

Within the Walls
by
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EXT. CREAKY OLD BOAT DOCK- AFTERNOON

An unidentified CHARACTER, seen waist down from behind, walks down the length of the creaky dock. Wooden planks CREAK and CRACK under each step. They are carrying a corked brown bottle with a note rolled up inside of it. They reach the end of the dock and toss the bottle as far as they can into the water. After watching the bottle float for a beat or two, they turn and walk back. As they pass, the CAMERA TILTS DOWN to the rocky shoreline which hosts a collection of corked bottles which evidently did not break the tide and washed back.

CLOSE UP- FLOATING BOTTLE

It seems to be making some degree of slow progress against the jagged waves.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM- LATE

PAULA, a little girl of about seven years old is busy dreaming. Her clock reads "11:04pm" as she wakes up excitedly, grabs a flashlight from her bedside table and scrambles over to her wall. She scours the wallpaper pattern (little orange flowers with turquoise stems). MARCIE JORDAN, an attractive woman in her early thirties and glued to her cellphone, pokes her head in.

MARCIE

Paula, sweetie? Are you okay? Did you have a bad dream or something?

PAULA

No, Aunt Marcie. I had a wonderful dream.

She goes back to shining the light on her wall.

MARCIE

Well, your mom's going to be back soon and if you're not asleep...

Marcie looks up from her texting. Paula is still surveying her wall.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

PAULA

Do you see anything different yet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCIE

No. Should I?

Paula SIGHS, shuts off the flashlight. Marcie almost trips over Paula's Dolly Dreamhouse which is propped up against the wall underneath a large poster of a unicorn.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Ow. Can I move this somewhere else, sweet face?

PAULA

No please.

Paula climbs back into bed as Marcie finishes up her text.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Are you still working?

MARCIE

Not really.

PAULA

You're always working.

Marcie tucks her in again and kisses her forehead.

MARCIE

I'm just in the middle of a lot right now. You know what I mean?

PAULA

Yeah. I kind of am too.

Paula grabs the well-used book from her table. It's entitled "The World Within the Walls... Book Two; The Sirens of Paradoxia". She turns to where she left off.

MARCIE

No, you little bugger. No more reading tonight.

Marcie takes the book and is surprised when she recognizes it.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

You're reading "World Within the Walls"?

PAULA

Yeah. It's my favorite. Mom said you used to know the writer.

MARCIE

I did. A long time ago.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAULA
What was he like?

MARCIE
Challenging.

PAULA
Do you think the book works?

Marcie is puzzled.

MARCIE
It worked for a little while. Goodnight,
kiddo.

PAULA
'Night.

INT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

Marcie exits Paula's room, closes her door and straightens a couple of the creative, fantasy-esque drawings taped on it. She notices that she still has the book in her hand. She looks at it.

MARCIE
Well... I guess you've still got it,
Mark.

She arches an ear towards the door as she hears a SCRAPING sound coming from within the room.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

Marcie walks back into her niece's room. Paula is up again and wearing a flashlight ducttaped to a fuzzy panda hat. She looks like a rabid miner. The poster and Dreamhouse are moved away from the wall and she is working on a sizable hole in the drywall with a garden spade.

MARCIE
Whoa! Paula!

Paula stops and turns to Marcie.

PAULA
The book works, Aunt Marcie! I know it
does!

Marcie stares at her, wide mouthed, not knowing what to say. She looks at the book in her clenched hand.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING- MORNING

Marcie, now in her mogul-in-training outfit and ready to attack the day, is walking with purpose towards her office building. She clearly possesses an eye for professional fashion and an ear for professional bullshit.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING- A FEW MINUTES LATER

The elevator doors open to the eleventh floor reception area and Marcie steps out. A PAINTER is replacing a new company name and logo (All Connect PR & Marketing) over the previous one (SilverTale Publishers, Inc.).

INT. OFFICE BUILDING (ALL CONNECT)- CONTINUOUS

Marcie walks into her office and is greeted by her assistant, RON, a middle-aged, neatly-dressed man.

RON

Morning.

MARCIE

Good morning, Ron.

RON

Not opening with your usual today?

MARCIE

Any messag...

RON

(interrupting cheerily)

Yes indeed.

Ron holds up a faded brown bottle sealed with a cork and hosting a rolled up piece of paper inside.

MARCIE

Is that a joke?

RON

Security guys handed it to me this morning on my way up. It's got our address on it.

She takes it and squints inside at the rolled up paper.

MARCIE

Yeah, but it's for the former occupants.

RON

You may as well open it. SilverTale is long gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCIE

Especially if you're trying to get your money from them.

Marcie opens the bottle and unrolls the paper.

RON

So... ?

MARCIE

It's an invitation.

RON

For who?

MARCIE

Mark Sinclair.

RON

Who's Mark Sinclair?

Marcie reaches into her bag and hands him the book inside.

INSERT SHOT: BOOK

It's a beat up hard cover copy of "World Within the Walls... Book Three; The Horizon of Bryter". The author is "Mark Sinclair".

RON (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. I remember these.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING (ALL CONNECT)- CONTINUOUS

Ron puts the book down.

MARCIE

Paula is all over them now. I figured maybe I'd try to track him down for an autograph.

Ron turns to his computer screen and surfs a bit. Marcie is still scouring over the uncorked message.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

It doesn't say where this is from. No contact info.

RON

Think we're after the same Mark Sinclair who just wrote "Crippled Eagle"?

MARCIE

Maybe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

Well, just in case, he's signing copies of it today at Morrow Books. 11 to 11:30. Doesn't give you much time.

Ron flips the book over and looks at the back cover.

RON (CONT'D)

So you know him?

MARCIE

Knew him. He's most of the many reasons I switched careers.

INSERT SHOT: BACK COVER OF THE BOOK, "THE WORLD WITHIN THE WALLS... 'BOOK THREE; THE HORIZON OF BRYTER'".

The photo of the book's author, Mark Sinclair, is frayed, beaten up and coffee stained almost beyond recognition.

CUT TO:

MEDIUM CLOSE UP: LIFE SIZED CARDBOARD CUT OUT OF MARK SINCLAIR.

It is pointed at a diagonal and gliding along. The cut out has seen better days. The face is peeling and dented as if it has gone through some recent blunt force trauma.

INT. BOOKSTORE- CONTINUOUS

As the CAMERA ZOOMS OUT, we see that the cut out is being carried by the real life MARK SINCLAIR as he rides up the escalator. He is about forty and dressed in an outdated suit that's probably a size too small for him at this point. He looks around surreptitiously as if he's afraid someone will see him. His cutout has a sign taped to the top that reads: "Today Only! Celebrate Mark Sinclair's new book 'Crippled Eagle'!".

INT. BOOKSTORE (READING LOUNGE AREA)- MOMENTS LATER

Mark and his cardboard effigy stake a claim to a nearby table. He dips into a bag and pulls out a stack of books which he haphazardly arranges into a semi-pyramid in front of the cut out.

FAN #1 (O.S.)

Mr. Sinclair?

Mark turns around, looking a little nervous.

INSERT SHOT: BOOK

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A book slides into view on the table. It's "World Within the Walls... 'Book One, A Myriad Constant'". The cover shows a magical fantastical cover scene (a child reaching up towards glowing tendrils dangling from a hole in the sky). It's the antithesis of Mark's new book cover in every imaginable way.

INT. BOOKSTORE- DAY

Mark recoils from the book like a vampire from a cross of ripe garlic. He looks up to see FAN #1, a guy who is way too old to be dressed in an outfit that's a cross between a medieval minstrel, an alien and a film noir gangster.

FAN #1

Could you make it out to "Laurence, My Favorite Dremfer."?

Mark stares at him.

FAN #1 (CONT'D)

I know technically the Dremfers don't come into play until book three, but... I'm a little obsessed.

He motions smilingly to his costume.

FAN #1 (CONT'D)

As you can see.

MARK

I'm only signing these today.

Mark plops a copy of "Crippled Eagle" on top of the fan's request. The fan ignites with anticipation.

FAN #1

Is this it? Book Seven, finally?

MARK

(irritated)

No. This is totally different.

VOICE (O.S. THROUGH A MEGAPHONE)

SINCLAIR! NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

Mark doesn't bother to turn around. Behind the megaphone is a balding, smiling asshole walking needlessly with a cane to tap himself a trail of pseudo elegance. JACK LAWLER has stopped all activity in the reading lounge.

JACK (THROUGH MEGAPHONE)

DON'T GET UP! THIRTY FEET, I BELIEVE!
RIGHT?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FAN #1
 (to Mark)
 What's thirty feet?

JACK (THROUGH MEGAPHONE)
 THAT'S HOW FAR HE HAS TO STAY AWAY!

MARK
 He has a restraining order against me.

JACK (THROUGH MEGAPHONE)
 FOR SEVEN OF THE SAFEST YEARS OF MY LIFE
 NOW!

FAN #1
 They're only good for five.

MARK
 (annoyed further)
 Aw, don't tell him that.

Jack backs his mouth away from the megaphone.

JACK
 Really?

FAN #1
 I should know.

Jack puts the megaphone away and starts walking over to them.
 Mark rolls his eyes.

MARK
 Happy to help you get that order renewed,
 Lawler.

FAN #1
 You're Jack Lawler?

JACK
 That's right. And I, for one, would be
 happy to sign anything "World Within the
 Walls" you have, but preferably the ones
 that I authored, of course. After Mark
 bailed on them like an idiot.

FAN #1
 Are you for real? You killed "World
 Within the Walls"! Why would anyone want
 your name on anything?

Jack is still obviously raw about this. But he shifts gears
 back to taunting Mark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

I hope I'm not late. I was asking around downstairs and they said they didn't know anything about a signing here today.

Mark glares at him suspiciously as Jack surveys Mark's sad attempt at self promotion. He picks up a copy of "Crippled Eagle".

JACK (CONT'D)

A new book, eh? How exciting.

MARK

It's a "taut political thriller".

JACK

So I see. And you're quoting... yourself from the back cover. Well done. Quite a departure stylistically. What's interesting is that, for the life of me, I could not find out who published this new book of yours. Neither could my assistant.

Mark rips the book from Jack's hands and stares at him in disbelief.

MARK

Exactly how much assistance could it possibly require to slime through life as you, Jack?

Jack is starting to lose his cool and appears at a loss for words. Mark stares at him patiently, then reaches into his bag.

Mark takes out a journal which looks to be somewhat new except for a beat up, old leather cover that is half burnt away. Fresh lined pages filled with handwriting show underneath. Mark scrawls something down, tears the scrap of paper out and hands it to Jack.

JACK

(reading Mark's note)

"'Not as much assistance as you'll probably require to find a charitable couch to sleep off another triumph of a day.'"

Jack and Fan #1 are impressed.

JACK (CONT'D)

You always did have a knack for dialogue, Mark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK

We finally agree on something.

Behind them, FAN #2, an eager kid of about twenty or so, approaches Mark.

JACK

I'll honest up. I came here for two reasons. First to see whether anyone still gives a damn who you... were.

Fan #2 is terribly excited as he picks up a copy of Mark's new book from the table.

KID

Is this Book Seven? Finally?

MARK

No!

JACK

There was a Book Seven. "The Stages of Tardage".

FAN #2

No. That was that other guy. Those don't count.

Mark and Fan #1 look at Jack.

FAN #2 (CONT'D)

"Pages of Garbage" we used to call that book.

MARK

Clever.

FAN# 2

I still read your books like they're a manifesto for higher life.

MARK

You can stop any time because they're not.

Fan #2 puts "Crippled Eagle" back on the pyramid.

FAN #2

I even found a first edition "Paradoxia" in Russian. Some slight variations especially with respect to the tidal pool's ability to transport Maslow forward into himself versus just backwards into other beings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Mark scribbles something on a piece of paper, folds it in half and then in half again while FAN #2 presses on. Jack is amazed as he listens to the guy's rambling. Mark finishes folding up his piece of paper (which is now the size of a large, thick postage stamp).

FAN #2 (CONT'D)

But did you mean to suggest that the fusion of spiritual matter...

Mark gently stuffs the folded up paper into Fan #1's mouth and fastens it in place with a piece of scotch tape.

MARK

"No". Whatever you're about to say. And please tackle anything else for your senior thesis, okay? You're wasting your higher life.

FAN #2

(through his muffled mouth)
I on't shupposz i cou havu yuh....

MARK

You're sucking on it.

Fan #2 spits the waded up paper from his mouth, excitedly unfolds it, and finds Mark's sloppily scrawled autograph.

FAN #2

Thank you!

Fan #2 scampers off before Mark can fully raise a copy of "Crippled Eagle" in front of him.

JACK

I don't know anyone who abused their fans more than you.

MARK

Jim Jones? And that's just off the top of my head.

Jack takes Mark's new book from his hand and starts flipping through the first few pages.

JACK

Think this might have saved the nasty demise of SilverTale, Inc.?

This gets Mark's attention in a big way. And Jack is studying his rival's reaction very closely, seeming pleased.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JACK (CONT'D)
You didn't hear? Really? Our old
viperish publisher finally bit the rather
large one.

MARK
So, why would you be smiling? Since that
essentially dries up your career of
ripping me off.

Jack flashes a sleazy smile.

JACK
I've left writing behind, Mark.

MARK
Writing thanks you from the bottom of its
soul.

Jack is at a flustered loss for words again until he spies
the store MANAGER. He raises his megaphone again.

JACK (THROUGH MEGAPHONE)
AH! THERE YOU ARE! HE'S RIGHT OVER
HERE, SIR!

The manager confronts Mark.

MANAGER
Sir, Morrow Books has no arrangement to
host you here today.

Jack acts shocked.

JACK (WHISPERING THROUGH THE MEGAPHONE)
Are you quite certain?

Mark elbows Jack in the gut, causing him to drop the
megaphone.

MARK
I'll be out of here in twenty minutes.

MANAGER
Ten if you don't want the cops called.

JACK
All sorts of potential for legal
liability in ten minutes.

Jack pretends to get a paper cut from Mark's cutout.

JACK (CONT'D)
Ouch!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MANAGER
(to Mark)
Three.

JACK
(holding his sore finger)
Where's your Health & First Aid section?

MANAGER
Right over there, sir.

The manager points to the other side of Mark's display, behind his cutout.

JACK
Oh. It's very obstructed, isn't it?

Mark grabs Jack by the lapels.

MARK
I'll help get you over there, Jack.

EXT. BOOKSTORE- MOMENTS LATER

Marcie is out front feeding the parking meter. Mark rushes out of the store dragging his cutout behind him.

MARCIE
Mark!

Mark sees her, opens her car door, throws his cutout and bag in the back seat and hops in.

MARK
Drive!

Marcie sees two policemen running out of the store and looking around for Mark. She gets back in the car.

INT. MARCIE'S CAR- CONTINUOUS

Mark is crouched down in the passenger seat. She starts the car and pulls away.

MARCIE
Driving.

She breaks a bit of silence.

MARCIE (CONT'D)
Nice to see you again, Mark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

So many kindly folks from my past
checking in on me all of a sudden.

MARCIE

I've thought about tracking you down...
reaching out... a lot over the past few
years.

Mark gets up from the floor and deposits himself upright in
the seat.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

You know that I was sorry about the way
things ended between you and SilverTale.

MARK

Your sorrow is noted. Feels nice. Best
part of my day so far. Thanks.

MARCIE

As I think you'll recall, I did get you
out of your contract... which is what you
said you wanted. And which was far from
a piece of cake, by the way.

Mark looks out the window.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I'm guessing your book signing didn't
exactly go according to plan?

MARK

As I'm sure you recall, one thing I'm
pretty consistent at is falling well
short of expectations.

MARCIE

I wouldn't say that. And my niece,
Paula, definitely wouldn't. You're her
favorite author in fact.

Mark nods, not convinced. After another long silence...

MARCIE (CONT'D)

So, I'm actually in the process of
switching careers.

MARK

Finally starting your publishing imprint?

MARCIE

I'm out of the book business. I'm
starting a PR firm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mark blinks.

MARK

You hate PR.

MARCIE

(not sounding very convinced)
Clearly, I do not... as it is my new
career.

She tries to maneuver them back to topic.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, with SilverTale folding...
I bought out their lease for some office
space and I happened upon a piece of
their mail.

MARK

Those death threats really pile up.

MARCIE

It's an invitation. For you.

Marcie hands him the rolled up message.

MARK

Well, I'm already in hell, so I hope it's
not to there.

MARCIE

You may as well take this too.

She also hands him the bottle that the note came in. Mark
instinctively tries to take a sip from the bottle which is
obviously empty.

MARK

That was deceiving.
(squinting at the paper)
So, what exactly am I being invited to?

MARCIE

From what I can tell it's for some kind
of engagement.

MARK

I don't know. I just started a new box
of cereal so I'm pretty engaged already.
(reading the message)
"Mr. Sinclair, we would like to contract
you for series of lectures at our resort."
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK (CONT'D)

The establishment's founder and benefactor will ensure that your time and energies are multiply more than worth your while." I like the sound of that. So where is this? How am I supposed to get in touch with them?

MARCIE

They don't say. But there are numbers there. My assistant thinks that they're map coordinates. Assuming so, it's not that far.

MARK

Everyone with their assistants lately. So, I just show up whenever?

MARCIE

That's what they seem to be suggesting.

He rolls the message back into the bottle.

MARK

That's insane.

MARCIE

I don't know, Mark. Why not?

