

TRACER, INC.

Pilot Episode
"Tracer Gets a New Car"

Teleplay by Jeff Andrus

Based on characters from his novels
Tracer, Inc. and Neighborhood Watch

TEASE

FADE IN:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD, EL TORO REGIONAL PARK - DAY

Shouts and murmurs. Pint-sized Giants versus small As. The scoreboard has it Spreckles 3, Carmel 2, bottom of the fourth.

EXT. PARKING LOT

A car pulls up. FAITH HUNTER gets out. She's an icy beauty who moves with brisk purpose.

EXT. FIELD

She emerges from the entrance tunnel behind the backstop and stops, intent on finding someone.

On the Speckles bench AUGIE VONOTTI watches his team hold its tight lead. He looks a nice, fatherly-type. The man at his side is a big, lumpy assistant coach named GEORGE McMANNIS.

TRACER (OS)

Hey batter, hey batter! Pitcher's a wild man! He'll knock your head off!

Hunter's eyes prowl the stands where SHORTY TRACER, an 8th Grader orbiting puberty, wishes she were somewhere else. Her mother CHRIS looks like she belongs on the cover of *Women's Day*, but there's also something that suggests banner headlines in the tabloids. That something is nearly always brought out by the man yelling at her side—JOHN TRACER. His manner can be an affront, but he is quick to laugh at himself. He's so loyal, he will die for you. He'll even take you along for the ride.

TRACER

Hey bat-bat-batter, your shoe's untied!

INTERCUT THE INFIELD

BRAD TRACER plays second base. All elbows and knees, he keeps close to the bag. But he casts an anxious looks toward his dad.

TRACER

Runner's gonna steal! Get a wheelchair!
He needs help!

Augie mumbles softly to the ground.

AUGIE

They'll call the game. At first people
will get upset that I hired a hit. But
then they'll see that Tracer is dead.
Everybody will understand.

Faith Hunter asks a question of a spectator who is standing at the edge of the backstop. She nods toward the two men on the Giants' bench. The spectator points to Augie.

The runner on first has taken a big lead. He bobs on tiptoes, ready to steal.

The PITCHER comes out of his wind up and sidearms the ball to first.

It's a wild throw, and the FIRST BASEMAN has to dive to snag it. He rolls, regains his footing and throws hard.

Brad's mitt smacks as if a rifle shot hit it. But Brad keeps his head as the runner goes at him with his cleats. Maybe Brad tags the runner out. But the bearded, avuncular umpire—CHARLES RYAN—would need instant replay to make sure.

RYAN

SAFE!

TRACER

ARE YOU BLIND?!

SHORTY

No, Dad, please don't.

But Tracer pops out of the stands and storms second base to go nose-to-nose with the ump.

TRACER

He was out! Brad, you tell him!

BRAD

Dad, really, it's cool.

TRACER

(grabbing the runner)

Look, he's got the seam imprinted in his forehead! He should be unconscious two feet from the bag!

(encouraging the runner)

You're a tough guy. Way to go.

(back to the umpire)

And you're on the take! Admit it!

In the stands Shorty slinks down.

SHORTY

This is so ebarassing.

CHRIS

(organizing her purse)

Just remember, we can be ashamed of friends, but never family because we didn't pick them.

(standing)

Let's go hide in the car.

FEATURE FAITH HUNTER

watching Augie with a fixed expression. He is moving to add his two cents to the debate on second. As his path comes opposite, she steps forward to cut him off.

HUNTER

Are you Augustino D. Vonotti?

AUGIE

Yes.

An instant of wonder takes over her eyes...

AUGIE

Now excuse me, OK?

...only to be replaced by a zealous sense of mission.

HUNTER

No.

INTERCUT TRACER

taking heat.

RYAN

You're the one who's out! I'm barring you from baseball!

HUNTER

You have the right to remain silent, Mr. Vonotti. Anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law.

AUGIE

What is this?

HUNTER

The DA takes failure to pay child support very seriously.

AUGIE

But I'm not a father!

Tracer sees Augie struggling against Ms. Hunter's trying to wrench his arm behind his back.

RYAN

Not just Little League, but Babe Ruth, high school, college!

HUNTER

If you will just come with me peacefully, I won't embarrass you with handcuffs.

