

THE HAPPINESS WAR
A work in progress
(Adapted from Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*)

Characters:

AUTHOR- man or woman
MONTAG- man or woman
MILLIE- woman
CLARISSE: woman
STONER: man or woman
ELIZABETH: woman
FABER: man or woman
MARTHA: woman

Scene 1

(AUTHOR lights a match. He has a glass of scotch in his hand. And a typewriter on the table in front of him. *Fahrenheit 451* is also open before him.)

AUTHOR: I like libraries. That's how it started. I was that kid everyone laughs about on TV... gangly, gawky, glasses. My father was a telephone lineman, and my family travelled around a lot. Everything changed every couple of years, you know, new house new school, new friends. But libraries were the constant. Everywhere I stopped, the first chance I had I was down the local library. The old woman that was the librarian and it was always an old woman then, frowned at the number of books I carried away. Always more books than kid. Then, later, I read about the burning of the great library of Alexandria..... that's how it all started. My story. I like libraries....and fire.

(match flares)

BEATTY: What is there about fire that is so lovely Montag? No matter what age we are, what draws us to it? It's perpetual motion; the thing man wanted to invent but never did. Or almost perpetual motion. If you let it go in, it'd burn our lifetimes out. What is fire? A mystery. Scientists give us gobbledegook about frictions and molecules. But they don't really know. Its real beauty is that it destroys responsibility and consequences. A problem gets too burdensome, burn it. Now, Montag, you are a burden. And fire will lift you off my shoulders, clean, quick, sure; nothing to rot later. Antibiotic, aesthetic, practical.

(LIGHT ON MONTAG. He begins to dress)

AUTHOR: It was a pleasure to burn.
It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, blackened and changed. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting in its venomous kerosene upon the

world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history.

MONTAG: It was a real pleasure to burn. Number 451, that was me. Watching the flames, I just wanted to shove a bloody marshmallow on a stick and sing a song.

AUTHOR: While the flapping pigeon winged books died on the porch. Montag grinned the fierce grin of all humans singed and driven back by flame.

MONTAG: In the mirror, back at the fire station, I looked like one of those old black-faced minstrels, Al Jolson, you know. And even later, when I tried to sleep, that smile would still be there, like a mask gripped tight to my face. That smile, you know, it was branded on. It never went away.

AUTHOR: A fireman. After the fire. On her way home.

SCENE 2

(street scene. CLARISSE is letting herself be pulled by the wind. Sees MONTAG and stops)

MON: Of course, you are new neighbour, aren't you?

CLAR: And you must be... the fireman.

MON: That's a strange way of saying it.

CLAR: I'd have known it with my eyes shut.

MON: The kerosene. My wife always complains. You never wash it off completely.

CLAR: No, you don't.

MON: Kerosene is nothing but perfume to me.

CLAR: Does it seem like that, really?

MON: Of course. Why not?

CLAR: Do you mind if I walked back with you? I'm Clarisse McClellan.

MON: Clarisse. Guy Montag. No problem. Anyway, what are you doing wandering around at this hour? How old are you anyway?

CLAR: Well, I'm seventeen and I'm crazy. My uncle says the two always go together. When people ask your age, he says, always say seventeen and insane. Isn't this the best time of night to walk? I like to smell things and look at things, and sometimes stay up all night, walking, and watching the sun rise. (pause) You know. I'm not afraid of you at all.

MON: Why should you be?

CLAR: Well, most people are. Afraid of firemen, I mean. But you're just a man, after all.

MON: Gees, thanks.

CLAR: How long have you worked as a fireman?

CLAR: Since I was twenty. Ten years ago.

CLAR: Do you ever read the books you burn?

MON: (laughs) that's against the law!

CLAR: Oh, of course.

MON: It's just a job. Good honest work. Monday burn Milton, Wednesday burn Winton, Friday burn Faulkner. Burn em to ashes, then burns the ashes. That's our official slogan.

