D)  
When did elevators stop working?

The operator fiddles with the handle and the elevator hiccups to it's floor.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Winston extinguishes his cigarette in a brass tray as he steps off the elevator in to a long, dreary hallway.

He walks to the only door in sight, at the end of the hall. Pebbled glass reads "Chase Brady: Nightmare Talent Agency."

INT. AGENCY RECEPTION - DAY

Shabby couches line two walls of a run-down, wood paneled reception area. An empty water tank rests beside a door that reads "Chase Brady."

A dolled up BRUNETTE with a red slash of lipstick for a mouth, and a pony tail pulled tight off her forehead, sits at a desk that faces the door.

She cradles a phone on her shoulder and waves her finger at Winston as he walks in.

An assortment of HOPEFULS sit on the couches, holding pink sides. They look up briefly at Winston. But only briefly.

He sits on the edge of the desk. A brass nameplate reads "Regina Marie"

REGINA MARIE  
Mr. Brady only sees new clients on Tuesday and Thursday mornings...  
Yes, that's right.

She holds the phone away from her ear and scowls.

WINSTON  
Nobodies ever very happy to see me.

REGINA MARIE  
You make a cameo in one celebrities  
pipe-dream and all of the sudden  
the worlds on your schedule.

She puts the phone back to her ear.

REGINA MARIE (CONT'D)  
No, I'm sorry it will have to be  
Thursday. Yes, that's right. Today  
is Tuesday.

WINSTON  
Jeez.

REGINA MARIE  
(she writes something on a  
pad)  
Yes, I'll be sure to give him the  
message...Yes, I'm sure he knows  
the man you mentioned.  
(she hangs up)  
Not that it matters.

WINSTON  
Someone getting cute with you?

REGINA MARIE  
Well, well, well. Winston Beaumont.  
I haven't seen you in weeks.

WINSTON  
I was on a long job. Recurring,  
you know.

REGINA MARIE  
Repeat performances?

WINSTON  
No, thankfully. The guy made some  
progress. I have to say, doll  
face, some guys have weird  
anxieties.

REGINA MARIE  
And some "Players" are supposed to  
have buttoned lips.

WINSTON  
Well I -

One of the hopefuls slowly approaches the desk. He's skinny, tall, and wears a slightly purple suit.

HOPEFUL

Excuse me one moment, if you don't mind. You look awfully familiar. Have we met?

WINSTON

I've been around.

HOPEFUL

Yes, I as well. I was with Brooker & Crate. You have heard of them?

WINSTON

Sure.

HOPEFUL

Perhaps I made an appearance one long and nervous evening?

WINSTON

Not likely. Don't dream myself. Never did, even before the contract.

HOPEFUL

Hmm. Well, you do seem familiar to me. Perhaps it's the suit.

WINSTON

Could be, yeah.

HOPEFUL

Well...

Winston stares at him until he returns to the couch.

WINSTON

(quietly)

What's so scary about him?

REGINA MARIE

You didn't notice?

Winston shakes his head.

REGINA MARIE (CONT'D)

He doesn't move his arms when he walks.

WINSTON  
Well...that is unwholesome. And  
how have your nights been lately?

REGINA MARIE  
Now now.

WINSTON  
You're a peach. He in?

REGINA MARIE  
Yeah, go ahead. He's with Annie  
and Darwin.

WINSTON  
What did I tell you? A peach.

Winston lights a cigarette and hands it to her. She waves it  
at him as the phone rings again.

REGINA MARIE  
Chase Brady's office.

He makes his way to Chase's office door. Before opening it  
he hangs his RAT HEAD on a coat rack.

INT. CHASE'S OFFICE - DAY

CHASE BRADY, a combed-over, almost tacky man whose too fat  
for his suit, sits with his feet on a cluttered desk.

Dream Player head-shots line the walls - Winston in full rat  
suit, DARWIN the alien, ANNIE APE - and scripts are piled on  
almost every available surface.