Tracer soothingly pats the ump's arm.

TRACER

Hey, Chuck, let's give it a rest, huh?

Ms. Hunter wrestles Augie to the ground to cuff him.

HUNTER

Quit making an ass of yourself. It doesn't have to be this way.

AUGIE

Just wait till the end of the inning! Unless I can stop that maniac, the ump

(MORE)

AUGIE (CONT'D.)
will bar us from the championship! You
gotta help me!

Tracer pushes through the players and fans now crowding the infield.

TRACER
Hey, Augie, what's going on here?

AUGIE
Jump him, jump him.

TRACER
(to Hunter)
Why the cuffs?

HUNTER
Who are you?
(to the spectators)
Back off, everyone! This is police business.
I'm with the District Attorney's office.

Tracer squats to get more chummy with Augie.

TRACER
Do you know how this looks? A man in your
Position.

AUGIE
I didn't do anything!

Now Ryan and the home plate ump hold the crowd back while Chris and Shorty move against the tide.

RYAN
Everybody calm down. We'll sort this out.
Stand back please.

TRACER
Lady, Augie's got an assistant. George
McMannis. Walt is what we called him in high
school. You know, Walter Brenen?
(a fair imitation)
"Yup, ol' Rivers and me are jes' gonna
stumble all over the back forty."
(spotting McMannis)
Sorry, Walt.
(to Hunter)
But we're not talking Yogi Bera, know
what I mean?

CHRIS
John, what is going on here?

TRACER
So why play Gestapo now? You got something
going with the other side?

HUNTER
All right, Pop, hands up.

He mockingly puts his hands up, revealing a hip holster and the butt
of a .38 Special.

TRACER
Now what do I do? Bow down to worship you?

CHRIS
Miss, he doesn't really know what he says.

HUNTER
Is that a pistol?

Tracer makes a show of looking.

TRACER
Naw, it's a pager.

HUNTER
(to Chris)
Is he law enforcement?

CHRIS
No, but—

HUNTER
HI-ahhHHH!

The sudden shout accompanies a wheeling kick that catches Tracer on
the side of the head and knocks him cold.

BLACK OUT.

END TEASE

ACT I

FADE IN:

DRAMATIC SHADOWS

crossing Tracer's swollen face. He reverts to his NARRATIVE ALTER EGO, a suburban version of Dirty Hairy.

TRACER'S NARRATION

I'm John Tracer, private eye. I hear God's voice occasionally, so I pack iron as kind of a religious thing. I've got a few satisfied clients who might say "Amen" to the fact that I'm good at my job.

WIDER - INT. HOLDING CELL, COUNTY JAIL AT NATIVIDAD - DAY

Tracer looks slowly to his side where Augie has his own thousand-yard stare going.

TRACER'S NARRATION

Trouble is, they want their skeletons kept in the closet, so that leaves the rest of the world thinking I'm an unemployed nut case who doesn't want to do real work.

A moment of silence, then a normal and vulnerable voice.

TRACER

Admit it. You think I'm a jerk.

AUGIE

What?

TRACER

65 bucks an hour, I'll get to the bottom of this.

AUGIE

What?

TRACER

I'm not just a crazy parent. I think I can help you.

INT. JAIL WAITING AREA

Chris sits at a table, writing in her pocket organizer.

CHRIS' NARRATION

Oh, God, I feel like a fool. You know what I'm thinking. But all right, Father Chuck thinks this is supposed to help me sort out what I think I know from what's really in my heart. Fine. I think I'm over having no money. I think I can live with John getting shot at occasionally. And all right, maybe it wasn't his fault that the kids and me were in the line of fire that time, but God damnit- I mean just damnit... waiting for him at the county jail is not the kind of marriage I signed on for.

She looks up to the SOUND of footsteps.

SIMON BOLIVAR LEVIN, Monterey County's red-headed and paranoid District Attorney, is following a deputy sheriff who unlocks a thick door.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Tracer looks up to the door grating open.

LEVIN

You've been a busy boy.

Tracer places a fist on Augie's knee and presses down to re-assure him.

TRACER

I'll get to the bottom of this.

Augie's expression is doubtful.

TRACER

I promise.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL WAITING AREA - DAY

FAYE VONOTTI, Augie's dutiful wife, enters hesitantly, spots Chris and crosses quickly to her.