CLAR: That's a cool slogan. Tell me, is it true that long ago firemen put fires *out* instead of starting them.

MON: No. Take my word for it. Houses have always been fire-proof.

CLAR: Strange. I heard that a long time ago, in the olden days, fires used to start by accident and they needed you guys to stop the flames.

MON laughs.

CLAR: why are you laughing?

MON: I don't know. Why?

CLAR: You laugh when I haven't been funny and you always answer right off. You never stop to think what I asked you.

MON: You are kind of weird, you know that, don't you/. Don't you have any respect?

CLAR: I'm sorry. I don't mean it to be insulting. I just love to watch people too much. I guess.

MON: well, doesn't that mean anything to you? (Pointing at his umber)

CLAR: Yes (whispered) Have you ever seen the jet cars racing down the highways?

MON: You're changing the subject.

CLAR: yes. I sometimes think the driver must not know what flowers or grass is because they have never actually seen them slowly. If you showed a driver a green blur he would say "oh yes, that's grass". A pink blur> A rose garden! White blur- a house. Cows are brown blurs. My uncle drove slowly on one of those hyperways once. Sixty kilometres an hour. They jailed him for two days. Isn't that funny? And sad too.

MON: You think too much.

CLAR: I'm never walled in, so I've lots of time to think crazy things I guess. Here's something else I know. There's dew on the grass in the morning. And if you look very carefully, there's a man in the moon..... I'll see you later.

MON: Hey, wait. Can I ask you a question?

CLAR: Fire way.

MON: Very funny. Your house, why are the lights always on, blazing away all hours of the night.

CLAR: Oh, that's just my mother amend father and uncle sitting round talking. It's like being a pedestrian. My uncle was arrested another time... for being a pedestrian. Oh we are very peculiar. You want to stay away from us. (Pause) Are you happy?

MON: Am I what!

(she tuns off)

Happy!

SCENE 3

(lights down. MONTAG enters house, looks round in darkness. Sees Millie lying with spilled bottle of pills)

MON: Millie. Millie!

(lights up again. MILLIE is plugged into the wall.)

Scene 3a

(Card table)

AUTHOR(sitting at table): And they rushed her to the hospital. You know the scene, body on stretcher, paramedics yelling out instructions, sirens, alarms going, people in coloured clothes running frantically about, code blue, code blue

STONER: Stat!

AUTHOR: And so they pump put her stomach. Then, they have this machine, which cleans out Millie's defective blood. Gives the body a little service, a little oil change....

STONER: pump the sad blood out

CAP: pump the happy blood in

AUTHOR: Just like that

STONER: Snap

SCENE 4

MON: You alright? (pause) Millie are you alright?

MILLIE: Of course I'm alright. I'm very hungry though. I've been eating all morning. Feel like I'm hung-over too. Who was here last night?

MON: A few people.

MILLIE: Thought so. Can't remember. Hope I didn't do anything stupid.

MON: You don't remember do you?

MILLIE: No, I told you. It's a blank.

MON: You took all the pills in your bottle.

MILLIE: No I didn't.

MON: The bottle's empty.

MILLIE: I wouldn't do a thing like that. Why would I do a thing like that?

MON: Maybe you didn't mean to take the whole bottle

MILLIE: I'm telling you I didn't do it. I'm not... I don't want to...

MON: Alright...

MILLIE: I didn't do it.

MON: alright, alright. Ok. (pause) Millie, do you remember how we got together?

MILLIE: Of course I do.

MON: I don't. I've forgotten. I've been trying to remember.

MILLIE: Well I remember.

MON: Tell me about it.

MILLIE: No. It's silly. It's embarrassing, talking about those things. That's so long ago.

MON: You don't remember do you?

MILLIE: I do remember. I told you. I remember. (pause) It was raining. (pause) I remember it was raining. (pause) And there was icecream.