A pale green, black & white TV glows in the corner with the  
sound off.

Darwin, a lanky man in a tight suit with a huge Alien head,  
and Annie Ape, wave blue index cards.

CHASE  
(motions Winston to a  
seat)  
You want better placement shop your  
rat-bastard acts somewhere else.  
The Brady agency runs it clean.

WINSTON  
What'd you pull this time?



ANNIE APE  
(holds up the card)  
Silverlake Preacher.

WINSTON  
Evolution? Not so bad.

DARWIN  
(throws his card on  
Chase's desk)  
Another General. Oooo, creative.  
Roswell. You read this guys stuff?  
I've seen better copy in soap ads.

Winston flops on to a plush leather chair in the corner.

WINSTON  
I had a soap job once. You're  
better off with the General.

Chase ushers the other two out.

CHASE  
Get outta here. And I don't want  
to hear you're soft selling  
anything, you two. Read the lines  
and for pete's sake be  
professional.

DARWIN  
(over his shoulder)  
Yeah yeah.

Chase leans on the edge of his desk, lights a cigar, and  
stares at Winston. Winston gestures at him.

CHASE  
And where the hell have you been  
the past week?

WINSTON  
Out in Tahoe. You booked me on  
that agoraphobic job.

CHASE  
That ended last week and you know  
it. And what's with the suit?

WINSTON  
What do you mean? I didn't wear it  
for my health. It was in the  
script.

CHASE

You ever open your mail? I sent you green-sheets this weekend. Never mind, though. Might as well keep it on. This is sort of a fussy job.

A loud retching sound comes from behind a door in the corner of the room.

WINSTON

A.C?

CHASE

A.C. I swear I don't know why I keep him on. He's been passed out in there for the last three hours.

WINSTON

(loudly)

But where are the clowns? Send in the clowns...

The door opens and AUGUSTUS CLOWN staggers into the room, bottle of whiskey in hand.

He's an imposing man in nightmarish clown makeup. His eyes are red, his makeup streaked.

AUGUSTUS

...they're already here. Beaumont, have a drink kiddo. Have a drink with your old pal.

CHASE

Winston.

Winston looks at a clock on the wall, which reads 9:30 am.

WINSTON

I'm not on the clock just yet. Besides, I'm on the lot today, right?

Chase grumbles. Augustus grabs a glass and pours Winston a drink. He drinks from the bottle.

AUGUSTUS

Been a rough couple of days. This one tell you about the near miss?

WINSTON

Getting yourself into trouble again?

CHASE

This lunatic got picked up in a raid. I had to call Moss and Hickman to keep his name out of the trades.

WINSTON

The cops? What, did you step into some poor little kids birthday dream?

AUGUSTUS

(cackles)

Nah, just a little of the grown up stuff. Fetishes and all that.

Augustus flops down on Chase's couch and hugs the bottle to his chest.

AUGUSTUS (CONT'D)

There are some screwy broads out there, let me tell you.

CHASE

It's not funny, A.C. You're not licensed for sex dreams and you know it.

WINSTON

Not anymore, anyway. How's the old song go?

(mimics A.C)

First victim of -

AUGUSTUS

(interrupts)

First victim of the censor board back in the sixties, and you god damn know it. Those rat bastard politicians have never looked too kindly on our industry. The second we started having fun, they tried to shut us down.

WINSTON

Aw, you just miss getting laid.

CHASE

Pornographic dreams need to be regulated and you know it. You wouldn't sell booze to a 15 year old, would you?

AUGUSTUS  
Wouldn't I?

CHASE  
We don't need to go over this again. People can't be trusted with their own dreams. That's where we come in -

WINSTON  
(slaps his palm with his fist)  
- and we run it clean. Yeah, we've heard.

CHASE  
Tell me you disagree?

WINSTON  
(shrugs)  
No, you're right. I don't.