FAYE

I came as soon as I heard. What's happening?

(breaking into tears)

I should have gone to the game.

CHRIS

That wouldn't have changed anything.
Now calm down and sit here for a minute.

FAYE

What are they saying Augie did?

CHRIS

Something about back child support.

FAYE

Child? But...

(looking around frantically)

I-I need to talk to Augie.

CHRIS

You have to sign in first.

FAYE

(struggling to calm herself)

Yes. Yes, they told me to wait until I was called.

CHRIS

Do you have a lawyer?

FAYE

Why?

CHRIS

I'm sure it's all a misunderstanding,
but it's a good idea to have counsel.
In case it takes awhile to straighten
out.

FAYE

Yes. We need to straighten this out.
But why is John in jail, too?

CHRIS

Because it's there.

INT. JAIL RELEASE PROCESSING

Another deputy eyeballs Tracer pocketing belongings from a plastic tray. Levin keeps at Tracer's elbow like a friend or an enemy. In this part of the country you can be both.

TRACER

Who was the lady Van Damm?

LEVIN

One of my investigators.

TRACER

Figures. She didn't ID herself.

LEVIN

She's new.

TRACER

That's not an excuse. I should press charges.

The DA picks up a plastic covered card from the tray.

LEVIN

Y'know, the ink's hardly dry on your permit-to-carry. Do you really want to go back to selling tires?

TRACER

I was director of human resources, not a salesman.

LEVIN

You know what I mean.

TRACER

I put in my practical hours. I passed the exam. I got a license fair and square.

LEVIN

You know what I mean.

TRACER

Then let's go back to what I know.

The memory of whatever that is floats like a sheep turd in a pan of milk.

TRACER

Know what I mean?

Tracer snatches the permit.

LEVIN

John, John, why so testy?

Levin nods to the deputy who hands Tracer six loose bullets and a fast loader magazine.

TRACER

They came with a friend.

The DA puts an arm around Tracer's shoulders to guide him away.

LEVIN

We'll give you the revolver outside.

CUT TO:

INT. EARLY MODEL MINIVAN, TRAVELING - DAY

With cool fury Chris negotiates Main Street, leaving a trail of exhaust smoke through Salinas' Old Town.

TRACER

Try looking on the bright side. We got a case.

She throws him a dagger look, which he takes as a green light to continue.

TRACER

Belinda Lotz—the daughter Augie's supposed to have fathered—goes by the mother's last name. She's 24 years old. That puts failure to support within the statue of limitations. Levin tells me the complaint also cites that new court case to cover the daughter's college years. Grand total: 150 K. And Levin is asking for fines. He really wants this one. But Augie swears he saved himself for his wife.

CHRIS

Uh-huh.

TRACER

He says it just didn't happen with someone he doesn't even remember. A blood test will settle it, but first I have to find the daughter. Until then I'm left with one conclusion. One of them is lying. Like, "Hey, Sherlock, no—"

His head jerks as she slams on the brakes.

EXT. STREET

A mother jaywalking a baby carriage gives a start to the screeching rubber of the minivan's tires.

INTERCUT INT. MINIVAN

Neither Chris nor Tracer speak.

The mother gives Chris a dirty look.

CHRIS

I want to honk the horn very badly.

TRACER

Y'knw, you're cute when you're pissed off.

A skeptical cough, almost a laugh, makes her shake her head. After a moment she gives him a sideways look, the once over, taunting but available.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL PIT IN THE SANTA LUCIAS - DAY

The soft green sweep of the Salinas Valley lies beyond the Tracers' minivan. The rear seat is down, and man and wife are going after each other like a couple of teens who've just drunk a pint of Slo Gin and think they're invisible. As he wrestles his shirt off, she looks to be struggling to pull a hand from his trousers; then she slaps his pistol on the wheel well.

CUT TO:

EXT. TWO-STORY TRACT HOUSE, CREEKSIDE ESTATES - DAY

The Tracers' van stops over a patch of oil on the driveway and adds more to it. He gets out from behind the wheel and jauntily circles to open Chris' door.

CHRIS

Don't let it go to your head.
 (moving to the front door)
 It was purely physical.

TRACER

Like a guy cares?