MON: Raining and icecream. (pause) That's what you remember?

MILLIE: Why are you asking me this Guy. You are acting so strange lately. Why for heaven's sake do you want to dredge all that up now? Leave the past alone. You don't want to be looking backwards all the time. That will get you nowhere. (silence)

MON: what's on the wall tonight?

MILLIE: Oh, it's great new hyper-reality show. You'd love it. About a fireman and his wife. Fascinating. It's very scary. Ground breaking stuff Ray. He even thinks about stuff! Ray, when are we going to get the fourth wall hooked up?

MON: I told you. When we've saved up. It costs half my salary.

MILLIE: But we have to get it Ray. Imagine how well reality would look showing on all four walls....

SCENE 5

(LIGHTS DOWN. Lights up on park bench. AUNTIE comes and sits next to MON> share lunch. She hands him a piece of paper. Gets up and goes. Lights down, up on MILLICENT and MONTAG)

MON: Hello.

CLAR Good afternoon kind sir.

MON: You're all wet. You've been walking in the rain.....

CLAR I like the rain. Rain even tastes good.

MON: What do you do? Go around. Try everything once?

CLAR No, sometimes twice. Hey, I'm still crazy. I'm on my way to see the shrink now.

MON: A shrink?

CLAR: A psychiatrist. They made me see him. I didn't want to go. I quite like being crazy actually. He says I'm a regular onion. I keep him busy peeling back the layers.

MON: I think you do need to see someone you know.

CLAR You don't mean that.

MON: No. I don't.

CLAR He wants to know what I do with my time. I tell them I just sit and think. But I don't tell them WHAT I think. That gets them running!

MON: I bet. You're peculiar, but you are interesting. I'll give you that. It's funny. You're seventeen, my wife's thirty, but you seem so much older somehow.

CLAR You are peculiar yourself Mr. Montag. Sometimes I forget you are a fireman. I've seen other fireman, and you are not like them. The other day, when I said that story about the moon, you actually looked at it. No one else does that. You actually put up with me. Talk to me. Most people just walk off in the middle of my stories. You shouldn't be a fireman. It's just not right for you.

AUTHOR: You better go. You'll be late for your appointment.

MON: You better go. You'll be late for your appointment.

(Lights up on AUTHOR)

Scene 6

AUTHOR: And now the Hound. The Mechanical Hound never sleeps, not really. It lies down, but if you watch carefully you can see it quivering gently, gently, humming softly to itself. It is always ready, the Hound, for its essential task: the righteous dispensation of swift and usually cruel justice. And Montag is afraid of the Hound. He thinks it sees things. Inside him.

Scene 7

(MON and CAPTAIN playing cards)

MON: It doesn't like me.

CAP: What, the Hound? Come off it my old son. It doesn't like or dislike anything. It just is. It's like a lesson in ballistics. It has a trajectory that we decide for it. It just follows through. It's a machine mate. The Hound doesn't execute people, we do.

MON: I'm telling you. Last night it jumped at me.

CAP: You're paranoid.

MON: It's trained to react to our DNA right? That means someone could fix the memory, right? To react to me.

CAP: You are paranoid. Relax Guy, you have no enemies here.

(SIREN Goes)

Come on, freedom calls.

Scene 8

(SIRENS continue. Lights up on WOMAN sitting in piles of books)

CAP: Go on.

STONER: Have reason to suspect attic: 2. No Elm, City. E.B.

Are you Elizabeth Blake?

ELIZ: You can't have my books.

STONER: Come on woman. We've doused the bloody place in kero. The whole thing's set to go up.

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

CAP: Come on you stupid woman. You know the law. None of these books even agree with each other. You've locked yourself up with a regular bloody Tower of Babel up here. They're not even real. Come on now. You want to go up on the barbie to?

(ELIZ shakes her head. They start to leave)

MON: You're not leaving her.

STONER: The bitch won't come.