MARK

Are you looking to rep me again all of a sudden, Marcie? Now that there's the slightest hint that I'm back to being worth your while?

She is stung a bit.

MARCIE

I don't want anything from you. I'm just the messenger here. But it looks to me like you could probably use a little... something. A little intrigue. A little adventure.

(beat)

A little revenue.

Mark looks away.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

And yeah... it might require a leap of a little faith.

MARK

Lately I'm running a little low on any sort of faith I could make a leap from.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARCIE

Maybe I could loan you some cash for the plane ticket?

MARK

No thank you.

MARCIE

It's an opportunity, Mark. SilverTale is dead. That means all of their assets are up for auction.

MARK

Really?

MARCIE

Yeah. Maybe you could buy your book rights back. Get them out there again.

MARK

They're out there plenty for my taste.

MARCIE

They're almost impossible to track down these days.

MARK

Builds character.

MARCIE

You would know. You built great ones. Look, I just think you deserve a chance at a happier ending than what you're working towards right now.

MARK

I guess we'll all just have to agree to disagree. You, me, and Jack. Just like old times.

Marcie jerks her head towards him. She is irritated by the mere mention of his name.

MARCIE

Jack? Lawler? How is he suddenly in this conversation at all?

MARK

He was back there at Morrow's. Once I saw you out front I figured you guys came together.

Marcie gets angry instantly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARCIE

Are you trying to make me sick?

Mark is a little surprised by her extreme reaction. But it's probably a pleasant surprise.

MARK

Geez. No. I guess it just still comes naturally.

MARCIE

Wait. Does Lawler know about your publishing rights being up for auction next week?

MARK

I don't know. He said he was there for two reasons: to see if I still had a fan base; and... we may not have gotten to reason number two. But the really good news is that I think there's another restraining order heading my way.

As Mark crosses his fingers, Marcie makes a hard right turn, cutting over two lanes to catch an off ramp. Mark and his cutout bounce around like lottery balls.

MARK (CONT'D)

Where the hell are you doing?!

MARCIE

Taking a leap of faith. In you. I'll advance you a thousand dollars against my percentage of your speaking engagement fee.

MARK

I'll think about it.

INT. AIRPLANE- A LITTLE LATER

Mark and Marcie are in line, boarding a plane. She has the bottled message out and is on a Map App on her cellphone. Marcie has a large carry on that gets tagged for baggage claim. She eyes Mark's small duffel.

MARCIE

You didn't buy much.

MARK

You didn't front me much.

MARCIE

Want to know where we're going yet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

Nope.

MARCIE

I hope you're not prone to seasickness.

MARK

I'm prone to everything sickness.

MARCIE

Ron mapped the coordinates on the invitation to a small island off of the Fernrock chain.

MARK

You putting a lot of effort into all this. You must feel really bad for destroying my career.

She tucks the message into her bag and stares at him.

MARCIE

That is the single most ridiculous thing I have ever heard spit itself from your mouth. I stuck with you long after you self-destructed.

MARK

Not too long after, as I recall.

MARCIE

And as far as this trip goes, let's just say that I have a rather special interest in seeing that Jack Lawler fails miserably in all facets of life.

Mark contemplates that.

MARK

Fair enough.

They move up a couple more steps in the line, working their way into the cabin.

MARCIE

I've also recently experienced first hand how addictive your books still are. And seen how hard it is to find them these days. I had the hardest time finding this one.

She holds up the beat up copy of "Horizons of Bryter".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Had to call around to three different used book stores this morning. It's seen better days, huh?

Mark glances at it without interest.

MARK

I know how it feels.

MARCIE

Got it for my niece.

She waits for a response that doesn't come.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Remember her? Your new biggest fan?

Mark stares at her and grabs the extended book. He scribbles something quickly.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Thanks. Her name is Pa-.

Before she can finish, Mark tosses the book back to her like it's attacking his hands. Marcie reads his note and is truly offended.

MARK

See you in a little while.

Mark dumps himself into his first class seat. Marcie is astonished.

MARCIE

You spent your advance on an upgrade to Business?

MARK

This is a business trip.

MARCIE

Business Class is not in our current marketing budget of zero dollars, Mark.

The flight attendant hands Mark his glass of champagne.

MARK

Oh, you're a love. Keep these coming, huh?

Mark takes a sip and pulls his hat down over his eyes. Marcie starts trudging her way to Economy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK (CONT'D)

Let me know if you need a magazine or something.

EXT. OCEAN- EVENING

A beat up old yacht motors its way to a stop in the midst of some heavy fog. A small outboard motor boat is tied to it and three fuzzy, silhouetted figures climb in. The motorboat detaches from the yacht and starts puttering slowly into the fog.

EXT. OCEAN (MOTOR BOAT)- CONTINUOUS

Mark is gazing out over the dark water as they crawl along. The tiny boat doesn't even have enough room for their luggage which is being towed behind them on a chewed up styrofoam pontoon.

MARCIE

Hello? Lynda? Can you hear me? No?

MARK

(under his breath)
Lucky Lynda.

Marcie shuts off her cellphone.

MARCIE

I guess that's the last of the reception. My sister just finished tucking Paula in... who is very excited that I'm here with you.

MARK

How's the hole in her wall?

MARCIE

She's almost finished with it.

MARK

Too bad it isn't six years ago. Your sister could have gotten in on that class action suit by all the pissed off parents with the holes and ruined wallpaper in their kids' bedrooms.

She makes a note on her phone.

MARCIE

That reminds me... I should stipulate that we steer clear of all past legal activity during your lecture Q & As.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks up to see him checking her out.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

What?

MARK

It's just strange to see you in your new PR hat.

MARCIE

Logical career progression.

MARK

So that wasn't you always saying that publicists were the exterminators of all things wonderful?

MARCIE

I don't remember that.

Marcie quickly turns to the FISHERMAN steering their boat.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Have you ever heard of the books "The World Within the Walls", sir?

MARK

He hasn't.

MARCIE

Shhh! How do you know? You probably have lots of admirers that you're not even aware of.

MARK

Prefer it that way.

FISHERMAN

Can't say that I have.

MARK

Don't pull his focus, Marcie.

MARCIE

Shut up.

(to the fisherman)

It's built on the idea that a child's dreams imprint images and energy onto her bedroom wall. Like a big subconscious, nocturnal emulsion, slowly creating a world based on their dreams that they can then enter and exit whenever they want. But the dilemma is that it can get more and more difficult to get back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FISHERMAN
 (sarcastically through his
 dying cigar)
 Sounds like my kind of read.

MARK
 Marcie, we're pushing "Crippled Eagle".
 Not "Walls".

MARCIE
 They're going to want to hear about
 "World Within the Walls". That's what
 you're known for.

MARK
 Captain, sir?

FISHERMAN
 Don't call me "captain" on this thing.

MARK
 It comforts me to call someone captain on
 this thing. Please indulge me.

He shrugs.

MARK (CONT'D)
 So what's our plan for when we capsize?
 Personally I'd liked to be knocked
 unconscious immediately so I can sleep
 through my cold drowning and being torn
 apart by whatever's swimming around here.

FISHERMAN
 It's actually shallower than you might
 think. Weird ocean around this stretch.
 Lots of rocks under us. They'd probably
 knock you unconscious pretty good.

MARK
 Oh super.

FISHERMAN
 Or you could just shoot yourself.

The fisherman motions to a clumsy looking flare gun fastened
 to the side of the boat.

MARK
 Plan B.

FISHERMAN
 It's not much further now. I don't
 think.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK
(whispering to Marcie)
He doesn't think.

FISHERMAN
Don't get many requests to head out here
anymore. Thankfully.

EXT. DOCK- NIGHT

The creaky dock (from the first scene) is dark and empty as the motorboat limps its way towards it. The fisherman ties the boat to one of the old, rotting dock moorings. The outer layer of wood crumbles as he knots the rope around it. A broken, barely legible sign reading "Port Bryter" sways with a rusty tune in the ocean's breeze. Mark looks around.

MARK
Maybe it's one creepy island over.

VOICE (O.S.)
Mr. Sinclair?

They peer into the darkness.

MARCIE
Over here!

Marcie waves to nothing.

FISHERMAN
(to Mark)
Want that flare gun now?

Out of the darkness scurries a kid of about seventeen with popcorn hair wearing a mismatched suit at least a size too big. This is PALACE.

PALACE
Hello! And welcome! Mr. Sinclair, we
are so excited that you're here.

Mark points to the fisherman.

MARK
He's Sinclair.

Palace smiles.

PALACE
No. I'd know you anywhere. You forget,
your picture is emblazoned on the back of
all six books in "Double W TW".
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PALACE (CONT'D)

Everyone has been on pins and needles in preparation for your visit. No one is concentrating on what they're supposed to be doing. I can't even begin to tell you.

Marcie takes out the bottled message that started all of this.

MARCIE

(referencing it)

Is Mr. Nivens here as well?

PALACE

He begs your forgiveness for not greeting you, but is tied up with some rather important town business. I'm Palace, Mr. Nivens' personal assistant.

MARK

Another one.

PALACE

Although, for the next week, he has assigned me the enviable task of being yours!

MARK

Mine what?

Palace begins to talk faster and faster. He is very excited.

PALACE

Your assistant. Anything you need to help get you acclimated to our little town. Although once you see it, I hardly think you'll need much acclimating, Mr. Sinclair, if you know what I mean!

MARK

Nope. But I guess that's good news for you because you can have the week off.

Palace is concerned. His nervous energy is not slowing him down for a second however.

PALACE

Oh, no! I want to make sure everything is just right for you. I'm sure you'll find me very useful and I only sleep about two hours a night at most. Maybe. And I can easily adjust to any schedule you want to put me to be at your disposal any time you like.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mark narrows his stare on Palace, trying to get a read on him.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Mr. Nivens was very specific with my instructions.

MARK

Who exactly is this "Nivens"?

PALACE

Mr. Nivens is our town's creator. We are all here because of him.

MARCIE

And exactly how many is "we"? The invitation didn't provide much detail when arranging for Mr. Sinclair's engagement. How large an audience should we be expecting?

PALACE

Oh, a good amount, yes... despite what your greeting here may have suggested. Of course, Mr. Nivens knows what a private person Mr. Sinclair is and didn't want arrange a fuss that might embarrass him.

MARK

Much obliged.

PALACE

Of course, if you're disappointed by the reception, Mr. Sinclair, we've readied for both scenarios.

All of a sudden the dock explodes into a loud and momentarily terrifying party of fireworks, lights, noise, music and activity as a group of about fifty people appear as if out of nowhere. It's an instant carnival (or perhaps a James Ensor painting). Jugglers, acrobats and strolling musicians start weaving around them, smiling eagerly. Flying bowling pins and glimmering knives are narrowing missing Mark's terrified face.

MARK

Other scenario! First one! Thank you!

Their eyes can barely get adjusted to the light before everything goes dark and silent again, save for the surf and the odd sound of the dismantling circus. Somehow, Mark has ended up with a melting caramel apple in his hand. He hands it to Marcie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK (CONT'D)

Here you go.

Palace latches onto Mark like a happy barnacle. Mark makes a sickened face.

PALACE

Please forgive us, Mr, Sinclair. Just covering the proverbial bases.

MARCIE

(awkwardly)

Another thing that was a little unclear from the invitation was the little matter of...

PALACE

Compensation? Well, I can assure you that Mr. Sinclair will be most generously rewarded for his time here.

Palace writes a number down on the invitation.

PALACE (CONT'D)

This is the last figure that Mr. Nivens permitted me to communicate.

Marcie stares at it in shock.

MARCIE

What!?

MARK

What?

Behind them, as the fisherman starts his motor and sets his course back, four of the carnival folks dive into the water and start swimming after the boat. Alarmed, the fisherman tries to whack them away with an oar.

MAN #1

Please! I'll give you ten thousand dream dollars.

FISHERMAN

You're going to capsize me, you idiots!

MAN #2

Fifty!

The fisherman detaches from them, kicks the motor into as high gear as he can and sputters away into the darkness. The four dejected islanders slog back to the dock. Mark and Marcie have been watching the whole scene.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Palace quickly spins Marcie and Mark away from the dock and guides them towards a grand, spiral staircase leading up to a clearing along a short cliffside.

PALACE

Watch your step along here. Don't touch the railing. For some reason, we just can't seem to keep it secure.

Marcie tests it cautiously.

MARCIE

Seems okay to me.

Mark steps right on by, unconcerned, and starts up the staircase.

PALACE

Really? Hmm.

Palace tests the railing which appears to be fine. Pleasantly surprised, he rushes to catch up with Mark.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Mr. Nivens wanted to assure you that...

MARK

(interrupting)

Mr. Nivens is a little annoying, isn't he?

PALACE

But means nothing but well. I realize it's late, but will you require anything before your first talk tomorrow morning?

Marcie is surprised by the aggressive schedule.

MARCIE

Tomorrow morning?

PALACE

Low pressure! Just a basic get-to-know you sort of affair.

Marcie tries her cellphone again to no avail.

PALACE (CONT'D)

I'm of course an enormous fan too... as we all are. And please accept this small token of our appreciation for your being here with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Palace hands Mark and Marcie a stack of bright orange pieces of paper.

MARK

What the hell are these?

PALACE

Port Bryter Dream Dollars. Good for all goods and services Port Bryter has to offer.

MARK

This isn't what I'm going to be paid in, is it?

Palace LAUGHS.

PALACE

Oh no. We have actual real money for that, of course. Do you mind if I ask you a question that's been burning my brain...

MARK

Is it about "Crippled Eagle"?

PALACE

No.

Mark picks up a few steps, leaving Palace in his walking wake. Marcie catches up to Palace for a some damage control.

MARCIE

He's a little tired.

INT. PORT BRYTER (HOTEL LOBBY)- MORNING

Mark walks down the stairs into the lobby where Marcie has been waiting for him, flipping irritatedly through a stack of 3x5 cards.

MARK

Good morning.

MARCIE

You're late.

He holds up his dilapidated journal which is open to a fresh page of notes.

MARK

Preparing my opening.

Marcie takes it and skims.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCIE

This isn't motivational at all. It's all about "Crippled Eagle".

MARK

Yeah. That's called marketing. I realize you're new to this and everything, but...

MARCIE

That's called obnoxious and disrespectful. And it's not what you're known for. You saw how much Nivens is shelling out. You will not disappoint.

She shoves the pile of 3x5s into his hand, grabs his scarf and leads him to the door.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Start cramming. We're due at the conference hall in five minutes.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN CENTER)- MOMENTS LATER

We get our first real look at the town. It's seen better days. The buildings are very oddly-shaped, twisted and bent. Some appear to almost melt into each other (like Gaudi through a funhouse mirror). There are visible cracks in the concrete and the paint, once certainly bright and alive, is now dirty, faded and peeling away. No one else is around. Everything seems deserted. Neither of them is taking much in. Mark is surveying the cards and Marcie is busy applying sunblock to her exposed skin.

MARCIE

This place is very odd.

Mark could care less, not looking up from the cards.

MARK

(flipping through them)
Not saying this. Not saying this.

Marcie is guiding the way as Mark surveys her cards. They pass a fountain, clean but dead, and then walk down a path through a row of trees with strange, oval bulbs at the tips of each extending branch. As they pass, one of the bulbs opens up like an eye. Several others on nearby branches follow suit.

INT. PORT BRYTER (BACKSTAGE AREA)- MORNING

Marcie steers Mark into the ballroom's backstage prep area. The bright morning sunshine glares behind them as they enter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

You really need to get to know your client. I wouldn't say half of this stuff.

Marcie unsuccessfully tries her cellphone again.

MARCIE

Okay. Well, do you think we can just get through this first talk? We'll have more time to prepare for the next one. If you get stuck, let's figure out a signal you can give me.

MARK

Now I wish I had taken that flare gun.

A panicked Palace runs in, once again allowing the outside sunlight to fill the room until the doors close behind him.

PALACE

He's gone! I lost him in less than...
(seeing Mark, who waves)
Oh, there you are. I wanted to escort you here personally.

MARK

Yeah, I told you that's not necessary. Or wanted.

PALACE

But Mr. Nivens...

MARK

I'll sign your timecard or whatever you need to show him, but... just don't be... around me, okay? You give me the jitters.

Palace seems a little hurt. They notice Marcie struggling with her phone.

PALACE

There is no phone reception in Port Bryter, Miss Jordan, I'm afraid.

MARCIE

Yeah, I'm noticing that. You know, Palace, we really didn't have much time to prepare. I hope Mr. Nivens will have a little patience. It may take Mark some time to hit his stride.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PALACE

Understood! He can have as much time as he needs!

Before Marcie can manage expectations further, Palace pulls open the large curtain in front of them.

INT. PORT BRYTER (BALLROOM)- CONTINUOUS

The audience of around 300 people is already eagerly amassed in their seats. They all stand and APPLAUD. Mark double takes, immediately seeing that they are all dressed as his characters from "World Within the Walls". Each one is more outlandish than the one in front of them.

As Palace takes the podium to introduce Mark, Mark stares at Marcie. She is befuddled but offers a smile and thumbs up.

PALACE

Ladies and Gentlemen... and yes, even Gorshes...

The audience CHUCKLES appreciatively, those dressed apparently as Gorshes (cool sort of fishlike things with partially skeletal faces) particularly enjoying the reference. Palace smiles to Mark for approval but is met only with an angry glare.

PALACE (CONT'D)

(explaining to him)

From Book Two. Chapter Eight.