He follows her across the lawn that needs mowing. He glances toward the street.

Cars crowd the curb.

TRACER

Lot of cars. The La Rochelles must be having a barbecue.

CHRIS

No. We're having a pizza party for the team. To make up for...you.

With a puzzled look, he reaches across her to open the door.

INT. FRONT ROOM

AD LIBBED CONVERSATION subsides as she breezes in. He follows, stopping short at the sight of Brad, Giants teammates, some parents, "Walt" McMannis and the Right Reverend Charles Ryan, who has lost the umpire's cap and gained a clerical collar. The crowd fits easily into the room because it is open to a step-down dining room, and the only furniture are an antique sideboard in the latter and a crooked lounge in the former.

TRACER

(greeting familiar faces)
 Nina, Eddie.

EDDIE DURAND, a macho man who knows how to listen, turns to Chris. While TRACER AD LIBS GREETINGS, Chris and Eddie whisper like friends, special friends. Eddie would like that to mean a lot more, and maybe Chris knows that she's playing with fire.

EDDIE

How's it going?

CHRIS

Fine.

EDDIE

Did you tell him?

She shakes her head.

TRACER

(to Brad)

So who won?

BRAD

We tied.

TRACER

(excited)

Hey, Walt, who'd of thought?

(to Durand)

How'd Seaside do?

EDDIE

They lost.

TRACER

Then we play PG!

(to Ryan)

There's a praise the Lord, hey, Padre?

RYAN

The regional committee is really serious.
Spreckles will not be able to play unless—

TRACER

I know. We don't stand a chance unless we
spring Augie. His bail's an outrage. So while
I'm clearing his name, maybe you guys could
do some bake sales, car washes, candy
door-to-door.

RYAN

Unless we have your solemn promise that you
will not to go to the game next week.

TRACER

So....

(with a clap)

Bet you Giants could use some pizza!

The boys CHEER.

CUT TO:

A PILE OF MONGREL FUR

scavenging crumbs from a pizza box on the floor. Shorty moves INTO

FRAME, picking up the box. As she passes, Dog takes a nip at the air near her heel.

WIDER - INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

There are more boxes, soft drink cans, crumpled napkins, and Tracer overlooks them all, sitting in the battered lounge like a king in an empty castle. Enjoying a final slice of the cholesterol special, he notes his daughter moping past, dragging a trash bag.

TRACER

What's wrong, honey?

SHORTY

Nothing.

TRACER

And I say, "Oh, come on, something's wrong."

He sets the remainder of his slice on a napkin on the threadbare carpet.

SHORTY

Dad.

There's a long pause.

TRACER

Shorty.

SHORTY

First Mom tried to bribe them with pizza, but they're still not going to let you go to the game. Then you passed Brad's hat around for a retainer.

TRACER

Well, if Augie can't afford bail, where's that put us?

SHORTY

It's so...so...cheesy.

TRACER

Oh. A guy trying to put a roof over his family's head, that's cheesy.

SHORTY

Dad, can't you just go back to doing something normal?

He draws her into his lap.

TRACER

Do you remember those Pippi Longstocking stories I used to read you?

SHORTY

What's that got to do with anything?

TRACER

I don't know, they just came to mind. Did you really like them?

SHORTY

They were kind of boring.

TRACER

Yeah.

Tracer lets that sit for a moment, then asks softly.

TRACER

Am I?

She pulls back, surprised that he sounded so serious. She searches his eyes, then shakes her head solemnly.

TRACER

I want you to be proud of me, but I know what you mean. Sometimes I embarrass myself.

SHORTY

I guess that happens to all of us.

TRACER

Now you remember that. Because there'll be times coming up when I goof. Which is when I'll act like I know exactly what I'm doing. But inside I'll feel real stupid, so I'm going to look at you, hoping that you say, "I don't care. You're my dad, and I love you."

SHORTY
(hugging him tightly)
You are my dad, and I do love you.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY HALL - DAY

TRACER'S NARRATION

This is the city. Los Angeles, California.
I don't work here. I come from the northern
part of the state. We'd like to chop
everything off at the knees, like from San
Luis Obispo on down.

INT. HALL OF RECORDS

TRACER'S NARRATION

But the complaint against Augie was initially
filed in LA.