MON: Well, drag her then.

STONER: They always suicide. They're fanatics.

MON: You can come back with me.

ELIZ: No.

STONER: I'm counting to ten. One. Two

MON: please...

STONER: Three, four...

ELIZ: I want to stay here

STONER: Five, six

ELIZ: You can stop counting. (pause. She holds up a lighter)

STONER: Shit! Get the fuck out of here. (They leave quickly)

ELIZ: Go on. (She hands him a book. He goes)

Scene 9

(LIGHTS down. UP ON STATION. CAP AND MON, sitting)

MON: Master Ridley.

CAP: What?

MON: That thing she said, "Master Ridely"

CAP: Ah, yes. A man named Latimer said that to a man name Nicholas Ridley, as they were being burnt alive at Oxford, for heresy, On October 16, 1555. (lights down)

Scene 10

(LIGHT ON Mon's house as he hides the book. And on AUTHOR)

AUTHOR: And that night, with the book ticking like a bomb under his pillow, Mon stayed awake and dreamed of the woman's face as she held up the lighter. And he thought of the Hound....

MON: It's out there tonight. I know it is. I can feel it. If I opened the window...

AUTHOR: He did not open the window.

(LIGHT up on Millie and Martha having a cup of tea. MON enters)

Scene 11

MAR: Good morning Ray.

MON: Hello Martha.

MAR: Not going to work today?

MON: I'm sick.

MILLIE: You're sick? You don't seem very sick. (pause) well, anyway, don't ask me to phone the Captain. You're just afraid he'll talk you out of being sick.

MAR: I hope it's not that new cat flu is it. I hear that's often fatal...

MON: No it's.... what are you doing here anyway Martha?

MILLIE: Martha and I are going to plug in the new Bert Newton show. (pause)

MON: Aren't you going to ask me about last night?

MILLIE: What about last night?

MON: You used to ask me about my work.

MILLIE: What is there to ask? You go to work. You play cards. You burn books. You come back smelling of kerosene and ash and smoke and something else I don't want to even ask about.

MON: Death.

MILLIE: What?

MAR: Well I would like to hear about it. I think being a fireman must be a very noble profession. Defending freedom and all that.

MON: Do you really want to hear about it?

MAR: yes.

MILLIE: Don't.

MON: We burnt a thousand books last night. We burned a woman.

MAR: well..

MON: we burnt copies of Dante and Swift and Marcus Aurelius....

MAR: Wasn't he a terrorist....

MON: something like that. I never read him.

MILLIE: He was a terrorist.

MON: Millie, what would you say if I quit my job? Took leave for a while.

MILLIE: because of that woman and her books?

MON: You should have seen her Millie

MILLIE: She shouldn't have had those books. It was her responsibility. She was breaking the law.

MON: why did she stay? There must be something in those books, something worth staying for.

MAR: She was mad.

MON: No, you didn't see. She was as rational as you or me. Maybe more so, I'm not sure anymore.

((FRONT DOOR VOICE: Mrs. Montag, Mrs. Montag. Someone here)

MILL: Now you've done it. It's the Captain. Come on Martha, let's get plugged.

(CAP and STONE enter)

CAP: I just thought I'd come by and see how the sick man is bearing up.

MON: How'd you know...

CAP: You really are the most innocent fireman I know Montie. Anyway, take the day off, take the week off. As long as you want. As long as you come back, of course.

MON: Of course.

CAP: I hear you've been asking about how things started, the fire business.

MON: Have I/

CAP: History is important. A sense of perspective. We started around the 1900, but it wasn't until photography really took off, then films, television, the web. Visual culture on a grand scale. Things started to have MASS.

STONER: Yeh, mass.