Only the continued glare. Palace COUGHS back to professional posture, getting back to his introduction.

PALACE (CONT'D)

We are all extremely fortunate this week to have in our midst a man whose imagination gave birth to a wondrous world of heroes, hopes, fantasies, and philosophies. An unrivaled author, artist, and visionary who generated countless wonderful dreams transforming our childhoods and beyond. The one and only... Mr. Mark Sinclair!

Thunderous APPLAUSE as another standing ovation springs upward. Mark settles himself behind the podium, taking his time surveying the crowd

MARK

I must be dreaming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Warm LAUGHTER eventually dies down to a long silence as excited faces begin to melt into confused ones.

MARK (CONT'D)

Like... the most terrible dream I could ever hope for. And I've had horrible dreams. Although I haven't remembered my dreams for quite a while now, I know for a fact that I've had bad ones.

His 3x5 cards slide from his hands in a plummeting cascade to the floor around his feet.

MARK (CONT'D)

This would be one of those.

Marcie nervously jumps in.

MARCIE

Uh, maybe let's start right off with the Q&A.

Despite the dampened atmosphere, plenty of eager hands still go up. Marcie waits for Mark to pick one. He doesn't. A creepy purple KNIGHT, dressed in spiked armor and seated in the front row, seems to be vibrating and shaking in his seat, CLINKING a bit as a result. People notice, as does Marcie.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Are you okay in there?

KNIGHT

(muffled through his face plate)

Uh no, not really. Can someone tell me what the hell I'm supposed to be? They just handed me this get up as soon as I got here this morning.

One of the audience members, wearing a costume that looks like a giant colorful BLUR, speaks up.

BLURRED AUDIENCE MEMBER

You are obviously "The Devourer".

Another fan, with fabric flames waving from both her arms, chimes in helpfully.

FACE FLAME AUDIENCE MEMBER

From Book Five.

Yet another partial CYBORG audience member lends a hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CYBORG AUDIENCE MEMBER

And Six.

Flame girl is irritated at the assistance.

FACE FLAME AUDIENCE MEMBER

Well... technically I suppose. But he's only hinted at.

KNIGHT/DEVOURER

Oh, well then, that explains it. I never got nearly that far along.

PALACE

(irritated)

You're a banished knight who either consumes or sells the karma of his victims... depending on their value as well as his appetite.

DEVOURER

(sarcastically)

Oh, cool! That's really cool!

The Devourer waits a beat.

DEVOURER (CONT'D)

I was rolling my eyes in here when I said that, by the way. Yeah, so, Mr. Sinclair, your new book...

Mark perks up.

DEVOURER (CONT'D)

... about the bird with the limp...

MARK

"Crippled Eagle". It's a metaphor...

Marcie's PR kicks into gear.

MARCIE

It's a taut political thriller.

DEVOURER

So I've heard. Anyway, I was at one of your recent book signings...

MARK

You were?

DEVOURER

Yeah, and my question is...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He takes the helmet off. It's Jack! Mark is not pleasantly surprised to see him pop up again. Palace isn't enthusiastic either. And Marcie is downright disgusted.

JACK

My question is... what the hell are you doing here, Mark? A meet and greet? You hate our fans!

MARCIE

Your fans!?

JACK

I wrote almost half of these books! Seven through ten!

PALACE

Well our existence centers on Mr. Sinclair's original six. They are the ones that matter here.

Jack shakes his head in insulted disbelief. There is a RUMBLE through the crowd, which quickly grows discontented. An ANGRY FAN, a woman with an odd, owl-like creature protruding out from the side of her head, stands up.

ANGRY FAN

You're Jack Lawler? You've got some balls showing your face here after what you did to The World Within the Walls.

JACK

I kept them going after he burned himself out! You should be kissing my balls right now! All of you! Both of them!

MARCIE

These are Mark's fans here, Jack. Make no mistake.

JACK

(scoffing)
And you're back with him?

MARCIE

None of your greedy little business.

JACK

I guess this gig must be paying pretty well then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PALACE

Words can be very powerful things.
Especially Mr. Sinclair's words. You
might try to bear that in mind.

JACK

What are you? Twelve? Telling me what
to bear in mind? That's... uh, ...
(struggling with his own words)
... that's really... like... uh...
"hey... what's". Like... some...
"any..."

Mark SIGHS.

MARK

It's exhausting keeping you in the
conversation sometimes, Jack.

Mark types something and it appears up on the overhead
projector screen. It's another retort suggestion for Jack.
"Any good 'Duck Duck Goose' strategies for us, Jiffy Pop?"
Jack looks up at the screen and CHUCKLES.

JACK

Yeah! Seriously, kid. Geez.
(angrily to Mark)
And I don't need your help! Perfectly
capable of thinking for myself.

MARK

Time permitting.

The crowd LAUGHS at Jack.

JACK

Yeah, well I doubt you'll all be laughing
in my face two days from now!

MARK

Why? Are you leaving one day from now?

The crowd LAUGHS again, but Marcie miserably realizes Jack's
threat.

MARCIE

You got the rights.

Jack clearly likes the impact this has on her.

JACK

Singing a different tune now, eh?
Mr. "About to Be Two Time Loser"?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JACK (CONT'D)

In about seventy four hours, I will own one hundred percent of the "World Within the Walls".

PALACE

I wouldn't bank on that!

They all look at Palace.

JACK

Damnit, kid. This doesn't concern you.

PALACE

You might like to know that Mr. Nivens, beloved creator of our town, bested your offer as of open of business day this morning. On Mr. Sinclair's behalf.

MARK

My behalf?

Marcie is surprised to hear this news. Jack is furious. He turns to Mark who also looks quite taken aback as his head bounces around from one suitor to the next. Jack stomps up to him.

JACK

You probably had all this in place yesterday!

Mark can't think of a word to say. Palace has been watching his expressions with great intent. Jack huffs a few beats, trying to get something out.

JACK (CONT'D)

Big... bunch of nerds... being all... all...

Mark scribbles him another note from his journal, but Jack smacks it out of his hand and storms out with the crowd LAUGHING again in his wake. Most of the crowd's hands go up again in an attempt to restart the Q&A.

Another audience member stands up from his seat. He is connected, via dozens of colorful veins, to a balloon-ish contraption floating above him.

MARCIE

Yes. Mr. ... balloon thing.

BALLOON GUY

Excuse me? This is the uniform of the Silence Reflector.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARCIE

Of course. Sorry.

SILENCE REFLECTOR

Mr. Sinclair, I'm sure I speak for everyone here... can you clear up the confusion about a true Book Seven?

The crowd emits an excited, but reserved MURMUR. Palace steps forward.

PALACE

Uh... let's not get into this just yet. Okay, everyone?

SILENCE REFLECTOR

(interrupting)

Sorry Palace, I know we weren't supposed to mention it, but some of us really need to know.

MARK

(icy)

What's your confusion about Book Seven?

He pauses.

SILENCE REFLECTOR

Well... when will it be finished? **Your** Book Seven. Not Lawler's

MARK

It is finished.

The crowd is excited again.

MARK (CONT'D)

Because it's non-existent.

Another guy, dressed like a rabbit samurai, pipes up.

RABBIT SAMURAI

But that's the problem!

Mark loses it.

MARK

Not for me! For all of you maybe it is! Not your biggest problem, by the way! Not by a long shot! If I had to diagnose your biggest problems just going around the room here,... hmmm...

Mark points them out one by one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MARK (CONT'D)
 "Sociopath". "Sociopath". "Psychopath".
 "Repressed Sociopath". "Neurotic".
 "Deviant".

Marcie intervenes.

MARCIE
 Thanks, everyone! This concludes today's
 appearance.

MARK
 (continuing his diagnoses)
 "Paranoid Deviant". "Complete Idiot".
 "Sociopath". Wow, a lot of sociopaths!

Palace scrambles up to the mic.

PALACE
 Uh, don't forget the Festival of the
 Myriad Constant tonight! See you there!

Palace and Marcie drag Mark away from the charging crowd that wants more face time with him. They pull him out of the ballroom and onto the adjoining terrace. The sunlight is gone and a storm has been brewing outside.

EXT. PORT BRYTER- LATE AFTERNOON

Palace is escorting Mark and Marcie on a rather somber tour of the clouded over town. Mark is appalled as he watches the people dressed as his characters and playing out mini episodes from his stories all around.

MARK
 So it's not enough that he built this
 asylum, now he has to own my books too?

PALACE
 I think you are failing to see the good
 intentions behind Mr. Nivens' bid on your
 publishing. Mr. Nivens built Port Bryter
 as an homage to your books. He would
 never want to exploit them in any
 fashion.

Marcie seems satisfied and Palace gets them back to their tour, showing off Port Bryter.

PALACE (CONT'D)
 You'll notice that as much was done to
 spec as possible. Right down to the last
 detail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They walk past a massive structure resembling a human hand protruding out of the ground. The tips of its five points support strange combination shapes (a rectangular star, a triangular oval, etc.) which are just big enough to contain one person each. Each person in their strange little "office" is working on an ancient-looking computer interface at some sort of menial task. Whatever the purpose of the task is, "output" pulses from their work stations through grey hose-like tubes so that you can see who is generating the most output by way of how big the pulse is snaking its way down the length of their tube.

PALACE (CONT'D)

And anyone is welcome. Anyone willing to commit themselves to The World Within the Walls' characters. There is, of course, what I'd call a loose screening process.

MARK

Yeah, I might firm that up a bit.

A man in a glass tuxedo with a very sad grey face, passes by them. In a polite gesture, he takes off his hat which pulls with it his hair and his entire sad face right off his head like a mask, revealing a happy, golden face underneath.

SAD/HAPPY PAINTER

A good most afternoon all to you,
gentlemen and lady!

Mark looks at Palace.

MARK

Who the hell was that jerk ass?

Palace is surprised that Mark doesn't recognize his own character.

PALACE

From "Paradoxia". Chapter Four.
"Magnus". Who can only experience
happiness and sorrow in equal measure in
any given moment for any given
circumstance.

Given Mark's abandoned interest, Palace finishes the explanation to Marcie.

PALACE (CONT'D)

He's comprised of solar energy... uh,
concentrated into a coherent organic form
that's attracted to... sort of...
positivity...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PALACE (CONT'D)

but also slightly dangerous because it can destroy everything that it's drawn to and loves which would in turn collapse it upon itself like...

Mark tries to hurry Palace along.

MARK

"... like an imploding star".

PALACE

(proudly)

As you can see... if it's in your books, it's here!

MARK

I wish I'd put a bar in my books.

MARCIE

This place must have been some undertaking.

PALACE

Oh yes. Mr. Nivens turned his back on quite a bit to dedicate himself to building Port Bryter. Friends... family...

MARK

... any dwindling connection to reality... a last scrap of mental fortitude...

Marcie elbows him in the gut.

MARCIE

He's paying you.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (BEACH)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Palace escorts them out onto a quiet beach. Marcie has her sunblock out again and is slathering herself.

MARK

Relax. You'd look cure with a few more freckles.

MARCIE

Oh my gosh. Are those candles?

Sure enough, out in the ocean, dug in at various points are seven or eight giant, unlit white candles jutting up about twenty feet over the waves like immaculate smokestacks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They are evidently functional because of the cascading streams of hardened wax pouring over their rim and solidified down the length of the massive columns to the breaking waves around them.

PALACE

Oh yes! We had a company that builds oil rigs dig them in. Three point five million a piece! A bit of a bargain really. Especially when you see them lit.

MARK

So, Palace, I guess amongst the obvious questions here is "what the hell is wrong with all of you"? Nivens built this place. I can accept that, I guess. He's insane. But why are all of you here?

PALACE

Because we love it here!

Marcie is looking off into the distance towards the water.

MARCIE

Do you need some help!!?

About seventy feet off shore is ALISON DANIELS, sixteen years of short sighted self-confidence under her belt, she is a force to be reckoned with. She is painted bright orange and purple with huge awkward, tangled spokes emanating from her back and head. She is desperately trying to free her halfway decent makeshift raft from some muscular seaweed. Palace is very annoyed.

PALACE

(under his breath)

Not again.

Alison looks around, judging her none-too-favorable situation. She waves to them.

ALISON

I'm good!!

PALACE

Here!!! Grab this line!!!

He throws a rope, perfectly, out to her. She doesn't make even the slightest move to catch it. Palace tries to contain his anger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PALACE (CONT'D)

Miss Daniels is a very spirited girl.
Always has been. She's... just a little
stubborn sometimes.

Palace ties the rope around his waist, hands it to Mark and begins to wade out into the water. Palace makes a face at her just before starting his doggie paddle out to her raft. Mark looks at the end of the rope line that Palace is attached to.

MARK

Tie this around my neck and pray with me
for a tidal wave.

Palace reaches Alison's raft and starts to pull it free from the seaweed which keeps coiling itself back around the raft.

ALISON

Go away, Palace.

Palace grabs the raft tight and calls back to shore.

PALACE

Pull, Mr. Sinclair!

MARK

Who am I? Chuck Atlas?

After a SIGH, Mark heaves on the rope. Marcie helps him. Alison's raft is slowly freed from the seaweed and she and Palace are on their back way to shore. They help her back onto dry land.

MARCIE

What were you doing out there?

ALISON

Trying to escape. Obviously.

PALACE

Don't be silly. No one would want to
escape from Port Bryter.

(to the Mark and Marcie)

She was just out for a quick paddle and
got a little ensnared. It happens all
the time.

ALISON

Especially when you're trying to escape
which, just to repeat, is absolutely what
I was trying to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PALACE
Mmm... that's not true.

ALISON
Mmm... kind of true.

He introduces her to Mark and Marcie.

PALACE
This is Alison Daniels... currently
enjoying her third session with us.

ALISON
Third straight summer of parental exile.

PALACE
You used to like it here!

ALISON
I used to pee in a diaper too, Palace.

Mark smiles. He likes this girl.

PALACE
Miss Daniels, may I present to you the
great Mark Sinclair, who is here to spend
some a few days with us.

ALISON
Just a few, huh? Is that what you think?

Palace quickly jumps in, cutting her off.

PALACE
Uh... Mr. Sinclair is here to regale us
with some choice tales of stories behind
the World we all love.

Alison sizes up Mark.

ALISON
(unimpressed)
He's here to collect a paycheck.

Mark shoots her a look, glances at Marcie and then looks at
Palace.

MARK
That's not entirely true.

ALISON
That's really pretty entirely true.
Don't worry, you'll fit right in. That's
why everybody's here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Palace LAUGHS. A little too loud.

PALACE

That is... just so... completely not true.

ALISON

That is... my and most people's... version of true.

MARK

You pay them to do all this?

PALACE

Well, Mr. Nivens does. He's a real stickler for realism and commitment to character. He can be quite adamant. Of course they have three hours per day to themselves... including meal breaks. That's the only time they are permitted to break character. Everyone appreciates the dedication to realism.

ALISON

And tell him about the chain gang.

PALACE

There's no chain gang!

ALISON

May as well be!

MARK

Guys, you're very cute and all, but you're also very annoying. Can we maybe wrap this up?

ALISON

Yeah, he's got a check to cash.

MARK

That's...

Mark chooses his words carefully given that Alison is a sharp cookie and is clearly onto him.

MARK (CONT'D)

... not... one hundred percent... Boy, I don't like you.

PALACE

I don't either!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ALISON

Damn. Two more empty chairs at my next birthday party.

EXT. PORT BRYTER- EARLY EVENING

They walk along, now joined by Alison. Mark digs into his bag and pulls out his beat up journal and starts to jot something down in it. Alison leans over and notices the cover in closer detail. "My Book of"... the rest cut off by the jagged burnt cliff separating the old leather cover from the newer one underneath.

ALISON

Your "Book of..." what?

MARK

Whatever's on the pages underneath. The cover kind of hitches a ride on whatever I'm working on at the moment.

PALACE

(excited)

What are you working on at the moment? It's not Book Seven, is it? By any chance?

MARK

Not by any stretch of a chance.

Marcie looks at the journal.

MARCIE

So what happened to the rest of it?

As Mark finishes his notation, Palace stares at a tangled mass of grey branches covering a bright blue wall underneath. A couple of vibrant red flowers are blooming through the thicket. All but a few pedals fall off and away from the tiny flowers, blowing away in the breeze. Mark closes the journal.

MARK

Long gone.

He stuffs the journal back into his bag.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TIDAL POOL)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Presently they come to a small pond of thickish, blue/white fluorescent liquid which blocks the walking path. There is no bridge across, but at the other side there is a sort of antique gondola tethered to a golden pole.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Asleep with his head propped up against the pole is ANGUS, a cherubic, slightly unkempt man with a twisted, striped outfit. His red hat is tilted down over his eyes and aiding his deep nap.

PALACE
The tidal pool portal.

Palace calls over to the ferryman.

PALACE (CONT'D)
Hello? Angus?
(to the others)
Not the first time we've encountered this with Angus. Mr. Nivens is going to have to hear about this, I'm afraid.

Alison rolls her eyes.

ALISON
Narc.

MARK
(sarcastic)
If only we had some stilts.

Palace has an idea that very much excites him.

PALACE
Write it down!

MARK
Why?

PALACE
Please, Mr. Sinclair. Indulge me. I'm curious about something.

Mark whips out his journal again and scribbles something down in it then looks at Palace. Palace's smile widens and he looks around, going over to the edge of the tidal pool.

PALACE (CONT'D)
Ahhhh!