CAMERA MOVES DOWN from the overhead sign and PICKS UP Tracer
exiting.

TRACER'S NARRATION

I'd assumed that it had come from Belinda
Lotz's mother. But it was the daughter who
was looking for her pound of flesh.

CUT TO:

EXT. A VINTAGE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

TRACER'S NARRATION

Unfortunately, I couldn't find her. So I
ended up going to the mother anyway.

INT. HALLWAY OF BUILDING

Tracer stands at a yellowing door that finally opens a crack,
revealing part of the face of CAROLINE LOTZ. She looks like a hot
number who went cold.

TRACER

Mrs. Lotz?

MRS. LOTZ

Who are you?

TRACER

A private investigator.

MRS. LOTZ

I don't like PIs.

He jams the toe of his cowboy boot into the doorway.

TRACER

Live a little.

INT. APARTMENT

She hesitates, which is when we see that she has a bruise on her face that mirrors Tracer's. She twists locks and pulls a chain, then steps back, allowing Tracer entry. He looks around.

MRS. LOTZ

OK, it ain't like Jeff Lewis if gonna fix it up anytime soon. What do you want?

TRACER

I represent Augustino Vonotti.

Her face is a blank.

TRACER

Augie?

She thinks until the diminutive is recalled with a smile.

MRS. LOTZ

I'll be a two-bit— It's been ages!
Oh, my. How is that sweet boy?

TRACER

Not so well after your daughter charged him with failure to pay child support.

MRS. LOTZ

When she what? How could Belinda have ever known Augie to— He slept with her? How'd they meet? When?

TRACER

I'm sorry. No one's saying he slept with her. What she's saying is—

A MALE VOICE

Slept with who?

BRUNO LOTZ hobbles in from the kitchen. We've seen his type—beer belly, shoulders sloped and strong, suspicious eyes.

BRUNO

What are you talking about?

MRS. LOTZ

It's none of your business, but we happen to be talking about Bee and an old friend of mine. A soldier and a gentleman. If you didn't drink so much, you might remember me mentioning him. Augie Vonotti. He took me to dances at the Paso Robles Inn. More than you ever did.

(to Tracer)

My husband, he was 4-F. Couldn't dance a lick

TRACER

It might be better if we continue this where it's more private.

BRUNO

Wait a sec.

MRS. LOTZ

Butt out, Bruno, no one's talking to you.

(to Tracer)

He don't bother me. He shouldn't bother you.

Tracer glances toward Bruno's menacing presence.

TRACER

Well, apparently...Bee apparently claims that, uh...that Mr. Vonotti is...is her father.

(quickly; to Bruno)

He says he knew your wife, but the relationship wasn't physical.

BRUNO

He does, does he?

MRS. LOTZ

Ha. Look at you.

BRUNO

Yeah, a sucker! You swore I was the one who knocked you up!

MRS. LOTZ

You don't know what to do with it anymore, but think back. You could at least fumble around in those days.

BRUNO

That don't make her mine.

MRS. LOTZ

She's yours if she's anybody's.

BRUNO

All these years. You slutted around while I fed and clothed that little bitch.

MRS. LOTZ

Worm!

The shriek comes with a fist. Bruno throws his hands up and tries to back away, but she keeps coming with fists and feet.

MRS. LOTZ

Don't you call my little girl that! Worm!
You never fed nobody! You can't even
collect disability! Worm!

Stunned, Tracer watches Bruno push her away. She crashes into a lamp, knocking it to the floor.

MRS. LOTZ

Now look what you did?! Look what you
did?!

Cowering, Bruno holds his hands up and circles toward Tracer.

BRUNO

It's was an accident. I didn't mean it.
We got company, sweetie. Let bygones
be bygones. We got company.

MRS. LOTZ

(wheezing for breath)
That's right. Sneak behind another man
like that's gonna make you one. Ha, I
oughta....Worm!

She storms to the hall. A door SLAMS so hard it shakes the wall. Bruno tries to cover his embarrassment.

BRUNO

Get a little fiery from time to time,
don't they?

TRACER

Look, your daughter's address was listed
on Arizona in Santa Monica. I called, but
the phone is no longer in service. Do you
know where she's moved?

He looks down, then mumbles softly:

BRUNO

We ain't heard from her since she run off
ten years ago.