AUGUSTUS  
Pansies, the both of you. You let them start calling the shots, they'll shut us down one day. Mark my words. Poof, we'll all be out of a job.

CHASE  
Don't be so dramatic.

AUGUSTUS  
You boys don't know, you haven't crossed the line. They'll fine us right out of business, or worse - expose us. People wouldn't like that much would they?

CHASE  
You're paranoid.

AUGUSTUS  
Oh? What about that guy?

He motions at the TV. A squat, bald, vicious looking man stands in front of a podium in all his black & white glory.

CHASE  
Senator Dixon.

WINSTON

Turn it up.

AUGUSTUS

Don't bother. We already know what he's saying.

Chase leans over and turns the volume up. The rounded screen glows with a dim light.

LESLIE DIXON (ON TV)

...and we can't just look to foreign shores for future threats. We have to be responsible right here, right now. Science can provoke the wrath of god, technology can bring the stench of brimstone along with it...

WINSTON

Enough of that blowhard. I'm due on set soon.

Chase stares at the TV for a moment before he turns it off. Augustus passes out.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

What did you want to talk about?

CHASE

This.

He sits down at his desk and tosses a script at Winston. The title reads "Chemotherapy - The Next Chapter."

Winston tosses it right back at him.

WINSTON

I don't do medical work, Chase. No cancer, no teeth. Nothing like that.

CHASE

Beaumont...

WINSTON

I shouldn't have to keep telling you this.

CHASE

It's a big deal, Beaumont. A researcher. A scientist. He figures most of his work out in his dreams.

WINSTON

Who wrote the script? Have him send a letter.

CHASE

It doesn't work like that. It's not like we know what he'll figure out. We're supposed to nudge him in the right direction, that's all. It's a huge job.

WINSTON

No medical work.

CHASE

(frowns)

At least think about it. You're one of the best Players I have.

WINSTON

What can I say? I just have kind eyes.

CHASE

Get outta here, then. Don't forget to pick up your travel vouchers from Regina.

WINSTON

Will do. Want I should roust the layabout?

He motions at Augustus, who clutches the bottle in his sleep.

CHASE

I can manage him. Go on, beat feet.

Winston pauses at the door to salute Chase. Chase grumbles and reaches for a script.

INT. AGENCY RECEPTION - DAY

Winston enters and finds Regina Marie in a heated discussion with the hopeful in the purple suit.

REGINA MARIE

Sir, I'm not going to tell you again. Mr. Brady will see you when he see's you. I don't care how they did things at Brooker and Crate. You're not at Brooker and Crate.

Winston leans against the wall behind her desk.

WINSTON

Need me to get heavy with this feather weight?

HOPEFUL

Sir, I am just objecting to the duration of my stay in this waiting area. I have credentials all over town. Some would offer up more than a few prayers to utilize my particular service.

REGINA MARIE

Yeah? Well kneeling bags my nylons. Hit the bricks, lanky. Mr. Chase won't be requiring your services after all.

The Hopeful opens his mouth to say something but Winston shakes his head. He shoots them a contemptuous glance and walks to the door, his arms motionless at his sides.

WINSTON

That IS off putting though. You got the travel vouchers?

REGINA MARIE

Right here. What do you say, want to grab some lunch tomorrow? I know a place that serves whiskey with blueberry pie.

She hands him an envelope.

WINSTON

We'll see. Maybe I'll get lucky with one of the doubles. They spring for much nicer gin-joints than you do.

REGINA MARIE

And why aren't you in that racket again?

WINSTON

Guess no one else looks like me.

He pulls his rat head on as he exits.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

A checkered cab pulls up to the main doors. Men and Women filter in and out, carrying poles and cables.

Winston steps out of the cab and shuffles in.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Winston casually moves through the bustling set. A DIRECTOR with a felt cap stands near an old camera, talking to someone who holds a light meter.

A makeup and hair team fawn over an attractive, bored redhead sitting in front of a mirror lined with bright bulbs.