CAP: Before that there was room. Books could belong to few people, be eccentric. But now the world was full of eyes and ears and hidden dangers. Things had to be quicker, simpler, speed up your film, cut down you books, instant Hamlet. Boil it down to the gad, the snap ending

STONE and AUTHOR: Snap

CAP: Things have to be downloaded instantly, quick, quick, Montag, quick. Clic, Pic, Eye, Now, Flick, Rush, Here, Thrill, Swift, Pace, Up, Down, In, Out, Where, Eh, Band, Smack Wallop, Bing, bang, boom. Politics, one page, one column, a soundbite, an image.....school shortened, history, language, literature dropped, only work, work, pleasure has to be instant to, at the touch of a button...

And then came the first War on Terror, now called....

MON: Universal Freedom War.....

CAP: A war we are still fighting, although now it is called....

STONER: The Happiness War...

CAP: yes, Montag mate, you see the trouble with books is that they cause unhappiness. The Koran, the Torah, the Bagavad Gita, The CSIRO well meaning Diet. Names that mean nothing to you now, I know. But these were irritating books in their day. Always a minority that takes exception, causes a stir... lawyers, fat people, blacks, cat-lovers, scientologists, environmentalists, Asians, Italians, Arabs, Jews, French people, real estate agents, netballers, Collingwood supporters....No, much better we have one book.

STONER: The Bible...

CAP: Which no one reads..... Montag. What do people really want?

MON: I don't know what I want...

CAP: Yes, you do.

STONER: To be happy.

CAP: You hear it all the time, don't you? I just want to be happy, they say. Well, they are happy. We provide all their entertainment, sport, fun. Never a dull moment. Nothing too taxing to worry about. Remember the constitution, all men born equal and free. No, we say, all men must be Made equal and free. Free from unhappy questions.

MON: Or we burn them

CAP: Only as a regrettable last resort. It's always their decision. Anyway, we're really on our way out. Just for show now really. Fireworks. Remember that stupid Patriot Act? We thought then that the answer was to restrict the flow of information, censor burnbabyburn. Now we know the answer is just the opposite. Let it flow, all the information you want, right into your bodies as immediate and instant as you can, floods of facts, figures, images, chatter, chatter, chatter, all fast and bright and burning non-stop into your brain...

Until you are consumed by information and

MOBTAG and AUTHOR: happiness.

CAP: We're the Sunshine Boys, Montie you and me, the Dixie Chicks. Anyway, lecture's over. See you tomorrow my old son, shall I then?

MON: Yes.

CAP: oh, by the way, we have a policy. Every now and then, when we see a fireman getting a little bit itchy, curious for knowledge, we let him take a book home for 24 hours.... Let him get it out of his system, scratch the itch. But only for 24 hours. (he leaves)

STONER: That girl you've been talking to.

AUTHOR: Clarisse?

MON: Clarisse? What about her?

STONER: She's dead.

MON: Dead? How?

STONER: Car accident. Very unhappy girl anyway. Came from a family of terrorists. Her uncle is a real psycho. Bright girl, too. Such a pity. We thought school might help, but genes will out. Too much thinking. Makes you unhappy. In the long run. I heard about this old fireman the other day. Reported his own house and turned the hound on himself. Too much thinking. (pause)

Scene 12

(lights up on MILLIE plugged in)

MON: (enters with book)

Mille, Millie. I have something to show you.

MILLIE: What. Stop it. What's wrong with you? I can't get any peace anymore.

Eddie was just about to give a way the million. What's that box? Oh, no... no...

MON: I have to tell you. I have to...

MILLIE: Get it away from me; I don't want it in the house...

MON: I've been saving books.....

MILLIE: I'm not listening.

MON: Listen to me. You will listen.....

MILLIE: No, they'll take us to gaol.... I'm leaving....

MON: wait. Just wait a second. Just here me. And if you still want to... we'll burn the books together. The Cap says we are all happy. But I'm not happy.

MILLIE: I am and proud of it. I am relaxed and comfortable.