He retrieves several pairs of stilts. Marcie is stunned. Alison is actually impressed.

PALACE (CONT'D)
I knew it! I just knew! I knew it the first time you had your journal out. I knew.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

Stop saying things like that. In fact,
stop saying things.

Palace starts distributing the stilts to the group.

ALISON

What just happened here?

MARCIE

Yeah. What did you do?

MARK

Considering Angus' apparent notorious
work ethic these might be logical to have
on hand. Right?

MARCIE

Yeah, but... exactly four pairs?

Mark grabs his stilts grumpily.

MARK

It's a nice round number.

Palace holds out stilts to Marcie.

PALACE

He did it with his words. Just like this
place. Port Bryter has always followed
our collective consciousness... as long
as our collective consciousness is guided
by the power of his words.

Marcie looks at Mark, who tries to avoid her eyes, as they
all start their shaky way across the tidal pool.

PALACE (CONT'D)

(to Marcie)

Don't stare directly into the pool unless
you're prepared to see your past or
future... and perhaps be transported into
the event it chooses for you.

MARCIE

(to Mark)

What's going on here?

MARK

Feel free to stare as much as you like.
I'm pretty sure the continuum portal is
on the fritz.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARCIE

But only pretty sure.

She smiles at him for the first time, instantly (and somewhat magically) becoming about ten times more beautiful. Mark notices. He almost slips and topples over, but Marcie catches him. They share a connective moment.

As they reach the opposite shore and deposit their stilts, they step over Angus, taking care not to rouse him. Mark notices something off to the edge of the path and seems impressed for almost a full second.

MARK

You've got Brain Fruit trees?

PALACE

How could we not?!

ALISON

(explaining to Marcie)

They fuel your brain with ideas and concepts from other worlds and galaxies.

MARCIE

I think I remember. Sort of late in the series, right?

PALACE

Book Four. "The Coming of Teiryxn".

MARCIE

They look like tomatoes.

PALACE

Cross-pollinated with a nectarine. Then they're just woven in with the branches to hang upside down.

MARCIE

So, do they really work?

Mark and Alison look at her.

MARK

What is wrong with you?

MARCIE

Sorry. I guess I'm kind of getting caught up in the spirit.

MARK

Well, stop it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Palace picks a brainfruit from the tree. It comes away from the vine with a sickening SLURP. He hands it to Marcie.

PALACE
See for yourself!

Marcie looks at Mark, who does not approve. She glares back defiantly and takes it. With slight trepidation, she raises it to her mouth. Mark starts walking on, not waiting for the results of the taste test. Marcie takes an exploratory bite. Her face quickly registers the regret of her action. Palace looks at her inquisitively.

MARCIE
Wow. That... doesn't quite work, does it?

PALACE
Not quite. Pretty though!

Palace scampers off to catch up with Mark.

PALACE (CONT'D)
Can I ask you something, Mr. Sinclair?

MARK
Love if you wouldn't.

PALACE
Doesn't it make you a little happy to see how happy you make people?

MARK
I don't see happy people, Palace. I see disturbed, troubled people trapped in a fantasy that should have ended a decade ago.

Palace starts to LAUGH strangely and very loud, looking all around as if trying to prevent someone from hearing what Mark is saying.

PALACE
Ha, ha, ha! Okay, yes! I'm so glad you like it as much as we hoped you would, Mr. Sinclair!
(to Mark in a whisper)
Please keep your voice down.

Mark is taken aback by Palace's behavior.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PALACE (CONT'D)
(still whispering)
I mean... just in case we're in earshot
of the powers that be.

Mark stays quiet, perhaps feeling a little guilty.

MARCIE
Mr. Nivens doesn't have anything to worry
about.

Palace seems momentarily confused.

PALACE
Oh. Mr. Nivens. Yes.

MARCIE
We are completely at his service. Right,
Mark?

Mark strains out a smile. Palace smiles back.

PALACE
Well, he will be most happy to hear that.

MARK
I'd love to tell him face-to-face. A few
things, actually.

PALACE
I think actually we should arrange that.

INT. NIVENS' OFFICE- LATE AFTERNOON

Palace leads Mark into an austere office with a large desk
and framed pictures of yellowing illustrations from Mark's
books that look like they were drawn by a child.

PALACE
Please have a seat, Mr. Sinclair. And
try not to be cross with him. Mr. Nivens
is just trying to protect your wonderful
creations. Same as you and Miss Jordan
are.

Mark settles into a solitary chair in front of the empty desk
as Palace makes himself a root beer float from a sterling
silver service nearby.

PALACE (CONT'D)
Mr. Nivens will be with you in just a
moment. Root beer float?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

No.

Palace walks around the desk and takes a seat in the large, antique leather chair. After a resonant pause, it clicks.

MARK (CONT'D)

You.

PALACE

I was hoping to keep my real intent for your invitation here a secret, but I'm afraid we may be beyond that point now, Mark.

MARK

I'm afraid we are, yes. So you're the current frontrunner for my publishing?

PALACE

Acting on your behalf.

Palace hands Mark a copy of the contract.

PALACE (CONT'D)

This outlines a joint ownership with you retaining all creative and managerial control of course.

MARK

So what's in it for you?

PALACE

I would only require a small portion of profits to keep Port Bryter in full operation. It's a completely honest and transparent contract. Possibly the first and only one in your career.

MARK

Possibly in existence. And I control everything that happens with the books?

PALACE

Absolutely everything.

Mark takes out his pen.

PALACE (CONT'D)

But before you sign it, we will need to renegotiate your current contract here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

Look, I know yesterday's attempt at public speaking wasn't exactly "I have a Dream" quality, but the next one will be phenomenal. I promise.

PALACE

Despite our interest in your appearances here, it's not the words from your mouth that we need to discuss.

Mark looks at him suspiciously, not liking what he's hearing.

PALACE (CONT'D)

It's the ones from your pen. And, as such, a new proposition is required. For a true Book Seven. Your Book Seven. Finally and completely. Wrap up the series the way that only Mark Sinclair can... and you will have your rights back. What would you say to that?

MARK

I would say that I need to talk to my manager.

PALACE

And what would you say if I told you that, unless my terms are agreed to and met with complete specificity,... you'll never see Miss Jordan again?

Palace CHUCKLES menacingly, letting his threat sink in. He takes a dramatic sip of his root beer float.

MARK

Hmmm. Well, then I'd say that, if you're actually threatening Marcie, you should probably let her know.

Mark waves happily over Palace's shoulder to Marcie, who is innocently walking by the open window behind Palace. She waves back, matching Mark's happy expression, and applies some more of her sunblock.

MARK (CONT'D)

(to Palace)

And that you've got ice cream all over your mouth.

Palace wipes his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PALACE

Okay. So I'm not one for hardball tactics.

MARK

No, no. I was pretty worried there for a second. Most evil masterminds tend to hatch their nefarious plots over an ice cream beverage.

PALACE

You sure you don't want one?

Mark signs the contract.

MARK

Bye, Palace.

He gets up to exit.

PALACE

No one can leave Port Bryter, Mark.

Mark provides Palace his fullest attention yet.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Miss Daniels was right. For the past four months we've been held against our will. Only two messages have gotten out in that time. The bottled one to you and the wire transfer this morning to bid on your rights. We're trapped here. And now... so are you.

Mark is silent as he tries to figure out just how serious versus just how crazy Palace is.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Of course, this all started as a wonderful celebration of your work. I built it three years ago, squandering the vast majority of my family inheritance in the process. And your fans came from all over and we embraced your world. People who wanted to be their favorite character for a few days. A week. A month maybe. Back then, Port Bryter was never more than just perhaps a bit peculiar.

Mark arches his eyebrows in agreement.

PALACE (CONT'D)

But then something changed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARK

Oh?

PALACE

When this arrived.

Palace slides a thin book across the desk to Mark.

PALACE (CONT'D)

"Book Seven".

Mark is not happy to see it.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Your Book Seven. Original. Handwritten.

MARK

How did you get this, Palace?

PALACE

I received a letter stating that it indeed existed and offering it for purchase. With a hefty price tag.

MARK

SilverTale's last gasp to raise some capital.

Palace takes a moment to stare accusingly at Mark.

PALACE

I should have saved my money.

MARK

Yep. SilverTale refused to print it. They were pretty horrified. Even told me they had destroyed it. Another lie to add to the pile.

PALACE

I haven't shared it with anyone. I keep it locked away. Please don't mention it to anyone.

MARK

Promised gladly.

PALACE

I think it would prove far too traumatic for your fans, don't you?

MARK

That was kind of the idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PALACE

I don't understand you. Anyway, your Book Seven was the last piece of mail that was delivered here. Four months ago. Before I could even crack it open weird things started happening. Phone reception started getting patchy. I get halfway through chapter two, an underwater fault shift pushes up a line of rocks three hundred feet off the only place to dock. Boats can't get near us anymore. I get to where Kiernan squares off against the Empress Morticol and our backup generator fries itself. It wasn't even in use! Unforecast monsoons. Some kind of static cloud cover that bounces our satellite signals. The list goes on and on. The whole island seemed to be isolating itself. And it started to become harder and harder for certain people to leave here. And do you know which people, Mark?

MARK

The crazy people, Palace? Come on. Anyone with half a head can recognize that you're playing out the central theme of the books. Right? Kiernan gets so wrapped up in the dream world projecting across his walls that it starts getting harder and harder for him to return back out to his actual life. And he's trying to avoid the same thing you and everyone here is trying to avoid... reality. And you're paying them to boot! Of course they're going to stay "stranded" here with you.

PALACE

I have to pay them! It's only fair. I'm just extending their contracts because they can't leave.

MARK

Palace, you need to get some help.

PALACE

I've tried! But I'm not even getting a dial tone anymore...

(suddenly realizing what Mark
is suggesting)

Oh, you mean because you think I'm crazy.

Marcie pokes his head in through the office window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MARCIE

Hi guys! What a gorgeous day. I love this place!

Palace doesn't takes his eyes off of Mark.

PALACE

That's good, Miss Jordan.

(to Mark)

Don't tell her just yet. Please? I love when someone still loves it here.

EXT. BRYTER INN (ROOFTOP RESTAURANT)- NIGHT

As evening settles in, Mark is having a second drink. He is agitated overlooking the curious, almost pulsating glow of Port Bryter. His journal is open, but empty, in front of him. Marcie walks in and she is not happy.

MARK

Have you been able to get a line out of here?

MARCIE

No.

MARK

I haven't been able to find one working phone or computer in this entire sanitarium.

MARCIE

That's what you've been up to? We were supposed to have a planning session three hours ago.

MARK

Actually, if you must know, I was building anticipation for our date.

MARCIE

If we want to stay ahead of Jack, we've got to bounce back strong after this morning's debacle...

She registers what he just said.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

This isn't a date. This is a strategy session.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

You know, arguing about whether or not this is a date is going to make for a very unpleasant date.

MARCIE

This is not a date, Mark.

MARK

Once again, we'll have to agree to disagree.

MARCIE

Well, you need to agree to adjust your attitude a smidge. You need to stay on Nivens' good side.

Mark CHUCKLES.

MARK

Don't worry about Nivens.

MARCIE

I'm worried about Jack Lawler, if you must know. You really want to give him a second shot at ruining your books all over again?

Mark seems puzzled by her animosity towards Jack. Marcie motions outwards to the town.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

You can't tell me that you're not flattered on some level by all of this.

MARK

Marcie, as I'm sure you'll recall, SilverTale took 90% of my royalties in exchange for granting my artistic freedom over these books.

MARCIE

Yes. I negotiated that deal for you. Because that's what you wanted.

MARK

You made more off of me than I did. You and Jack.

MARCIE

Jack taking over "World Within the Walls" was SilverTale's idea, not mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

And then you helped them twist it and commercialize it and overexpose it to the point where there was nothing flattering or special left.

MARCIE

To you. And let's get this straight once and for all. You're the one who walked away, Mark. You alienated and deprecated everyone who was trying to help you to the point where I couldn't even get you a pitch meeting. Your books would have made anybody else nothing but proud.

MARK

Well, they make me nothing but angry and this place makes me nothing but sick to my stomach.

The bartender returns with her drink. She lays a ten down on the bar before Mark can crack his wallet open.

MARK (CONT'D)

You're paying for our date?

She gives him a quick glare.

MARK (CONT'D)

I guess I'm okay with that. I'm a liberated kind of fellow.

MARCIE

I'm going to give you and your angry and sick a little space.

MARK

Something I said?

She takes a sip of her drink.

MARCIE

This tastes like root beer.

MARK

(finishing off his own drink)
Everything does.

Marcie leaves.

ALISON (O.S.)

"Yes".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK

What's that, voice in my head?

He looks up to see Alison strapped into a harness ten feet above his head with cellophane streamers extending from each fingertip out hundreds of feet in every direction.

ALISON

It was just about everything you said.

She references the writing, doodles and scribbles she's been making on her arm.

MARK

Hmmm. I'm usually pretty good at dialogue.

ALISON

Not tonight.

Mark stares at her for a second.

MARK

Okay, I give up.

ALISON

"The Thought Weaver".

MARK

The.... what?

ALISON

From "Forgotten Balance". Gee, I'm not surprised you've forgotten since you only gave her half a page. I got downgraded as a result of my little jailbreak attempt yesterday.

MARK

Sorry. Yeah, I think I got bored with her pretty quickly.

ALISON

I started out here as Kiernan and now I'm a half page character that probably gets absorbed by Gorshes before her intentions are ever even hinted at.

MARK

What do you want from me?!

ALISON

Purpose! A function! Give me something to do up here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARK

I don't know! What do you still like about this place?

She shrugs awkwardly, sending ripples down the cellophane trails.

ALISON

I like the Brain Fruit Gardens.

Mark smiles.

MARK

Yeah. Those were pretty good. Well... you know I was initially going to make the Thought Weaver be in charge of all Brain Fruit fertilization.

ALISON

How?

MARK

Through the Thought Soil.

ALISON

(skeptical)

The what? You just made all that up.

MARK

Prove it.

ALISON

(challenging him)

So write it down.

MARK

What?

ALISON

(reminding him)

The stilts, dumb dumb.

Mark rolls his eyes and takes out his journal. He scrawls down some notes. Alison is softly lowered to the ground. Mark helps her to her feet and she plops into a chair next to him. Mark seems legitimately confused.

MARK

I did that?

ALISON

I think it's just the end of my shift.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARK

(back to reality)

Ah.

She goes back to her sketchbook doodling. Mark peeks to see what she's working on with her sketchbook doodling. It's a beautiful drawing of a very trippy character with small golden cages entrapping each of her glowing knife-wielding hands. Two dark lines trail down her face, covering her eyes. He's genuinely impressed. She notices and starts flipping through her pages for him.

MARK (CONT'D)

You know, I tried like hell to prevent them from putting illustrations in my books. But I like these a lot better than what ended up in there.

Alison perks up. She smiles for the first time.

ALISON

Really?

MARK

Hey, I like this one in particular.

INSERT SHOT: DRAWING

Mark is looking at an elaborate rendering that's a kind of map (presumably of the town). It's covered with arrows, dotted lines and filled with notes.

ALISON (V.O.)

My latest escape plan. Probably the only route I haven't tested.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (ROOFTOP RESTAURANT)- CONTINUOUS

Mark studies the picture.

ALISON

Not like I'm in any hurry to get home. The other stuff in there just helps me empty my head. Kind of a visual journal.

Mark taps his tattered notebook and slides it next to hers.

MARK

I used to keep a journal, when I was a kid. A chronology of all my dreams. And nightmares. It was massive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alison smiles, enchanted. Marcie comes back to the bar with her empty glass. She is right behind Mark, overhearing them, but he doesn't notice her.

MARK (CONT'D)

I used to set my alarm for the middle of the night to snap myself up so all the dreams would still be fresh in my head. I did that for years. Age seven through... twenty-seven.

Alison traces the cover's tattered edge with her finger.

ALISON

So ... where's the rest?

MARK

(shrugs ironically)
Lost my dreams.

ALISON

That's sad.

MARK

Not as sad as having them compromised away from you. Don't ever let that happen. Promise me. Okay, brat?

Behind him, Marcie is soaking all this in. Alison sees her, but Marcie signals to keep it quiet.

ALISON

Okay. I promise.

INT. MARCIE'S HOTEL ROOM- LATER

She settles into bed and notices Mark's six "World Within the Walls" books, in every imaginable language, displayed in a bookcase. She smiles and pulls out the first one.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- MORNING

Mark is walking around the bizarre, ornately decorated town center, re-connecting with all of his literary creations. His train of thought is disrupted by a group of ten strangely-dressed, robed musicians (like elders in a coven) overtake a small stage. They carry far-out instruments that appear to have been created in another dimension. The band quickly begins to create a cacophonous RACKET.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Despite the horrible noise, the cast of WWITW characters in attendance start an elaborate choreographed celebration, dancing around the scene waving torches of different colored fire and throwing handfuls of "jewels" into the air, letting them rain down over everything.

Mark squints in aural discomfort. Marcie suddenly pops up behind him.

MARCIE

The Festival of the Myriad Constant!

He spins around to greet her. She looks excited and happy, which makes her look especially beautiful.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

"The Gathering of the Quiath"!

MARK

(remembering with a trace of a smile)

Right. Okay.

MARCIE

I should have known it better at the time! Sorry!

MARK

Sorrow noted.

He smiles at her.