He looks up, eyes desperate for hope.

BRUNO

Do you really think she's mine?

Tracer doesn't answer. He asks for what he wants.

TRACER

Do you have any pictures of her lying
around?

The man shakes his head.

TRACER

Get out, pal. Whatever you think you have
here, it left a long time ago.

CUT TO:

PICKET SIGNS

denouncing spousal abuse in general and a wife beater named Lenny
Kovin in particular. As our CAMERA ANGLE LOOSENS, we see that the
picketers march in front of Art Deco edifice of:

EXT. MONTEREY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, SALINAS - DAY

Among the protestors is MYRA SAVANT who has the sullen look of a
full time malcontent.

INT. RECEIVING, DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S WING - DAY

Tracer sits on a high-backed bench that faces a knee-high partition,

beyond which is an open area for desks and assistants. Faith Hunter enters from the corridor and nearly passes before she recognizes Tracer.

HUNTER
What brings you here?

TRACER
Business.

HUNTER
What sort of business?

He doesn't answer.

HUNTER
Look, Mr. Tracer, a man with a gun is not someone an investigator can just laugh off. I owe you an apology, but I would do the same thing again given the circumstances.

TRACER
Apology accepted.

HUNTER
My name is Faith Hunter.

She offers her hand with a smile that warms the room, the day, the man standing to take her hand.

HUNTER
Call me Faith.

TRACER
I'm John.

HUNTER
So, may I help you with anything?

He hesitates, then removes a document from the inside pocket of his blazer.

TRACER
I wanted to talk to Levin. This is a photocopy of the complaint against Mr. Vonotti. It's the basis of your arrest warrant.

HUNTER

I see.

TRACER

But the accused needs an accuser. And she can't be found. So there's a little problem called habeas corpus.

HUNTER

What do you mean she can't be found?

TRACER

I mean there's no forwarding address. I just got back from LA. Her folks don't know where she is, either.

HUNTER

Her folks? One's right here in Monterey County.

TRACER

In spite of what the daughter thinks, I doubt the mother will ever testify that Augie is the father.

HUNTER

Women get scared, they get embarrassed.

TRACER

They get zealous and kick strangers in the head.

She gives him a sharp look that becomes an exasperated smile.

HUNTER

OK. Please come with me.

He follows her as she wheels through the swinging door to the office bullpen. She passes the desk of the SECRETARY guarding accesses to the double doors of the district attorney.

SECRETARY

Ms. Hunter, you can't—

But she does. Tracer bestows a polite smile before following.

INT. LEVIN'S INNER SANCTUM

The DA stands at window overlooking the protestors. As he turns to Hunter's and Tracer's entry, we see a photograph of him as a college

baseball player. Other sporting poses, Love Me awards, law books and criminal memorabilia are organized in a studied clutter meant to remind reporters of 22-B Baker Street,

LEVIN

Ah! I hoped you two would kiss and made up.

HUNTER

Excuse me for barging in, Mr. Levin, but you said your door is always open.

LEVIN

Unless it's shut.

HUNTER

Sir, there's been a mistake. Mr. Vonotti is in jail without due process. We need to release him.

Levin pulls in a breath, glances back to the window, then exhales.

LEVIN

I'm already going to be on the Five O'clock News for being soft on one jerk. Why not make the Six with a double play?

CUT TO:

CHRIS

tossing a baseball up. She takes a one-handed swing with a fungo bat. The ball heads for the live oaks dotting the foothills of El Toro Park.

INTERCUT REACTIONS - EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

The Giants' short stop groans, which is noted by Brad on second. He overcomes his embarrassment.

BRAD

That's OK, Mom! Give us another!

Chris awkwardly tries again and hits a bullet that nearly kills the third baseman.

On one sideline "Walt" squats with a catcher's mitt, stiffly signaling for the pitcher to burn one in. The ball zips past to his left. It takes a moment for Walt's hand-eye co-ordination to kick in, and we can almost hear a creak as his moves his mitt to where he

might have caught it.

PITCHER
(running)
Sorry! I'll get it!

At the batter's cage Eddie Durand seems the only one doing a good job at coaching.

The first baseman spots reinforcements.

1ST BASEMAN
COACH!

Augie and his wife approach the field with Tracer. A CHEER GOES UP, and the boys rush to welcome their head coach.