Winston lingers by a long table filled with snacks. He takes his rat head off and wipes his brow. The director sees him.

DIRECTOR

You. Where have you been? At least you brought the suit. I wasn't sure you got the message in time. Get over to makeup.

Winston moves slowly toward the Red Head.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Not over there. Over there. We just want to fluff up your suit.

WINSTON

Can do, boss. Any new pages?

The Director ignores him. Winston moves to a solitary chair by the -

WARDROBE DEPARTMENT

- where a middle aged man starts combing his suit.

WINSTON

Now that's a red-head, don't you think? Pale as you please and you can count the freckles on her on one hand. Just a little scatter on the cheeks. I'll lay odds I get two sentences out of her, maybe three. What do you say, want to take that bet?



The Middle Aged Man simply takes the rat head and moves off to a table to comb it.

WINSTON (CONT'D)  
Not a gambler, huh? Fair enough.

A startled looking ASSISTANT runs across the scene, dropping scattered pages as he goes.

ASSISTANT  
Five minutes. Actors to set,  
please. Five minutes, actors to  
set.

Winston retrieves the rat head and walks over to the -

SET

and checks out a painted backdrop of a curving mountain road is set on two rollers behind a convertible car.

The car itself is set on wooden planks with springs under them. Poles stick out of each of the tires.

ASSISTANT  
(runs past the car)  
No smoking on set please. We need  
the double, what's it looking like?

WINSTON  
(waves his cigarette)  
It's in the script.

He takes a place in the passenger seat and sits smoking, with the rat head on his lap.

DIRECTOR  
Put that out until we tell you to  
light it. Can we get the ginger  
girl over here please?

ASSISTANT  
(rushes to the car with  
the red-head in tow)  
Double is on the set. What's it  
looking like?

He looks into the -

FRONT OF THE CAR

- as the red-head slides in next to Winston. She takes a long look at him and sets about fussing with her lipstick.

WINSTON

Names Beaumont. Been on the job long?

She ignores him.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

I've been at it about five years now. Used to date a Double back in college and she turned me on to it. Been downhill ever since.

DOUBLE

Izzat so?

She snaps the compact shut and sets about fussing with her lipstick in the car mirror.

WINSTON

Say, ginger, you wouldn't happen to know -

The Assistant runs in front of the car and opens a slate.

ASSISTANT

Quiet on the set, please. Actors on their marks.

Winston lights a cigarette, places it on the dash, and puts on his rat head. The Assistant holds the slate as people settle.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Roll sound.

SOUND GUY (O.S.)

Speeding.

ASSISTANT

Roll camera.

D.P (O.S.)

Rolling.

ASSISTANT

Round the Bend, take one.

DIRECTOR  
Lets get this over with.  
And...action.

The Double SCREAMS and holds her hands up. Four men shake the car back and forth by the poles. Winston hunches forward and turns the wheel wildly.

The backdrop scrolls forward as two men turn the wheels on its side. Without warning the Director yells -

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
Cut. Cut cut cut. Back to one,  
dammit. We're getting a glare off  
the windshield.

People scramble around the car as the two men roll the backdrop to it's starting point.

ASSISTANT  
Two minutes people.

WINSTON  
(slightly muffled)  
As I was saying...

DOUBLE  
Sorry, can't hear you.

WINSTON  
(louder)  
I was just going to ask if you knew-

DOUBLE  
(motions at her ears)  
- can't hear you at all.

WINSTON  
(yelling)  
A blonde girl, about yay high...  
Really pale skin. Almost glows.

DOUBLE  
I simply cannot hear a word you're  
saying.

Winston is about to remove the rat head when the assistant steps in front of the car with a slate.

ASSISTANT  
Going again. Round the bend, take  
two.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)  
Roll sound.

SOUND GUY (O.S.)  
Speeding.

ASSISTANT  
Roll camera.

D.P  
Rolling.