MARK (CONT'D)

Again.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (GARDEN PATHS)- A LITTLE LATER

Away from the racket of the Festival, they walk past a tree of signs pointing in every imaginable direction, identifying such nearby attractions as "The Fountain of Nyphot", "Runcorn" and "McTeagle's Drop Off... EXTREME CAUTION".

MARCIE

You know Mark, most people couldn't fill six books with all this in ten lifetimes. I'm really excited about getting them back for you. Any ideas for Book Seven?

MARK

Not yet. Nothing on paper anyway.

MARCIE

Are you maybe avoiding testing Palace's theory?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

What theory?

MARCIE

You know. Whatever you commit to on paper... becomes...

MARK

No.

MARCIE

(playfully)

You scared?

MARK

Maybe I should have tried at breakfast. They brought me the wrong toast three times.

MARCIE

I haven't been this excited about my job in a long time.

MARK

It's nice to see.

MARCIE

Thank you, Mark. This all really means a lot to me.

MARK

Me too.

Their moment is interrupted rudely by Jack, who pops his head up from a nearby overgrown spot of garden. He's now dressed as a tangle of snake scale-covered flowery weeds.

JACK

Hypocrite!

MARK

Wow. You really have to get weeds at their root.

JACK

(impressed with himself)

I changed characters so I could be a little more mobile in this freak show. I knew you had a plan, Sinclair. You've never had any sort of a poker face.

Marcie looks at Mark, studying his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK
(nodding to her)
More of a "Crazy Eights" face.

JACK
You guys are partnering up against me,
huh? Lots of luck. I've got some
partners of my own back in civilization.
But at least I can keep my eye on you
both of you this way.
(to Marcie)
And to think I almost went into business
with you.

MARK
What!?

JACK
Oh, she didn't tell you?

Marcie is a combination of mortified and embarrassed as she
turns to Mark, barely able to look at him.

MARCIE
No. I didn't.

JACK
We were this close to starting our own
imprint off of SilverTale.

Jack holds his fingers an inch apart. Mark looks at Marcie's
averted eyes.

MARK
That is... remarkably close.

MARCIE
I'd say your depth perception is just a
little off, you scum sucking parasite!
It took me exactly one and a half
meetings to pull out of your consortium
of vermin.

JACK
(scoffing)
Ootch.

MARCIE
(making her case to Mark)
Then he stole all my contacts and
completely torched my reputation from one
end of the publishing industry to the
other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

Well, those vermin and I have big plans for "World Within the Walls". It's going to be the cornerstone of our business.

MARCIE

You should really be more careful around this guy's pen, Lawler. It packs a wallop.

MARK

Enough with that already.

He turns to Jack.

MARCIE

You attract more bees with honey, Jack.

MARK

I thought it was "flies".

Mark scribbles the phrase both ways in his journal.

MARK (CONT'D)

Hmmm. Maybe you're right.

Mark crosses out the "flies" option on the page.

JACK

I'm allergic to bees.

MARK

Well then, don't change a thing.

Marcie starts squinting at Jack.

JACK

What's that? The evil eye? Bring it on, sweetheart. I'm not superstitious.

MARCIE

No, I'm just getting a lot of morning glare off your head. Would you mind pointing it a little that way?

Irritated, Jack complies, taking an exaggeratedly large step to the left. Marcie's mouth drops when she sees that Jack has put himself within about a foot or two of a monstrous, pulsating beehive that didn't seem to be there a moment ago.

She nudges Mark, who is still trying to figure out what the correct phrase is. Mark looks up as hundreds of bees start to swarm from the hive and encircle Jack. Mark watches in worried amazement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JACK
What?

MARK
Nothing.

MARCIE
No. Not nothing.

MARK
Well, no. You're right. I take that
back.

MARCIE
Something. I'd say. Wouldn't you?

She looks at Mark, waiting for him to acknowledge his power.

MARCIE (CONT'D)
Finally?

MARK
Okay. Maybe something.

Jack finally notices the tornado of bees forming around him
and starts to panic.

MARK (CONT'D)
Easy, Jack. They smell fear.

MARCIE
(tantalizingly)
Delicious, honey-scented fear.

JACK
(whispers)
Please help me.

Mark runs over to the start of a steep trail.

MARK
Quick! Through here!

As Jack runs by him, Mark moves backwards and reveals a sign
that he was unwittingly obscuring ("McTeagle's Drop Off...
EXTREME CAUTION"). Mark sees the sign.

MARK (CONT'D)
Oh...

EXT. PORT BRYTER (CLIFF SIDE)- CONTINUOUS

Jack, silhouetted by the gleaming rising sun in the mid-morning sky, goes sailing over the cliff and into the ocean below. Despite his effort to swim back to shore, the tide seems to shift and take him further out to sea.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (MCTEAGLE'S DROP OFF)- CONTINUOUS

Mark throws a nearby life preserver down to the struggling Jack. The water diverts the life preserver away from him and continues to push him away from safety.

Marcie grabs his journal, opens it for him, and hands it back.

MARK

Marcie...

MARCIE

(interrupting)

You know you can.

Mark SIGHS and writes something on a blank page. In an instant a portion of the sea starts glowing fiery red as a very small volcano erupts underneath the waves behind Jack. It spurts up instantly cooling, hardening lava which lifts Jack from the water and forms a walkway for him back to the shore. Mark nods, acquiescing.

MARK

Okay. That was very cool.

Marcie is bursting with giddiness.

MARCIE

Book Seven! Page one!

MARK

Geez. A little tough to follow. What's that leave for page two?

MARCIE

At least everyone will turn to find out. You should tell Palace you're off to a strong start.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (LIGHTHOUSE PATH)- LATE AFTERNOON

Palace is following Mark through a tiny underpass cut into the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PALACE

How strong a start? Do you have anything for me to look over yet?

MARK

Oh yeah, actually. I was hoping you'd ask.

Mark hands over his journal. Palace is very excited.

INSERT SHOT: A CARTOONISH DRAWING

It's Palace in a straightjacket with a cuckoo bird extending on a little platform from an open door in the center of his forehead.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (LIGHTHOUSE PATH)- CONTINUOUS

Mark is teasingly apologetic.

MARK

I'm not great with visuals.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (FIREWORK FLOWER FIELD)- CONTINUOUS

They emerge on the other side of the underpass. They are in a field of flowers and within view of a beautiful old lighthouse. Mark picks up his pace, but Palace follows right along. He hands Mark his journal back.

PALACE

Not funny. And by the way, Marcie told me about this morning. Why do you think you're the only one who can control the energy here? It knows you. And it recognizes your writing. You wrote Book Seven freehand.

MARK

Oh, Port Bryter dabbles in graphology when it's not shooin' boats away?

PALACE

I think it knows your tone and your penmanship. Yes. And it knows that you're finally here!

MARK

Come on, Palace! Are you listening to yourself?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PALACE

But it doesn't quite trust you anymore because it knows that you wrote those words in that Book Seven. The words that tried to shut it down.

MARK

It should have been a nice tidy end to everything. But SilverTale sued me back to the drawing board.

PALACE

I'm guessing they wanted a version more in keeping with the magic of the rest of the series.

They pass between two rows of characters walking their way, each row alternating perfectly in the vibrant color of their elaborate hairdos and their gowns.

PALACE (CONT'D)

The Tribunal of Kawth.

MARK

I KNOW!!!!

EXT. PORT BRYTER (LIGHTHOUSE)- CONTINUOUS

They reach the lighthouse and Mark starts climbing the circular staircase winding around and up it. Palace is close behind.

PALACE

I hate to say it, Mark, but you're right back at that drawing board.

MARK

Am I now?

PALACE

Port Bryter isn't any happier with Book Seven than SilverTale was. Than I was. Than anyone would be. And, just like the rest of us, it's waiting for a true Book Seven. Not Lawler's imposter style and concepts. A Book Seven by it's true creator. Don't you see?

MARK

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PALACE

It knows it's incomplete. That's why...
(whispers)
... it's misbehaving.

MARK

You do realize that I'm trying to get
away from you, right?

PALACE

Excuse me, but I come here every day!

They walk out onto the lighthouse's observation deck which
overlooks the beach below. Mark nods and smiles as he looks
out over their view.

MARK

Ah... So you do.

Far below them, Alison is on the beach, sketching in her pad.

PALACE

(without looking up)
I've been in love with her ever since she
stole my hibatchi and every windbreaker
in town and tried to escape via a
makeshift hot air balloon.

MARK

So go talk to her, dummy.

PALACE

(horrified)
No!

Mark gets up and waves, trying to signal to her.

MARK

Hey! Alison! Palace here thinks you're
swell!

Alison, way out of earshot, doesn't flinch. Palace pulls him
away from the railing.

PALACE

I am begging you to stop!

Mark climbs up on the railing.

MARK

Yoo hoo!!! Down there!!! Object of
Nivens' weirdo affection!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PALACE

Shhh! No one else knows I'm Nivens.

Mark smiles again and jumps down.

MARK

Why not?

PALACE

I want them to treat like a normal person.

MARK

Well, luck to you there. Geez. What am I going to do with you?

EXT. PORT BRYTER (BEACH)- A LITTLE LATER

Angus, the boatsman, is maneuvering a large rowboat outfitted with a massive, oval magnifying glass atop a tall mast pole twenty feet high. He starts rowing his way towards the nearest giant sea candle.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (LIGHTHOUSE DECK)- CONTINUOUS

The lighthouse beacon circles around out to sea where Angus has positioned his rowboat in front of a sea candle, the magnifying oval stretches high up near the wick. As the lighthouse beam hits the glass, it sparks the wick and ignites the giant candle, filling the horizon with added bluish white glow. Angus sets out for the next one.

Palace is hugging his knees to his chest, staring at Alison on the beach far below. Three of the huge sea candles are now lit and blazing beautifully as the first tinges of sunset begin to emerge.

PALACE

She's so stubborn. And it's getting more and more difficult to keep her safe here. As much as I don't like it when people stray too far from your words, Port Bryter really doesn't approve. Now people are terrified to flub one line of your dialogue because the town might...

He looks around nervously again.

PALACE (CONT'D)

(whispers)
... retaliate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The wind picks up and blows a flap from the awning covering them against Palace's root beer float, spilling it all down the front of his shirt.

PALACE (CONT'D)

See!? I try to keep from saying things against it. Especially when I'm outside. It's taken on a life of its own... protecting your words because your words created it.

MARK

Listen to me, my bonkers little wacko, you created this. You're keeping everyone here and you're blaming the town for how you're running things.

Even though Mark's words are stern, there is an almost big brotherly tone.

PALACE

No. The balance of power has shifted. Port Bryter has collected the people who excelled at being in your world. The people who really stood out. The people... *that it liked*. But now it won't let us go.

MARK

You really believe that you're trapped here, don't you?

MARK (CONT'D)

In the last four months only two things have been able to make it out of here. The message to you.... by bottle. And the money to regain your legacy. Rewrite Book Seven and Port Bryter will release us all. I know it will. And your books can be born again, Mark!

Mark stares at the blank page in his journal, mulling over what Palace has just said.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (BEACH)- DUSK

As the sun sets, Alison is sketching in her pad by the light of the giant sea candles blazing all around the shoreline.

MARK

You'll ruin your eyes like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALISON

Angus keeps things bright enough for me.
I come here every night to draw.

She hands him her sketchpad.

MARK

Yeah, I've heard.

After being initially impressed by her latest creations, Mark starts flipping backwards in her book.

ALISON

I did some work in the Brain Fruit
Gardens. Like you said.

MARK

Alison...

ALISON

And it looked like the thought
fertilization was taking.

MARK

I was just trying to...

ALISON

And, as of this morning, they had changed
color a little. And maybe got a little
bigger. Neat, right?

He looks at her as she looks at him, temporarily re-
invigorated. He decides not to burst her bubble.

INSERT SHOT: ALISON'S SKETCHBOOK

Mark stops on the picture of her latest proposed escape route
off the island.

BACK TO:

EXT. PORT BRYTER (BEACH)- CONTINUOUS

Alison looksShe goes into a nearby picnic basket plopped into
the sand.

ALISON

Everyone's talking about your deal with
Nivens.

MARK

Book Seven?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALISON

Forget Book Seven! They're already making guesses about books eight, nine, ten, and so on.

Mark does not look happy.

MARK

The headlines keep getting better and better.

ALISON

Pretty cool extended canvas you suddenly get to paint on, huh?

Mark, nodding, takes her words in, clearly disturbed.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

EXT. PORT BRYTER (FOREST TRAIL)- NIGHT

Mark is creeping along with his small duffel bag trying to find a way out of the town. He passes in front of weird, polished stones of all different sizes, shapes and colors that throw off jagged reflections like twisted mirrors. Faces seem to form in them and then dissipate as he turns around looking for the reflections' source which are never there.

He takes out the escape plan that he stole from Alison's sketch book and references his position. He take four large steps to the right, but tree roots trap him, pulling one of his shoes off and lodging it in its crevice permanently. He gives up trying to free it and continues along. Ground falls out underneath him into undulating sinkholes blocking off one direction. Branches and brambles thicken out of nothingness, blocking another attempted route.

Mark gets increasingly frustrated and disturbed as he shakes the escape map. The nearest clearing seems to get farther and farther away, closing up like a cold flower. A fog crackling with static electricity rolls in obscuring anything left that was even remotely clear or familiar to him. He sees a face in one of the weird stones that he sort of recognizes. He turns around and is face-to-face with Alison. And she's pissed.

ALISON

Taking some time for a little reflection?

MARK

Jesus! You scared the crap out of me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She holds up her sketch book to the section still marked by a small torn piece of the page that Mark helped himself to.

ALISON
Where are you going?

MARK
Getting the hell out of here. Then I'll send someone with a fleet of kayaks to tow everyone back to the mainland. I'm our best chance.

ALISON
You're not leaving. Not now.

MARK
Watch me.

ALISON
Um, I've been watching you for over an hour now. I'm getting a little bored.

A mass of vines descend from the side of a nearby tree and wrap themselves around the flashlight that Mark is holding, constricting it until it shatters and flickers to darkness.

MARK
(desperate)
How can it be doing all this?!

ALISON
(shrugs)
It likes you. You don't see it, but you're already bringing new things to everyone here.

MARK
OW!

He rubs his forearms.

MARK (CONT'D)
How did Palace make stinging fog?!!

Alison rolls her eyes impatiently.

ALISON
You made it. In Book Five.

MARK
Yeah! Okay, I made it **up!** But how did he **make** it!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALISON

You're still not getting it. This place
is all you.

He rubs his bare arms and tries to blow away the fog.

MARK

Christ! Ow!

ALISON

That's why it's not letting you leave.
You're responsible whether you want to be
or not. You're responsible for six books
that changed people's lives. For
inspiring people to pull the dreams out
of their heads, pin them on their bedroom
walls and follow them to wherever they
lead. And you're responsible... just
even last night... for giving me
something to really love about that empty
character I got stuck with. Look, I grew
this for you.

She holds out a large Brain Fruit for him, perfectly round
and beautiful.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Through the thought soil. Just like you
said.

He smiles a bit and takes it. She turns and starts heading
back to town. He calls after her.

MARK

Alison, I need to move on with my life.
And so do all of you. There's got to be
a way out of here.

ALISON

(calling back over her
shoulder)

I'm busy with my thought soil. Write
your own way out. That's the only way.
For all of us. Unfortunately you're the
one we have to count on.

Mark, defeated at least for now, looks at the Brain Fruit.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (GARDENS)- DAWN

Along a lonely cliff side expanse, Mark is sitting working in
his journal by the entrance to a lush garden as the sun
rises. He's not happy with what he's producing and rips the
current page out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A DELIGHTFUL NERD is nearby, outfitted in a suit made up of jigsaw puzzle pieces. Every once in a while, he loses a piece of himself and has to retrieve it and secure it back into place. He is observing Mark as he reads one of his books, but he is turning the pages in the direction of back to front.

DELIGHTFUL NERD

You should start with the last chapter.

MARK

What?

DELIGHTFUL NERD

That's the most important one, right? I always read the last chapter first.

MARK

Kind of ruins the suspense, I'd imagine.

DELIGHTFUL NERD

Well, I get panic attacks and have generalized anxiety, and asthma. So, it's more of a safety precaution for you.

MARK

Then that makes sense.

DELIGHTFUL NERD

But it also makes me feel like I really know your characters before I even start the story with them. Like we're friends. It's important to feel like friends from page one. To me anyway. That's why I always start at the end.

Mark smiles contemplatively.

MARK

Hmmm.

Marcie approaches, admiring the view and carrying two cups of coffee.

DELIGHTFUL NERD

(to Marcie)

Hi!

MARCIE

Oh, hello there.

DELIGHTFUL NERD

I'm helping him write.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

Yes. He's been invaluable.

MARCIE

Palace cornered me for breakfast.

MARK

I am so sorry.

MARCIE

He told me everything.

MARK

I thought it was all in his head. Turns out, it might not be.

MARCIE

Like it or not, it all seems to be in yours. I thought you could use this.

She hands him a coffee which he gratefully accepts.

MARK

Wow. You're like something out of a dream.

MARCIE

I thought you don't remember your dreams anymore.

MARK

Sad but true.

MARCIE

So... the long-awaited Book Seven. How's it coming?

MARK

Slowly. There's none of this crap left in my head anymore.