MON: I'm not. I've been... collecting books... from jobs. I haven't ready any. But I want to. You didn't see that woman, Millie. Or Clarisse. Or, the man on the bench.

MILLIE: What man? Oh Ryan, what have you done?

MON: Just a man. I have lunch,

MILLIE: You are sick, twisted...

MON: He says poetry. That's all. One poem a day. And I listen... I just listen, and breathe for a few minutes. I think, well, I think he is Clarisse's uncle.

DOORVOICE: Mrs.Montag, Mrs.Montag, someone's here, someone's here....

MILLIE: It's the captain; it's the captain..... We're going to be burnt; we're going to be burnt..... Hide them. Hide them....

(MON grabs books and takes them away)

MAR: (enter MARTHA) It's just me Millie. I heard raised voices, and I just wanted to check you were alright. You never know with these terrorists around. You alright dear? You're shaking. (pause) what you need is a nice cup of tea and to be walled in for a few hours. I'm all stress myself, I can tell you. What with this war hotting up. All you ever hear are these planes and helicopters every day.

MON: don't you ever ask why?

MAR: Of course I don't. I know why. The Happiness War. And we're winning thank god. It might be over by Christmas.

MON: No, it won't. It will never be over. The planes go up night and day and we never ask why. We never talk about it. We just get fed these images of victorious soldiers.

MAR: I don't need to know. I'm happy with what I'm told.

MON: You don't even know what happiness is. You don't what war is. You don't see people shot or burnt or blown up. You don't know what beauty is. You've never read a book. Or a poem.

MAR: Well, I'm sure you haven't either or you wouldn't be here.

MON: I have.

MILLIE: Don't joke Guy. She'll think you're serious.

MON: At least, someone read, recited one to me.

MAR: That's illegal.

MON: No, it's illegal to read one. But I could read one. I have a poetry book. And it has a poem about happiness and war.

MAR: Well read it to me then if you are so brave.

MON: Alright. I will...

MILLIE: He's allowed. He has special permission. Firemen are allowed to take books home with them for a night just to learn about the enemy you know. A special privilege just for firemen. So he's not a spy or anything. It's quite legal.

MON: Here it is. It's called DOVER BEACH.

MAR: Read it.

MILLIE: Yes, read it darling and then put it right in the fire and we'll forget all about it, won't we. Have a laugh about it.

FABER: (reads it)

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

[

(MILLIE IS crying. Lights upon park bench. FABER and MON)

Scene 13

FABER: Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...

MON: I know who you are. (pause)

FABER: Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.....

MON: Help me. (pause) Please. (pause) I know there must be more of you. (pause) I need to find them. (pause) how do I join? I'm a fireman. I've seen things. (pause) You must help. (silence) What's the point of being here otherwise? (Pause)

FABER: Defenseless under the night

Our world in stupor lies;

Yet, dotted everywhere,

[Ironic points of light](#)

[Flash out wherever the Just](#)

[Exchange their messages:](#)

MON: Where? Tell me where?

(FABER leans in and whispers.)

Scene 14

(LIGHTS DOWN. LIGHTS UP ON MILLIE. She picks up the phone slowly)

Scene 15

(LIGHTS up on CAP and STONE playing cards. MON walks into the room, sits down)

CAP: hands above the table old so. Not that we don't trust you, you understand (he and STONE laugh) Good to see you back, too. The sheep has returned to the fold and all that. We've all been tempted by the smell of knowledge: "sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge", Sir Phillip Sydney said. But on the other hand, "Words are like leaves and where they most abound. Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found". Alexander Pope. What do you think of that Montag?

MON: I don't know.

AUTHOR: careful...

CAP: A little learning is a dangerous thing. Same essay. What did that do to you, that little taste of the good bard. Made you a tad tipsy, right, a bit more and you are an addict, a drunkard, A few more lines and you drive off a cliff, bang, you are ready to blow up the world, chop off heads, carry bombs strapped to your stomach, kill innocent women and children, destroy authority. I know. I've been through it all.