DIRECTOR  
And... action.

The Double lets out another high pitched scream.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Winston stands at the entrance to the warehouse as the crew pack up. The sun is still a bright stain in the sky.

A FEMALE ASSISTANT approaches him.

FEMALE ASSISTANT  
Mr. Beaumont? Winston Beaumont?

WINSTON  
Yeah?

FEMALE ASSISTANT  
Phone call for you.

WINSTON  
Thanks.

INT. WAREHOUSE. DAY

Winston approaches a rotary phone mounted on the wall. In the distance the Double flirts with the Director.

WINSTON  
Hell-oh.

AUGUSTUS (V.O.)  
(through a din)  
Beaumont, kiddo, how'd it go?

WINSTON  
It went, lets leave it at that.

AUGUSTUS (V.O.)  
Sounds about right. What say you  
mosey on over to my place? We're  
getting Darwin loaded.

WINSTON  
Pass.

AUGUSTUS (V.O.)  
Don't be that way, cutie pie. Some  
people you might want to meet are  
on their way over. Could be big  
bucks in it for you, kid.

WINSTON  
I'll come and drink with your  
sleaze merchants another night. I  
got a bed to lie in for a few  
hours.

AUGUSTUS (V.O.)  
Marie will be crushed.

WINSTON  
(pauses)  
Reg is over there?

AUGUSTUS (V.O.)  
Guess you'll never know pal. She'd  
want it on the hush hush, wouldn't  
she?

WINSTON  
(smiles)  
All right, tough guy. Give her my  
regards. Or I'll do that myself  
tomorrow, when I see her outside  
your fantasies.

AUGUSTUS (V.O.)  
(laughs)  
You're loss.

The line goes dead. Winston catches one last look of the  
Double, who pouts all alone.

EXT. BACON CHAMBERS - DAY

Winston steps out of the same checkered cab and walks up the  
steps of a green building. The words "Bacon Chambers" are  
carved in the stone above the door.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Winston walks slowly to his door, the rat head balanced on his brow. He reaches into his vest pocket for his keys.

He's about to use them when he notices Riley's door is slightly ajar. He pauses. He tucks the rat head under his arm and approaches the door.

WINSTON

Riley? Hey Riley, you in there?

INT. RILEY'S PLACE - DAY

A small, well kept studio apartment. Clean. Spare. Winston's furry, costumed hand slowly pushes the door open a little.

WINSTON

Riley, hey. It's Winston. From across the hall. I'm coming in, I hope that's OK.

He pushes the door open completely and peers in.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

Riley?

Nothing. He slips in and sets the rat head down on a chair by the door. He takes two steps before turning to shut the door behind him.

He looks around. A purse sits on the kitchen counter, a set of keys on a small table by the open window.

He takes a few more steps and stops when he hears a DRIP-DRIP from the bathroom.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

Hey Riley, you home?

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP. He notices a small sliver of light from the bathroom door and edges toward it.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

(quietly in sing-song)

Ri-ley...hey.

He taps on the bathroom door and it swings open on a reflection of Winston in the mirror. A slight red stain runs into the sink. He steps in to the -

BATHROOM

- and catches sight of a straight razor open on the sink. It's stained with a few drops of blood.

He turns to the claw foot tub and sees --

-- Riley, fully dressed, hair spread out on the tub behind her. The bathtub is filled with ice. She has a thin red-ribbon slash across her neck.

Aside from this, and the thin trickle of blood in the sink, the bathroom is immaculately clean.

WINSTON (CONT'D)  
Christ. Riley.

He moves to the tub. Blood swirls around the icy water.

He reaches to touch her but stops. He pulls his gloves off and drops them.

WINSTON (CONT'D)  
No... god damn it no.

He reaches for her and stops again. A dull thud sounds, like the trunk of a car closing. He freezes.

After a pause he gets up and grabs his gloves. Water drips from the faucet. After one last look he backs out the door.