DELIGHTFUL NERD

Start with the ending. I'm telling you. You'll thank me.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOPIARY GARDENS)- A LITTLE LATER

Marcie and Mark wander through a beautiful, lush garden. Bizarre topiaries decorate both sides of their path. Everything is perfectly manicured, but the shapes are a little unsettling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCIE

A lot of pressure on you right now, I guess.

MARK

Are we still in the lead to get the rights?

MARCIE

We don't know. Jack has been going crazy trying to get some news. Meanwhile, people are already camped out all over the town... waiting to see whatever you write start to take root.

MARK

I still think Palace has got these people brainwashed.

MARCIE

Maybe. But they do seem to have a strange collective consciousness that is very open to your words, Mark.

She looks around them at bizarre topiary creatures and jagged and jarring abstract shapes carved into the plants. Marcie is excited to recognize it.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

"Shaeleerah's Garden"?

MARK

Kind of a wishing well that works in reverse.

MARCIE

I know! You leave something you don't like about yourself or that you're afraid of here and then it takes the form of these.

She motions to the sculpted vegetation. Mark seems surprised that she's on top of this.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

I've been refreshing my memory.

MARK

I see.

MARCIE

So, we're actually in the perfect spot...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She positions him at a designated place in the garden, marked by an octagonal stone.

MARK

What are we doing?

MARCIE

Not we. You. I want you to leave all the resentment you have for your past.

MARK

Come on, Marcie.

MARCIE

I'm serious. I think you've got yourself brainwashed. What's more real than all of this? These people? This town? The energy here?

MARK

Just because we're cut off here doesn't mean that there's some mysterious lifeforce enforcing my story lines.

MARCIE

I've seen your words doing some pretty magical things here, Mark. Something's reacting to what you put in that journal of yours. Whether you buy into the magic or not, everyone here thinks the only thing that's going to allow them to leave is you finishing the series.

MARK

Fine. Let's just get my rights back. They can think whatever they want.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (PALACE'S BUNGALOW)- EARLY EVENING

All is dark in Port Bryter. Mark knocks and opens the door to Palace's candlelit home simultaneously.

MARK

Hey, Palace...

INT. PORT BRYTER (PALACE'S BUNGALOW)- CONTINUOUS

Mark walks in, offering a handful of handwritten pages. Palace, startled, rushes over to him from an adjoining room.

MARK

What's up with the blackout?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PALACE

I'm told our main generator is out. It happens every once in a while.

MARK

Per our contract, here's the first three chapters for you to...

Mark notices the dining room where it looks like Palace is in the middle of a romantic dinner.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, buddy. You busy?

PALACE

Uh... sort of. I'm practicing.

INT. PALACE'S BUNGALOW (DINING ROOM)- CONTINUOUS

Mark walks into the dining room where a table has been set for two with about fifty candles, but seated at the other place setting is a cardboard cut out of Alison. A big unnatural smile has been pasted over her mouth.

MARK

Oh boy.

PALACE

Practicing a date with her.

MARK

Oh geez.

PALACE

It's not her real smile, but she's always frowning when I take her picture.

MARK

Oh wow.

PALACE

Thursdays are our "date night".

MARK

Oh geez christ wow stop.

PALACE

I had some different outfits made for her.

MARK

Please stop telling me about this. It's too close to my bedtime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mark tosses the first chapters down on the nearest chair. Palace grabs a nearby candle and snatches them up eagerly.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sorry I can't stay for dinner.

PALACE

You weren't invited.

MARK

Thank you for that at least.

EXT. PALACE'S BUNGALOW- CONTINUOUS

Palace is already a page into Mark's chapter as he follows him outside. Mark hears something and looks up to the sky. The clouds are thick so there's nothing to be seen.

MARK

Sounds like a helicopter.

PALACE

Not way out here.

Off in the close distance of the town a flare shoots up and poofs a sparkle of color into the dark night sky. Palace still hasn't looked up from Mark's pages.

PALACE (CONT'D)

This is great! Can you have another two chapters by tomorrow morning?

MARK

I don't know. I'm having a late supper with a plank of wood. That's going to require most of my imagination.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- MORNING

Palace is driving Mark and Marcie around in his wild and garish, customized golf cart. They zig zag around as cracks in walls and pathways in front of them seal themselves. Broken steps reconnect. A gust of breeze peels old, faded and dirty paint from walls like a shedding skin, revealing bright pastels underneath. The wind is accompanied by a slight darkening of the skies.

Palace is excitedly multi-tasking (reading Mark's latest chapters and steering). It is a nerve-wracking balance especially as Mark is trying unsuccessfully to enjoy a rootbeer float which is sloshing all over the place. Mark tries to pawn it off on Marcie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

Can you hold this for me?

MARCIE

(laughs)

Not a chance!

MARK

(to Palace)

Can Marcie or I maybe take the wheel for a while, Palace? I'm licensed to operate excessively silly vehicles.

PALACE

(looking up from the pages)

Look at this place! I mean, this is the town epicenter where all the positive energy has always been. But still...

He motions to everything around them, in bloom and born again. The fountain in front of them gurgles forth a final belch of dirty algae ooze and then offers a strong steady stream of crystal clear water.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Look at that! That hasn't worked for over a year now!

MARCIE

Pretty quick reflexes on this town.

Marcie looks at Mark to suggest, once again, that his pen is the inciting influence to all this.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (FIREWORK FLOWER FIELD)- MOMENTS LATER

Palace takes the golf cart down a path that cuts through the center of a huge field of swaying flowers that are alternately exploding and fading in bursts of beautiful bright colors. Palace finds the reference in Mark's pages.

PALACE

"a huge field of swaying flowers that are alternately exploding and fading like fireworks in bursts of beautiful bright colors!" See?

MARK

The Paulan Fields of Essence.

MARCIE

A lot of pollen out there for sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PALACE
No, Miss Jordan.
(spelling it out for her)
"P-a-u-l-a-n".

MARK
For Paula.

Marcie is charmed.

MARCIE
She is going to freak. Thank you.

MARK
Welcome. But I'm stuck on the last
third. Apparently I've got no ending.
Watch this...

Palace stops the cart as Mark scribbles down a quick idea in his journal. A bird swoops down from the increasingly storm-infused clouds, tears out the page and flies off with it. Mark isn't fazed in the least.

MARK (CONT'D)
Bye now. That's been going on all
morning. Want to see it again.

Mark writes down something else and then, unimpressed, tears it out and holds it up, offering it to be sacrificed. A goat shows up from out of nowhere and gobbles it out of his hand.

MARK (CONT'D)
(to the goat)
No swimming for at least an hour.

MARCIE
Maybe they're not the right ending for
the story.

MARK
Says who?

PALACE
I told you that Port Bryter will
ultimately be your final critic.

MARK
See, when you say things like that... this
is why people don't hang out with you.

PALACE
I don't care about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK
You need a friend, Palace.

PALACE
You're my friend.

MARK
No, I'm not.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (FOREST TRAIL)- MOMENTS LATER

Driving onward, they almost hit Alison, who comes along out of nowhere on a bicycle. Palace slams on the brakes very dramatically, with very undramatic results (it being a golf cart).

MARK
(over dramatically to Palace)
Wow! Nice reflexes!
(to Alison)
He just saved your life, young lady!

PALACE
Are you unhurt, Miss Daniels?

ALISON
I think so since you missed me by like four feet.

MARK
Well, I still think you should be checked out at the infirmary just to be safe. Sometimes you don't feel a really serious injury for hours after an accident.

Marcie looks at Mark with a sly smile.

MARCIE
What are you up to?

Mark points excitedly over Palace's shoulder.

MARK
Hey, cool! You guys made an Ice Monkey? From Book Two?

PALACE
No. Where? We tried, but...

Alison is looking with interest as well.

MARK
Not you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He grabs Alison's face and twists it back towards him as Palace cranes his neck towards the forest.

ALISON
(through an intense whisper)
I'm fine.

Mark pinches Alison's arm. She YELPS just as Palace is turning back around.

PALACE
Are you okay?

A RUMBLE of thunder is heard off in the distance as the skies overhead darken further.

MARK
Clearly not. Internal damage probably.
From the almost impact of the near-
collision. But I'm no doctor.

Mark snatches the key from the golf cart and throws it into the forest.

MARK (CONT'D)
Clumsy me. Could you grab those, buddy?

PALACE
Uh... yeah.

As Palace heads into the brush, Mark addresses Alison again.

MARK
I spent the whole morning teaching him
how to ask you out and he's hopeless.
This is the only way the ice between you
is going to even crack much less break.

ALISON
I'll keep our ice as is, thank you.

MARCIE
Go on one date with the poor guy.

MARK
For me?

ALISON
No way.

MARK
You can illustrate Book Seven.

She can't believe her ears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALISON
Are you serious?

MARK
Two dates.

ALISON
(still excited)
Okay!

MARK
The first date should go pretty well
because he's been practicing.

ALISON & MARCIE
(in unison)
What?

MARK
But you have to smooch on date two.

MARCIE
And hand hold.

ALISON
"Hand hold" meaning make physical contact
with his hand or guide him through the
date step-by-step?

Another CLAP of thunder echoes... louder and closer.

PALACE
I can't find the key.

MARK
Damn! You'll just have to carry her.

Alison fires a look at Mark.

MARCIE
Yeah. I mean, let's be cautious about
this.

Alison points over Palace's shoulder.

ALISON
There's the key! In the birdbath.

Palace turns around allowing Alison just enough time to punch
Mark's arm as hard as she can.

MARK
Ow!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Palace turns around.

PALACE
Is every-

MARK
(interrupting him)
Ice Monkey.

Palace looks away and Mark stomps on Alison's foot.

ALISON
OWW!!!

She starts hopping on her intact leg.

MARCIE
Wow. You guys better get going. Who knows what other internal trauma is going to come to the surface if you keep hanging around here.

PALACE
Okay. Hang on, Miss Daniels.

Palace swoops her up in his arms.

ALISON
Oh, for godsake.

Alison glares at Mark over Palace's shoulder as they start off for the infirmary. Mark beams back and waves at her with the golf cart key still in his hand. Marcie kisses Mark's cheek as a light drizzle starts to fall on them.

MARK
What was that for?

MARCIE
For being very sweet. That was the most excited I've ever seen Palace. Except at the prospect of bringing the true Book Seven to the world.

Mark LAUGHS.

MARK
To the world?

MARCIE
What's funny about that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARK

Marcie, Book Seven isn't moving one inch off Port Bryter.

MARCIE

What are you talking about?

MARK

We're not publishing this. I hand the book over to Palace so maybe everyone can get out of this place. Otherwise this book isn't making its way to anyone. I have control over what happens with it. It's in my contract. "Final say".

A streak of lightning precedes another HIT of thunder.

MARCIE

He meant "final say" creatively, Mark.

MARK

If Palace wants to get in on the publishing business, he can start with "Crippled Eagle".

It's Marcie's turn to hit Mark. And she does... hard.

MARK (CONT'D)

Ow! That's my rootbeer float holding arm!

MARCIE

You complete, soulless jerk! I mortgaged my business. Everything I have. For Mark Sinclair. So that you can get your rights back to "World Within the Walls". And so you could just shut it all off again?

MARK

If I don't, I will never be accepted for doing anything else, Marcie. Why can't you understand that?

The drizzle turns into a full rain. Mark pulls his jacket around him tighter. Marcie doesn't seem to notice (or care).

MARCIE

I'm sorry you're so broken, Mark. I thought Port Bryter was starting to heal you.

The leaves of the woods around them start to rustle violently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

An impressive army of about twenty dark PURPLE WARRIORS emerge and surround them. They are each about four feet high with dour stone faces and piercing eyes. At the ends of each of their arms is what looks like a mouth, struggling to stay closed around long, razor-sharp teeth inside. Drool is pouring from the mouth hands as they "breathe", opening and closing ever so slightly. Intimidating as they are, in a flash they disappear.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

You wrote those guys?

Mark seems confused as he looks at the small footprints in the dirt all around them.

MARK

Sort of.

MARCIE

Lovely.

She walks away just as Jack strolls up the path resplendent again with his needless cane and flashy civilian clothes. He calls after Marcie as she walks away.

JACK

Bitch!

Mark grabs Jack by the collar.

JACK (CONT'D)

Mark! Ah, excellent! I've been looking for you all morning.

MARK

Out of costume, Jack? Nivens isn't going to stand for that very long.

JACK

I could not care less about what Nivens may or may not stand for. In fact, he needs to start caring a lot more about what I may or may not stand for.

MARK

Oh?

JACK

Let's just say I received a very special delivery last night.

MARK

So I did hear a helicopter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JACK

He could barely find this godforsaken place. I had to shoot up a flare for him to make his drop.

MARK

You took that poor fisherman's flare gun, you prick?

JACK

He offered! So anyway, guess who you're looking at, pal?

Mark goes to say something, but Jack interrupts.

JACK (CONT'D)

No, don't. You're just going to say something you'll immediately regret. I'll just tell you. You are looking at the new owner... of you, Sinclair! As of midnight yesterday, you and your buddies were officially outbid. Signed, sealed and everything else. Everything "World Within the Walls" was delivered to me right here last night. In a big cozy box.

Jack is absolutely beaming. The rain picks up, pelting them hard. Another closer flash of lightning eviscerates the sky overhead and, as quickly as they disappeared, the little purple warriors are now back and amassed in a silent circle around Jack and Mark. Their faces now share a strange and rather chilling smile. Jack SCREAMS.

JACK (CONT'D)

What they hell are those things?

Huge thunder BURSTS their ears and smiling little guys vanish once again.

JACK (CONT'D)

Geez. Friends of yours, I'm guessing?

Mark is disturbed and distracted.

MARK

Wrong as usual, Jack.

JACK

Not this time.

Jack looks around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

JACK (CONT'D)

And all of this, as I see it, is
copyright infringement. On my copyright!

Mark grudgingly takes his final defeat.

MARK

Let Palace have the town, Jack. What are
you going to do with it?

JACK

Are you kidding? Once I re-issue your
books, I'm going to turn this place into
the most horrendous amusement park and
resort that I can. It's going to be
disgusting! And perfect! One will feed
the other and vice versa! Hey, and I
hear you're working on Book Seven.

MARK

Not for you, Jack.

Jack shrugs.

JACK

Oh, what do I care? I've got deals lined
up that will keep me busy all year.
Action figures. Posters. Coloring
books.

Each of these eventualities is like a stabbing jolt of pain
into Mark's soul.

JACK (CONT'D)

Video games. Christmas tree ornaments.
Marshmallow cereals. Everything you
fought SilverTale on seven years ago.

With another pairing of thunder and lightning, Jack drops the
jokey, jabby tone and turns dead serious. He grabs Mark's
arm.

JACK (CONT'D)

Only this time, I'll be the one calling
the shots. It's a dream come true.

Mark glares at him with seething hatred.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- A LITTLE LATER

It is still raining and Mark, frustrated, wet and exhausted,
stumbles through a clearing in the woods. Mark shouts to the
town, his voice barely audible over the pelting rain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

You're not magic! You're not alive!
You're clearly not under any influence of
mine otherwise I'd be long gone. I've
got nothing more to offer you! You hear
me?! Okay?! And there is certainly
nothing for me here!

He trips over something and then tries to walk on, but his remaining shoe is embedded in the mud where he tripped. Irritated, he tries to retrieve his foot, but finds something next to it encased in the sopping dirt. The rain begins to ease as Mark pushes the mud from around the edges of the shallowly-buried object. It looks like a book.

INSERT SHOT: MUDDY BOOK

The last of the rain washes away the dirt from the cover which reads "Dreams" on its lower half. The top half of the cover has been burned away.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN CENTER)- CONTINUOUS

The irritation on Mark's face streams away with the last drops of rain from the sky. He is astonished. He picks up the book and stares at it for a moment then, with trembling fingers, he opens it. His eyes widen further.

INT. MARK'S HOTEL ROOM- MUCH LATER

Mark is in a daze, settled back at his desk. His "Book of..." journal is in front of him and the freshly unearthed "... Dreams" book is next to it, turned to the very last page. He has just finished reading through his old book. As if in a trance, he starts writing feverishly. The lights in the room start to flicker as if signaling their approval. Mark smiles to himself and nods. He looks at Alison's Brainfruit which he has set in front of him. He picks it up and takes a bite, but his pen never stops moving.

EXT. PORT BRYTER INN- MORNING

Mark, carrying his completed last chapters of Book Seven wrapped with a nice bow, exits from his room and closes the door behind him. He is immediately surprised by the snow storm that is raging! He goes back inside, grabs a jacket and then makes his way down the stairs on the landing, tucking the chapters safe inside his jacket.

EXT. PORT BRYTER INN (STAIRWELL)- CONTINUOUS

As Mark is walking down the flight of stairs, the snow turns to rain. A legitimate thunderstorm actually.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mark stops, troubled, and walks up the stairs again and into what has now become a full force blizzard. He hurries back down the stairs, through the thunderstorm to the ground level where the rain is nonexistent.

It's a bright sunny day. Mark looks very concerned.

MARK

This can't be happening. Not this fast.

Mark slowly looks up. Just above his head, the thunderstorm is still raging, but completely contained.

MARK (CONT'D)

No, no, no. Give me a little time here, okay?

PALACE (O.S.)

Mark!

Mark lowers his head back to eye level and sees a panicked Palace staring right at him about a foot away.

MARK

I know. Here.

He stuffs the new chapters into Palace's hand.

MARK (CONT'D)

That's everything but the last page or two. I still don't quite have our ending.

PALACE

What the heck is going on, Mark? This isn't supposed to be possible. Just you and me... right? I mean, we're the only ones here who've seen it.