BOYS
Augie! Augie! Augie!

Chris converges with her husband.

CHRIS
Not bad, hon.

Durand comes up, looking from Chris to Tracer.

DURAND
Yeah, John. Who'd a thought?

CUT TO:

KSBW NEWS VIDEO - EXT. NATIVIDAD JAIL - EARLIER

Tracer, the DA and Faith Hunter escort Augie to the parking lot, the press dogging them, while an on-site TV REPORTER moves into the foreground from the opposite direction.

REPORTER
As you just heard, District Attorney Simon Bolivar Levin refused further comment, and Mr. Vonotti said he wants to get back to his team, not talk about a possible lawsuit for wrongful arrest.

The CAMERA ANGLE now takes in the protestors from the courthouse. Myra Savant is eager to speak.

REPORTER

But Citizens Against Abuse of Women have plenty to say. I have with me Myra Savant, CAW spokesperson.

MYRA

Yes.

REPORTER

Because Mr. Vonotti's case is not related to the release of Mr. Kovin, how do you explain your interest here?

MYRA

Another miscarriage of justice. Another example of the oppressive patriarchy represented by the DA.

REPORTER

But Coach Vonotti did not...I mean, allegedly did not pay child support, whereas Mr. Kovin practically killed— Well, that's what he's been charged with. So, my question is—

MYRA

A hate crime is a hate crime. Subjecting women to unwanted intercourse and pregnancies, then abandoning them, is the moral equivalent of rape and robbery.

Tracer sticks his head in for a surprise appearance.

TRACER

Sounds like slander. Not to mention hogwash.

INT. TRACER FAMILY ROOM (BURN IN TV) - NIGHT

Brad makes a fist.

BRAD

Yeah!

He's by himself on the floor. The backyard, as seen through one sliding glass door, is dark. A sheet of plywood covers the other door.

MYRA

You're an accomplice! This society and individuals who condone its white male power structure are engaged in criminal acts against womankind.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Tracer and Chris lie on an eider down oasis, she writing diligently on a legal pad, he reading a book. He puts it on the his nightstand, turns off the light and settles into his pillows. She keeps writing.

TRACER

That's a long letter.

CHRIS

Mmm.

TRACER

Who's it to?

CHRIS

Oh...God.

Dog BARKS frantically downstairs.

TRACER

What do you suppose he wants? Darn mutt never barked in his life until...

(swinging out of bed)

Nuestra Familia!

EXT. DRIVEWAY

An athletic figure dressed in black creeps along the minivan. A spray can hisses paint.

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

A sleepy-eyed Shorty steps into the hall and is nearly bowled over by her charging father.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL

Pulling on a robe, Chris comes out of the bedroom.

Tracer waltzes wildly away from Shorty.

INT. FRONT ROOM

Dog keeps up the RACKET at the door, Brad coming up on his father, who flies out of the stairwell on the other side of the room.

EXT. HOUSE

The intruder turns to the door bursting open.

Tracer sees the figure racing up the street toward the frontage road.

TRACER

Come on, Dog, sic 'im, sic 'im!

Tracer gives chase, Dog scrambling in his wake only to stop to sniff the base of a tree. Brad streaks in the animal's stead.

CHRIS

Brad, no! Come back!

EXT. STREET

The intruder runs with determined ease.

Tracer huffs and puffs for a good twenty-five yards before pulling up to feel his neck pulse. Brad sprints past.

TRACER

That's OK. Let him go.

But the words are barely audible, and Brad keeps going until it's clear he doesn't stand a chance. The intruder veers close to a hedge on the corner, then turns onto the frontage road.

CUT TO:

MINUTES LATER - EXT. FRONT LAWN

Chris stands ashen faced, her arm around Shorty, who shivers for comfort. They face the driveway, so Chris has to turn when Tracer comes up with Brad.

TRACER

Remind me to hit up my brother for a treadmill test.

She doesn't say anything but turns her gaze back to the drive.

The minivan is painted with deranged writing. "Rapist...Woman

hater...Child abuser."

The Tracers feel utterly violated, which for the head of the house precedes cold fury.