MON: I'm ok.

CAP: I had a dream the other day. You were in it. We engage in a debate on books. You towered with rage, screamed quotes at me. I parried every thrust. Power I said. And you, quoting Dr. Johnson, said "Knowledge is more equivalent to force". And I said, the old quack also said "He is no wise man that will quit a certainty for an uncertainty".

CLAR: Don't listen. He's trying to confuse you.

CAP: And you said, "Truth will come to light, murder will not be hid long!" And I answered "The Devil can cite scripture for his purpose!" and you said,

STONER: This age thinks better of a gilded fool, than of a threadbare saint in wisdom's school"

CAP: "The dignity of truth is lost with much protesting"

STONER: Carcasses bleed at the sight of the murderer!" "Knowledge is Power! A dwarf on a giant's shoulders sees the furthest of the two"

FABER: We must love one another or die

CAP: But I smiled and won the argument with rare serenity: "The folly of mistaking metaphor for a proof, a torrent of verbiage for a spring of capital truths, and oneself as an oracle, is inborn in us, Mr Valery once said" (feels MON's pulse) what a pulse, like an alarm or a fire engine siren. Shall I talk some more? Swahili? Sanskrit? More Introduction to Literature? A kind of excellent dumb discourse.

AUTHOR, FABER and CLAR: hold on, Montag, hold on.

CAP: Oh, you are sacred, eh? That's the trouble with books, films, ideas generally. Others can use them too, and before you know it you are lost in a fog of nouns and adjectives and verbs. But then we come along, my dear Montag, we fireman with our torch and light up the great darkness of knowledge with our simple, purifying light. Oh well, "all's well that ends well in the end". The rest is silence. (pause)

Tired Montag? You don't want to play anymore? Tired of the game? (pause) Anyway, we have work to do. There's been an alarm, and it's a special treat (pause). Lights down)

Scene 16

(Sirens. In darkness)

MON: That's my house (lights up on Mon, CAP and STONE) was it my wife?

CAP: I want you to do this job by your lonesome, Montag. Not with kero and matches, but piecework, with a flame thrower. Your house, your mess, your clean up.

MON: I have no choice.

CAP: No, Stone's got the hound around here somewhere, so don't try and run. You were right after all along. It does have your stink in its nostrils, the stink of poetry if you like. And, by the way, when you are finished, you are under arrest.

MON: And yet I choose... (turns on CAP)

CAP: Oh come on now, that's just plain foolish.... You're a reader, not a killer...

MON: Master Ridley...

CAP: Montag, you fucking, Stone, Stone...

MON: we shall this day light a candle..... Goodbye Captain (lights down)

Scene 17

AUTHOR: And then you know the rest. He runs, like *The Fugitive* or *The Bourne Conspiracy* or *Edgar in King Lear*.... Countless other stories.... The just man being hunted by the merely righteous. But this one knows where to go, miles from the city, deep into the bush, high in the mountains, not far from the desert, in the centre of the mythical country, he finds his tribe, his army of believers. And there is a hopeful ending to my story as the city burns in a war or a pogrom or both at the same time. I wonder if such a hopeful ending is still possible today? Anyway, in my story each of the remnant has memorised a book, so that amongst them they are a small walking library, a ruined Alexandria rising from the ashes.... And here they are, gathering at the end of the play in celebration and resistance. (points to people in the audience) Let me introduce you, Mr. Montag. There is Tom Payne. In the centre we have Mary Shelly. Up the back is Aphra Behn. Sophocles has just gone for a leak. Dorothy Hewett is here too, hi Dorothy, and over there is Voltaire and Plato at he back. George Elliot, and we have two Shakespeares, because he's quite popular, and Wordsworth, Sylvia Plath (as he talks each of the people mentioned get up and start to recite their books, led by Clarisse and Faber. Lights fade)

(The end)

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