Mark swats the pages he has handed over to Palace.

MARK

Right. But something is giving it power. Just keep reading this.

They are both starting to sweat from the oppressive heat and humidity baking the atmosphere around them like a kiln. Mark untucks his shirt and unbuttons a few. Palace takes off his shoes and rolls up his pant legs as he starts into Mark's new chapters.

Marcie walks over to them. She is applying her sunblock and motioning to the ominous, swirling darkness now a few feet above them... lower than before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCIE
What's going on!?

Mark is happy to see her.

MARK
Good!
(to Palace)
Give her the pages as soon as you're
finished with them.

PALACE
Okay.

MARCIE
So what is all this?

JACK (O.S.)
I can tell you what it isn't...

Jack strolls over to them.

JACK (CONT'D)
... and that's an invitation to leave this
suck rock anytime soon.

PALACE
We need to find Alison now!

MARK
Right.

JACK
Just as soon as I discuss a little
business with Mr. Nivens. Where is he?

They ignore Jack as the storm layer above them gets a little
lower.

MARK
The Brainfruit Orchard. Let's try there.

Mark and Palace start off towards the orchard. Marcie, deep
into her pages, follows. A frustrated Jack follows a few
steps behind.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mark is leading the charge. Behind him is Palace, who is
alternately reading Mark's pages and passing those that he's
finished to Marcie behind him. Jack is bringing up the rear,
rapidly losing his patience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCIE
(reading Mark's pages)
This is really good.

MARK
Thank you. And I'm sorry.

She looks up from the pages at him.

MARK (CONT'D)
You were right. We ended up here for a
reason.

He goes to kiss her, but Jack separates their mouths with a
piece of paper.

JACK
Excuse me! This is a Cease and Desist
covering all references and activities
hitherto carried out in Port Bryter
associated with my "World within the
Walls".

Marcie looks up at Mark.

MARCIE
He got the rights?

Jack beams at her.

MARCIE (CONT'D)
(to Mark)
Then why are you still writing?

MARK
Read!

Marcie goes back to her pages. Palace hands her two more.

JACK
Reconsidering my offer, eh Mark? We can
do a little business as long as you keep
in mind who's bo-

Mark shoves the Cease and Desist into Jack's mouth.

MARK
They kept a copy, didn't they?

Jack spits the paper out.

JACK
What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

Of my original Book Seven. From ten years ago.

MARCIE

We never submitted a Book Seven.

MARK

I did. On my own. To take this all down. You were basically done with me by then, Marcie. And with good reason. I should have always written in the colors of my dreams. That's what you told me.

Marcie remembers sadly, but fondly.

MARCIE

Yes.

MARK

But I burned my dreams. My whole book of them. In a unraveled, bitter, self-pitying rage. And then... all I had left were my nightmares. And I carefully selected the worst of them and spat them onto four hundred and forty three spiteful, angry, dead pages that destroyed everything I had created. I choked the life and the joy out of every character and every possibility. I incinerated the entire World Within the Walls to the core. It was awful. And I delivered it to SilverTale through a drunken sneer. Because I thought I was above it all. Above all of the joy that it gave.

MARCIE

That's what those secret lawsuits were about?

MARK

That's the kind of awful that the original Book Seven was, Marcie. And it was probably a little bit... "evil".

MARCIE

Evil awful?

MARK

The sort of evil awful that we're starting to see the beginnings of now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PALACE

And I bought what was supposed to be the only copy in existence.

Mark turns to Jack.

MARK

But SilverTale made a backup, didn't they?

Jack is starting to connect the dots.

JACK

(sheepishly)
A couple.

MARK

(to Palace and Marcie)
Read!

MARCIE

Why?

MARK

Because those backups were just delivered here to Port Bryter. Right, Jack? In a big cozy box.

JACK

We thought this would be the perfect place to build a little word of mouth for my new business enterprise.

MARK

A place that enforces my words to the letter? That's the perfect place for a book that destroys everything?

JACK

I didn't read it! I didn't even know it existed until I got your rights.

By this point, they are all awkwardly bent over because the hurricane layer is now maybe five feet above the ground.

MARCIE

(to Jack)
You are such a vile human being. You don't care about "World Within the Walls" or the people who love it! All you care about is coming out on top of the dollar.

Mark points to his new pages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARK

We've got to get this new Book Seven into as many hands, and heads, as we can. Quick.

PALACE

Yes! As long as they are your words, Port Bryter will always follow whatever is strongest in our collective consciousness.

MARK

You know what, Jack? I have reconsidered. Here. Check out my latest draft.

He grabs the pages that Marcie has finished and gives them to Jack. Palace hands over another few pages to Marcie, who goes back to reading.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (ORCHARD)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

They are all hunched over and awkwardly hurrying along as fast as they can manage. Mark looks back every couple of seconds to make sure everyone is still soaking in his words. They are. Including Jack.

Palace, in particular, loves what he's been taking in so far. He stands upright, his head disappearing into the storm layer. He immediately crouches down again, soaked from the shoulders up.

PALACE

I love this bit about the folding ocean where Kiernan finally finds the stone from sub space...

Jack perks up, engaged for the first time.

JACK

The building block of the Temple of Ages? Wait. Don't spoil it for me. That's basically the entire solution to Book Four.

They all look at him. He immediately tries to switch gears back to his normal, disconnected self.

JACK (CONT'D)

Or whatever.

They are now on their knees to stay dry and underneath the storm layer overhead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCIE

I thought you never got past Book Two,
Jack.

JACK

I skimmed!

Palace spies Alison, valiantly (and creatively) trying to protect her Brainfruit Trees from the radical elements of the tri-storm with a dozen umbrellas and several rolls of aluminum foil.

PALACE

Alison! Are you okay?

She is genuinely touched.

ALISON

You came here to rescue me?

PALACE

Well... of course I did. You think I'm going to leave someone that I've been in love with for two years out in the middle of this? Two and a half years really, if you count the first time I talked to you when you used to come here with your parents and you...

She kisses him, stopping him in his tracks.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Okay. I can die now. I'd be okay with that.

Unable to avoid the next layer of the tri-storm any longer. They all stand up, their tops of their heads now in the blizzard layer. Jack, now rapt with Mark's pages, hands the ones he's finished with to Alison.

JACK

Here, kid. Check this out.

ALISON

Is this... ?

Jack looks at Mark and smiles. Respectful for the first time.

JACK

"Book Seven".

Alison takes the pages excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCIE

It seems like the storms are slowing, but shouldn't they be stopping?

JACK

Uh, we might want to get back to town.

PALACE

Why?

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN CENTER)- DAY

As the tri-storms subside, strange lines of clouds remain, rolling slowly towards a central meeting point above the town.

The inhabitants of Port Bryter are scattering to take cover, not sure what is going to happen next. Suitcases and trunks have been left abandoned as the crazy sky ripples and churns, the dark clouds coalescing above them.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (PICNIC VALLEY) -MOMENTS LATER

Mark stops in his tracks as he notices one of his characters, a BIG GUY with the entire left side of his body tattooed and wearing a skull on top of his head, near the barbecue area, reading a bright purple book. It's the unpublished, awful evil "Book Seven: Dark Prism".

MARK

You didn't waste any time, did you, Jack?

JACK

(embarrassed)

Word of mouth is the best publicity.
Right, Marcie?

She just glares at him.

MARCIE

Right, Jack. Nice job.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (PICNIC VALLEY BARBECUE PIT)- CONTINUOUS

Mark runs over to the guy and snatches the book out of his eager hands. More than comfortable immediately resorting to violence, the big guy grabs Mark by the scruff of the neck and is about to haul off on him until he smilingly sees who it is.

BIG GUY

Wha--- Oh, Mark Sinclair! Hi.

Mark taps the book with a shaking finger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

How far did you read?

BIG GUY

Uh, only two chapters in so far.

The guy has apparently forgotten to let go of Mark. Mark tries to delicately pry his fingers open.

BIG GUY (CONT'D)

Ooops. Pardon.

He releases his grip and Mark sucks in a gasp of oxygen.

MARK

Thank you.

Mark takes some lighter fluid, throws the book into the coal pit and is about to set it ablaze. The guy grabs Mark again, blowing out his lighter.

BIG GUY

Did I did mention that was fifty bucks?

Mark shoots an accusatory look at Jack, who shrugs supportively.

JACK

You're worth it.

Mark turns back to the Big Guy.

MARK

It needs one more draft. I'll give you a free copy in a little bit.

The guy is skeptical.

MARK (CONT'D)

Signed!

BIG GUY

Cool!

He allows Mark to torch the book. A ripple forms in the darkening sky above them, letting in a brief but brilliant ray of beautiful sunshine. But the darkness quickly envelopes it again, churning angrily around the seam.

BIG GUY (CONT'D)

Whoa. Did you do that?

Mark grabs the big guy now by his generous jowls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

I need your help!

BIG GUY

You got it.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE- MOMENTS LATER

Mark is running around snatching copies of "Book Seven: Dark Prism" from everyone's hands that he finds it in. Jack is trailing after him.

JACK

Sorry! Rewrite in progress! Get this right back to you! Sorry for the unplanned intermission!

Palace, Alison and Marcie catch up with Mark and Jack.

MARK

They're probably all over town. We need to grab up every copy and destroy them.

PALACE

And we need to get to people before get too far in. Otherwise the balance of the town's power will shift to darkness.

MARCIE

Mark, is it really get that bad?

MARK

The last two chapters alone could blow this town, and everyone in it, apart. We can't take the chance that even one person makes it even halfway though.

They split up to collect the evil copies. Meanwhile, the dark clouds have compressed themselves into a massive pyramid-like formation in the sky. The town is bathed in a bizarre purplish glow.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (PICNIC VALLEY BARBECUE PIT)- A LITTLE LATER

The big guy is busy burning a stack of about thirty purple books. Marcie is feeding him the books to throw on the flames. Each time a book is destroyed, the sky seems to flicker a little, trying to combat the clouds that are solidifying into a giant black pyramid above the town. She looks up at it as Palace and Alison approach and deposit more to the stack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG GUY

Drop those right here. How do you want 'em? Rare, medium rare?

ALISON

Extremely well done.

BIG GUY

You got it.

He grabs some more lighter fluid. Mark returns with another few copies as well.

ALISON

I think these are the last of them. And definitely before they got to the end.

Mark looks up at the still blackened sky.

MARK

Are you sure? No one got to the end?

Mark suddenly remembers something. Something terrible.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oh no. Where is he?

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOPIARY GARDENS)- A LITTLE LATER

The SOUNDS of growing tumult back in the center of town are still heard as Mark, Jack, Palace, Marcie and Alison rush out into the topiary gardens which are completely empty. The ground is pitted with deep holes where the missing roots of the strange flowery sculptures look to have been violently ripped up.

DELIGHTFUL NERD (O.S.)

Oo-ooaa-ahhhhh-hhh-hh-h-h.

Mark locates the Delightful Nerd who is frozen wide-eyed and stuck on the last page of the forbidden copy of Mark's original Book Seven, having of course started from the last chapter backwards. In a zombified-like daze, he tries to get his asthma inhaler to his lips. Mark grabs the book away from him and helps him connect to his inhaler.

MARK

You had to start from the end, didn't you?

DELIGHTFUL NERD

I... always... do. Not... from now... on... though.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

You may not have to worry about "from now on".

Mark turns to Jack, who realizes the gravity of the situation.

JACK

(pleading frantically)

I've learned my lesson, okay? For real and across the board. No take backs. I get it now. Okay? I am officially sorry and turning over a new leaf.

Palace looks worried.

PALACE

Uh, not here, okay Mr. Lawler?

JACK

(adamant)

No. Starting right here and right now. Just get me back to civilization, please Mark.

Marcie looks around at the torn earth where the strange "reverse wishing well" topiaries once were. She realizes that this could be a problem right here and right now.

MARCIE

Why be rash, Jack?

MARK

Yeah. Give yourself a couple of days to have a change of heart.

JACK

Won't happen. I am going to abandon all my treacherous ways.

ALISON

Shut up, dummy!

Jack- always the last person to catch any drift- presses on cluelessly.

JACK

You're absolutely right for calling me that given how poorly I've treated people... especially you, Mark. And you, Marcie. But I'm telling you, my days of being a stealthy, evil snake are officially behind me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Palace, Marcie and Alison roll their eyes as weeds and vines erupt forth from the ground in a twisting pattern, forming a giant snake with smaller snakes tendriling out from its body. They all stare with mouths agape, watching the nightmarish realization of what Jack has decided to rid himself of. Growing to at least twenty feet long in a matter of seconds, it rests motionlessly.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oooh. Did I do that?

Flowers start to bloom all over the leafy beast and then burst open like tiny canons, turning dead and brown as their petals fall away, revealing long sharp, twisted thorns inside. Suddenly the snake topiary comes alive. Struggling, it rips its head from the ground, dangling its root system from underneath and jerks itself towards Jack who SCREAMS as the thorny snake clamps down on his leg.

Mark and Palace pull him free as the rest of the viney snake tears itself from the lawn and rears up in front of them, expanding its hood like a cobra. Dozens more floral snakes jut out of its open mouth, striking at them, their thorns tearing gashes in their clothes. Jack rubs his bleeding leg.

JACK (CONT'D)

I deserved that. See? This is why I swear I'm going to stop being such a rat jackass.

Before Mark can clamp a hand over Jack's mouth, an evillooking donkey rat creature forms itself out of weeds and thorns and begins to chew itself free from the ground. They slowly turn at look at Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

Me again, huh?

MARK

You again.

The new beast backs up and kicks Jack square in the gut, sending him flying through one of the hedges. The others lose no time in fleeing the giant floral snake and donkey rat thing. They run to Jack, who is gasping for air.

MARK (CONT'D)

Any other self improvements you'd like to share today, buddy?

JACK

I could probably stand to drop a few pounds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK

Let's get you right on that.

They scoop him up from the ground and continue their retreat back to town.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (PICNIC VALLEY)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Port Bryter is in an utter panic. People scatter in retreat from the evil topiary creatures. Our favorite big guy is busy doing battle with a couple of them with a weed whacker. He forces one of them over the cliff and down into the high tide where it perishes in the salt water. Mark and the gang catch up with him.

BIG GUY

Where the hell have you been while I'm here saving the world?

Suddenly beams of purple grey light begin to transmit from the prism cloud. They roll downward and connect with the ground like lightning bolts.

MARK

Stay away from those beams, everyone!

BIG GUY

Why?

MARK

You guys can't just trust me at this point?

PALACE

The Dark Prism filters light and gives it power to bring all of your internal darkness out.

MARK

Immediately making you very unpleasant to be around.

Mark shoves Jack hard and out of the way of one of the prism's light beams.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sorry, Jack. But you really need to stay away from these things.

MARCIE

Yeah. We can't risk you getting any more unpleasant to be around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack contemplates all this as Mark grabs Marcie's Sunblock from her bag. He squirts half of it into Palace's forehead.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Easy on that! I'm running low.

MARK

You sell these in the gift shop, right?

PALACE

Right.

He squirts a generous portion on Alison's arms.

MARK

Cover yourselves and go get all of them. We'll meet you at the town square. We'll need all the positive energy this place has.

PALACE

We're on it!

Palace and Alison head off back towards the town square. Mark empties the rest of the Sunblock into his hand and starts coating Marcie's face.

MARCIE

I thought you wanted a few more freckles on me.

Mark smiles and wipes a tiny bit off of the tip of her nose.

MARK

There.

He tosses the rest of the tube to Jack then starts wrapping Marcie's arms, trying to cover all of her exposed skin. One of the beams from the prism hits a nearby Port Bryter inhabitant. His inner darkness flushes out and over him in an angry rash. His veins turn deep black/purple, clearly visible through his skin. He lumbers up to Mark.

EVIL FAN

Can you sign this for me?

The Evil Fan holds up a copy of "Dark Prism". Mark grabs it from him and tosses it over to the Big Guy who shreds it with his weed whacker, sending the scraps onto the nearby fire. The Evil Fan grabs Mark and throws him over one of the picnic tables. Marcie and Jack gather him up.

JACK

Hey Mark, I've got an idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK

That is so great, Jack. Hope it's a doozie.

Mark yanks Jack back just as another purple beam is about to connect with him.

MARK (CONT'D)

Be careful!!!

JACK

Okay! Sorry!

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mark and Marcie are running along, deftly dodging beams of light flowing from the dark prism. Jack is close behind until one of the evil fans grabs him by the shoulders.

EVIL FAN #2

You did this to our town!

Mark doubles back to make sure Jack is okay as Evil Fan #2 continues his rant against him.

EVIL FAN #2 (CONT'D)

You smell even more evil than I feel!

JACK

(sheepish)

I had a little accident during that snake attack.

EVIL FAN #2

How do you live with yourself? Such a pathetic, passionless waste.

The evil fan punches Jack in the stomach. Jack looks pathetically to Mark.

JACK

Help me...

MARK

This guy makes a good point, Jack. Let's hear him out.

Evil Fan #2 punches Jack again.

MARK (CONT'D)

(agreeing with him)

Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (VERANDA)- CONTINUOUS

Mark finally pulls a recovering Jack up onto an elevated veranda about six feet up from the ground where Marcie is waiting for them, crouched out of sight under a table.

MARK
Stay under here, Jack.

JACK
Why? I can help!

One of the Port Bryterites is pulled off of his feet by several spidery legs of something that has been given birth to under the ground. He SCREAMS as he's sucked into the ground up to his neck and dragged along with only his head visible as it smacks into every possible obstacle in its way, leaving a trail of furrowed dirt behind it. Another Port Bryter resident is spit forth from the ground, his shredded suit flapping like ribbons as he sails through the air.

JACK (CONT'D)
This Dark Prism turns people evil, right?

MARK
Right.

JACK
So if I'm the most evil person here...

MARCIE
No arguments.

JACK
Right. So... maybe the light from it will have the opposite effect on me and turn me really good.

Mark turns ultra serious.

MARK
Jack. It won't.

JACK
Why not? That makes total sense! Total you sense!

Mark is creatively outraged.

MARK
Oh! You're suddenly the pulse of what makes me sense now?! After all this time?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
Why do I always have to be the bad guy?

MARK
You didn't read the book, Jack.

JACK
I know. And I'm sorry. I will get around to it.

MARK
That's not what's I mean!

JACK
This plan could shut the whole thing down. AND I'd get to be the hero for once.

Mark pleads with him.

MARK
You're not the hero of Book Seven, Jack! I'm sorry.

JACK
Total you sense. Watch this!

MARK
You're not the hero of the World Within the Walls, Jack! You're...

Before Mark can finish, and before they can stop him, Jack jumps off the veranda.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN CENTER)- CONTINUOUS

Jack runs out into the square and leaps into the nearest shaft of purple light. His SCREAMS turn into HORRIBLE LAUGHTER as he bloats up disgustingly, absorbing the dark light and becoming a much worse human being than ever before.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (VERANDA)- CONTINUOUS

Mark and Marcie look down in horror at Jack's transformation. Mark is legitimately sorrowful.

MARK
... you're the destroyer.

MARCIE
You made him the villain of Book Seven?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

It's not my fault! He was such easy
inspiration!

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN CENTER)- CONTINUOUS

Jack is oozing a slow gurgle of dark purple sludge from every opening he has.

JACK

Oh!!!! That feels great!!!!

Jack climbs up onto the pavilion, the wooden boards creaking painfully beneath his bloated evil weight. The small purple warriors with the evil smiling faces return and flank Jack on either side. They raise each frightening mouth hand into a unanimous cacophony, snapping and drooling, and initiating a round of forced APPLAUSE.

JACK (CONT'D)

Thank you all for the loving embrace of
your new world!

The inhabitants of Port Bryter (evil and normal) turn his way. They reluctantly join in with the slow building ovation.

JACK (CONT'D)

What you've been waiting for... for
almost ten years... is now a reality.
Your reality.

He motions to all of the horror transpiring around them.

JACK (CONT'D)

Think of our "Dark Prism" as a Seventh
Seal in the legacy of the "World Within
the Walls". Soak it in, everyone!

A VOICE distracts Jack from his speech.

PALACE (O.S.)

Anybody want a free copy of Mark
Sinclair's new book, "Time of Light"?!!

The Bryterites turn in the direction of Palace and Alison cruising into the scene in his golf cart which is filled to capacity with xeroxed copies of Mark's latest.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Free copies! Right here! First fifty
are autogrphed!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Many of the Bryterites (good and evil) rush the cart. Palace guns the vehicle towards the veranda.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (VERANDA)- CONTINUOUS

Mark and Marcie jump down and run to the golf cart.

MARK

There's still no ending!

ALISON

Yeah! So focus!

She helps Mark and Marcie onboard. Palace takes off, keeping them just out of reach of the marauding horde of fans.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN CENTER)- CONTINUOUS

Jack is furious, pulsating with evil. His eyes bulge painfully in their sockets.

JACK

No! Not that book!

He holds up a copy of "Dark Prism" (slightly singed at the edges).

JACK (CONT'D)

This book! This is the real book! The true book! The only book!

Mark calls out to Jack as they speed by.

MARK

Never a good way to start a healthy debate.

Palace hands Mark and Marcie a couple of tubes of Sunblock and they start smearing it on. Palace starts circling Jack, taunting him.

PALACE

That book is so ten years ago, Jack! This is fresh Mark Sinclair! Critics say it's his best yet!

JACK

What critics?!

PALACE

The only one that matters here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jack is losing his crowd. Evil and non, they converge on the golf cart like hungry children. The only thing remaining loyal to Jack is his purple monster, piranha-handed army.

JACK

And those books are technically mine now too! Hand them over!

Marcie opens one of the xeroxed books to its blank last page and hands it to Mark.

MARCIE

Finish it now!

Mark ponders it for a second then writes something down in the book being held in front of him. Jack jumps down from the pavilion to stop this from going any further. He grabs Mark around the head. Within seconds, Jack's snake and rat jackass topiaries spring forth out of nowhere and attack Jack, allowing Mark to pull himself free. After a brief struggle, Jack's purple warrior army tears the creatures to pieces, their vines, flowers and thorns raining down.

Jack charges forward towards the golf cart. Palace kicks off a medium speed chase with the pursuing Jack. Jack swats at the back of the golf cart and knocks the box of "Time of Light" copies off. Alison and Marcie grab a few before they fly off the cart.

The overloaded cart struggles and Jack is right on top of them now. Mark is scribbling away launching everything he can think of at Jack.

Walls of stone spring up from the ground. Jack smashes through them. A mini swamp sogs forth under his stomping feet. Jack pulls himself free and resumes pursuit.

MARK

It's not working. My old words are still stronger. Why isn't the town getting behind us?

PALACE

I think it's confused. It doesn't know which one of your books to put its energy behind. Unfortunately, I think you have to give this place more than just your words to win this fight.

MARK

What does it want, Palace?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Even Ice Monkeys, finally realized and jumping out of nowhere, aren't enough. Jack shakes them off like fleas. Nothing is strong enough to overtake him.

PALACE

I built Port Bryter, Mark. I helped it grow. But it doesn't need me anymore.

MARK

What are you talking about?

PALACE

It needs someone to care for it and tend to it and continue to give it life. That's not me anymore. It can't be anybody but you now.

Marcie looks at Mark pleadingly.

MARCIE

Mark... now I agree with you. That is crazy.

Mark looks at Alison.

ALISON

You know it's not that crazy.

Mark yells out to Port Bryter as loud as he can.

MARK

I'm in!! Okay!!? Deal!!!

He gathers up the remaining copies of "Time of Light".

MARK (CONT'D)

You guys get to somewhere safe.

Mark jumps off the cart.

MARCIE

Mark!!!

Mark tries to catch up to the cart to kiss Marcie one last time, but it pulls ahead before they can connect.

PALACE

But we still need to shut down the prism, right!?!?

As he's running, Mark instantaneously starts writing in one of the copies he has taken along with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARK

Let Alison *reflect* on that!

Mark takes off in an opposite direction, Jack following hot on his trail. The gang in the golf cart looks at Alison.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (FIELD)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mark is frantically running, writing, and tearing pages and slapping them onto wherever he can find a place for them. One page goes on a lone fireplace and chimney in the middle of the woods which then explodes and sends firey bricks flying Jack's way like asteroids. He dodges most, but a few smack him pretty good and allow Mark to pull a little further in front of him. Mark crumples up another couple of pages he has written and tosses them up in the air over his shoulder like grenades.

JACK

Looks like you're running out of ammo, Sinclair!

MARK

It's okay. I've still got what really matters.

Mark hold up his journal with the complete cover "Book of Dreams" reassembled.

Before the balled up pages hit the ground they expand and turn into fuzzy balloon-like animals floating ten feet in the air. They wrap their tails around Jack and lift him just high enough to get his feet off the ground and stop his forward momentum.

Mark starts climbing up a high steep cliff side. Jack frees himself and continues his pursuit.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (WATERFALL)- MOMENTS LATER

Mark has reached the top of the cliff where multiple huge, cascading waterfalls are raining over a verdant cliff side. Bright orange staircases twist and turn every which way in and out and underneath and through the waterfalls. Mark starts up one of the railing-less staircases, which are very slippery with the splashing, falling water. Mark almost slips a few times as he climbs up just under the torrents of water pouring down into a huge chasm below leading out to sea.

Jack follows him slowly, trying to maintain his balance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Pretty silly, Sinclair! Can't argue with a contract! They're my books now.

MARK

I can't let you have them, Jack. There's too much at stake. This place has shown me that.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (FOREST TRAIL)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Alison, Palace, Marcie, Big Guy, Delightful Nerd and a couple of the non-evilified Port Bryter inhabitants are lifting the polished stones out of their nesting places within the craggy holding spots of the valley they're in. Alison is sort of like the foreman on a construction site.

ALISON

Careful with those!

BIG GUY

Yes, mam'n.

ALISON

And you guys, wipe those down. We want maximum reflection potential.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (WATERFALL)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Little walkways branch off of the stairways, through the waterfalls, and lead to small platforms (some with sitting chairs, some with bathtubs, one with a bright blue waterproof baby grand piano, etc.). Mark reaches the end of his little walkway. It connects to a portion of bridge which hits another walkway fifty feet away and leading to the opposite side of the cliff. The bridge segment is supported in the middle with by a huge screw that it rotates on, allowing it to connect to any of six different walkways just by turning it one way or the other.

Mark runs across the bridge and over to the platform on the other side. As Jack starts across Mark cranks a lever, turning the rotating bridge until Jack is stranded between connecting walkways. The bridge starts shaking and tilting under Jack's weight. He loses his footing, slides down the length of the bridge section but manages to stop himself just as his legs dangle over the steep edge.

JACK

Sinclair! Okay! We can make a deal here!

MARK

I was hoping you'd say that.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Alison is leading the charge as everyone is hefting the polished stones and slowly dragging them towards the nearest beam smacking down from the dark prism.

Big Guy and Marcie lift their stone up to shoulder level and stumble it under a purple light beam. The beam ricochets back upwards into the dark prism. Alison and Palace lift their stone and bounce a convenient beam back upwards. The rest of the Port Bryterites follow suit and the sky is suddenly ablaze with reflected light feeding back into the dark prism, setting it ablaze. The evilified Port Bryter folks stop dead in their tracks, frozen as if they've been tasered.

The town band strikes up a happy tune as they circle the pavilion and the dark prism starts folding inward upon itself, shutting off the beams of light as it's robbed of its power. All the evil in every evilified person there is sucked clean from them. They immediately jump to the opposite end of the spectrum, loving everyone and being as kind and considerate as you could possibly imagine. It's a little ridiculous, but it's as genuine as can be.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (WATERFALL)- A FEW MINUTES LATER

The stalled bridge that Jack is stuck on starts to quaver again as Jack transforms back to his relative normal. He struggles to maintain his grip as the bridge sways and buckles. Mark is scribbling away in his journal.

JACK

Please make this stop!

MARK

I'm working on it. Don't rush me.
This place has kind of a will of its own
sometimes.

Mark rips the piece of paper out of his journal. It's the second to last sheet.

MARK (CONT'D)

But you can make nice with it if you
really want.

Mark folds the paper into an airplane and sails it over to Jack. Its tip glides to a perfect landing in Jack's left nostril.

JACK

What's this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He unfolds it very carefully to avoid shaking his failing bridge any further.

MARK

That's our deal, Jack. To turn the controlling share of "Within the Walls" publishing back over to me. And to leave Port Bryter exactly the way you found it.

JACK

This isn't fair, Mark. I waited so long for this!

MARK

You'll have a generous profit share. You'll get to field offers on our behalf. But your opinion will just matter much much less. Like the good old days. Come on, Jack. A little while ago you said that you were looking to turn over a new leaf. Here's the perfect start.

Jack pauses a moment. . . and then signs away the rights he had for a brief moment in time. Mark cranks the lever, connecting Jack to the nearest walkway where Palace is waiting for him holding a briefcase.

JACK

Well, at least my conscience is clearing a bit.

PALACE

Speaking of . . . we can't in good conscience leave you unrewarded after what you've just done.

He holds up the briefcase.

PALACE (CONT'D)

Please accept this payment of one million dollars in exchange for the wonderful gesture you have just made to all of us.

Jack opens it eagerly. Taken aback, he examines a few of the brightly colored bills inside.

JACK

"Port Bryter Dream Dollars"?

PALACE

Good anywhere in town towards many quality goods and services.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (TOWN SQUARE)- SUNSET

Palace, Mark and Jack walk back into the center of town. An extraordinary sunset, with every color of the rainbow plus a few others, is in the final stages of overtaking the diminishing traces of the retreating dark prism. They look around at the town which is quickly settling back to normal, but brighter and happier than it has ever been.

Marcie runs up to Mark. Palace runs up to Alison. The Big Guy looks around for a little love.

BIG GUY

Anyone? Anyone? Also a little bit of a hero right here, you know.

PALACE

It's all over.

Alison kisses him.

ALISON

I'd say it's all just starting.

They kiss again as Jack rolls his eyes.

MARCIE

You still don't think this place is magic?

MARK

It is now.

He kisses her.

JACK

Clear a perimeter, everyone. I'm going to throw up.

Without breaking the kiss or looking away, Mark takes out his pen and journal, threatening a new Jack assault.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry! Sorry. Just yanking your chain.

Jack separates the tip of Mark's pen before it can connect with the last remaining journal page.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (DOCK)- EARLY MORNING

Most of the inhabitants of Port Bryter are dinghying themselves out to two waiting boats about a half a mile off shore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mark is on the dock edge shaking hands and saying goodbyes. Alison and Palace are amongst the last. Alison holds up her sketch pad to Mark.

ALISON
I've got the first three chapters finished! Wanna see?

MARK
Don't ruin the surprise for me. Coordinate everything with Marcie, Palace and Jack. They'll take care of it.

Palace clutches the completed true Book Seven.

PALACE
I have so many questions for you.

MARK
No, you don't, Palace. That answers everything. It has to.

ALISON
But you've created so much room for so much more.

MARK
That's always going to be the way, kiddo.

PALACE
One question?

MARK
Okay.

Palace holds out the book and a pen.

PALACE
Will you sign this for me?

Mark smiles and signs it very big across the cover.

PALACE (CONT'D)
(reads it)
"To my true friend, Palace. Thank you. I owe you everything. -Mark."

MARK
You brought me back to something I forced myself to forget. And you returned something to me that I thought was lost forever. And so... I owe you everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PALACE

Well, that's true enough.

Mark smacks Palace lovingly. Marcie steps up next.

MARK

So, if you get any more of my mail...

She LAUGHS. Mark hands her another copy of "Time of Light".

MARK (CONT'D)

For Paula.

MARCIE

Come back with me, Mark.

MARK

You think this place is going to let me leave now? Besides, I'm a man of my word. At the very least, this place has proven that.

MARCIE

Some leap of faith we took, huh?

MARK

I would never have taken it without you.

She kisses him goodbye and Jack respectfully helps her into the dinghy. Mark watches and waves as they push off towards the boat.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (DOCK)- AFTERNOON

Mark sits alone on the now empty creaking dock, bobbing with the light ripples of water delivering themselves to the rocky shore. The Port Bryter sign is swinging in the breeze above having once again broken free from one of its hinges.

He is finishing up some writing on the last remaining page of his journal. He blows the ink dry, rips out the page, rolls it up and inserts it into an empty rootbeer bottle next to him. He corks it tightly and tosses the bottle gently into the water. It starts inching away from the dock.

EXT. PORT BRYTER (DOCK)- SUNSET

Mark has been asleep, another half empty bottle of root beer and some scraps of bright colored paper in his hand. He wakes up as something catches his ear; the soft gurgling RUMBLE of a motor. A certain, familiar banged up motorboat turtles its way around the east cliff drop and putters towards the dock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mark squints towards the boat and Marcie waves as her captain (the fisherman from earlier) steers full ahead. He throws a line to Mark who pulls the boat up to the dock. Marcie hops happily up onto the dock as the captain deposits her suitcase behind her. Mark looks worried and regretful.

MARK

Did I do this?

She holds up the bottle with his message still inside.

MARCIE

Of course you did. We picked it up on our way back here.

FISHERMAN

(to Marcie)

So long. I hope you know what you're doing, kids.

MARCIE

Thanks, Captain T. I do.

Captain T putters away. Marcie turns to Mark.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

It wasn't your pen, but you still did this.

MARK

Another impressive leap of faith you're taking.

MARCIE

I guess we'll have to agree to disagree. Oh, and I have a present for you.

Marcie hands him a brand new notepad.

MARCIE (CONT'D)

Picked it up back on shore. I saw you were running low.

MARK

Yeah. I had to outline my new book on some of my Port Bryter Dream Dollars.

He shows her his scribbling all over two or three of the ridiculous bills. She takes the almost empty bottle out of his hand and drinks the last of it.

MARCIE

I hope that wasn't the last of our root beer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Marcie stuffs the outline in the bottle and corks it up.

MARK

What are you doing?

MARCIE

I'm still representing you, right?

MARK

Yeah.

She tosses it into the water.

MARK (CONT'D)

But all the good publishers are that way.

Mark points the opposite direction.

MARCIE

So it may take a little longer. We've got time.

MARK

Yeah. I'm going to have my hands pretty full keeping this place happy.

MARCIE

Something tells me that if you're happy, getting Port Bryter to follow suit shouldn't be too hard.

MARK

Well... then I like our chances.

They kiss as the camera PULLS BACK to find the root beer bottle floating its way out to sea. It follows the bottle away from the dock as, after a few beats, Mark and Marcie finally break their kiss and set their attention to re-hanging the swinging Port Bryter sign.

THE END