QUICK FADE.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

FADE IN:

EXT. TRACER HOME - DAY

A rented air compressor rattles in the bed of a battered pickup. Lines lead to a steel paint pot and nozzle which are wielded by an bandy-legged, grizzly-faced cowboy named MIKE. He applies an uneven mist of fire engine red over the last of the graffiti. He turns off the spray and steps back to where Tracers stands. He squints at the overall effect.

MIKE

Best I can do.

TRACER

Better than nothing.

MIKE

Kind of reminds me of a weekend I spent in the Plato lockup. Before Nacimiento Dam put the whole town underwater. There were these things that kept coming at me.

TRACER

Things, Uncle Mike?

MIKE

Horrible spotty things. Went away, though, soon as I got my hands on a bottle of Ten High.

TRACER

Think that will help?

INT. PICK UP - ANGLE ON THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT

Uncle Mike's weathered hand rummages for a half-pint of cheap bourbon in which a sizable dent has already been taken.

EXT. PICK UP

He hands the bottle wordlessly to Tracer, who unscrews the cap and takes a sip.

MIKE

Little more.

So Tracer takes a bigger swallow, but when he turns to study the

minivan, he can respond only with a sad shake of his head.

TRACER
Still looks awful.

MIKE
(indicating the bottle)
Work on it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ASILOMAR STATE BEACH - DAY

Sea otters float fat and lazy on kelp-laden waves. The waves break on layers of shale that rise to Sunset Drive. Tracer's fire engine red minivan is parked on the landward side of the road. A Volvo pulls up behind it. Myra Savant gets out, looks at the minivan, then peers across the sand dunes bordering Del Monte Forest. She fishes through her tote.

ANGLE ON A GNARLED CYPRUS

where Tracer stands.

MYRA
Tracer?

He turns.

She holds an aerosol can at the ready.

MYRA
This is mace.

He nods.

MYRA
So you just keep back where you are,
and I'll listen to what you have to
say.

TRACER
Glad you could find me.

MYRA
Just like you described it on the phone.
(glancing to the road)
Hard to miss.

TRACER
Different color from how you left it.

MYRA

What do you mean?

TRACER

I'm a Christian.

MYRA

The religion for misogynists.

TRACER

God made all kinds of Christians.

MYRA

She made all kinds of insects.

TRACER

Most people know what Jesus said about turning the other cheek.

MYRA

Don't try to sell me your co-dependency.

TRACER

What most people ignore is the time Jesus said a good disciple needs to carry a sword.

She's not going to act surprised, but it is a revelation to her.

TRACER

In a way I look at myself kind of like the Sword of Gideon.

MYRA

He did something in the lions' den?

TRACER

Naw, he killed a bunch of people. Like I would do if they threatened my family or hurt them. Understand?

MYRA

I'm sure you're a bully.

TRACER

You come by my house again...you so much as call...I even think you're scaring one of my family...that'll be the last thing you ever do.

MYRA

You're threatening me?

He moves in, close, daring her to use the mace.

TRACER

Yes.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACER HOME - DAY

Chris is digging up a flower bed when a compact pulls up. Augie Vonotti gets out.

CHRIS

How are you doing?

AUGIE

Fine. Just fine. How 'bout you?

She gestures with her trowel, a kind of shrug, and nods that she's OK. There's an awkward silence, then—

AUGIE

I was hoping John would be here.

CHRIS

I don't know where he is. Would you like me to relay a message? Or just have him call you?

Although he doesn't like baring his problems, he needs to get something off his chest.

AUGIE

It's Mrs. Vonotti.

CHRIS

Is she all right?

AUGIE

No. The arrest. John says the complaint was bogus. But that doesn't explain why it was made. That's what my wife keeps saying. And there are people who.... Well, she can just tell what they're smirking about because it suddenly gets real quiet if they think we can hear. So there's this cloud over us.

CHRIS

Have you ever given Mrs. Vonotti any reason not to believe you?

AUGIE

I hope not. I mean, the usual disappointments, you know.

CHRIS

Married people sometimes...

Chris wheels her hand, hoping to come up with something more than a cliché that won't rip the scab off her own wounded feelings.

CHRIS

Well, the usual disappointments. You know it isn't all smooth sailing. But if she basically trusts you...if she admires what you stand for...if...if she still wants to touch you....Just give her time. She'll get over it.

AUGIE

She's never gotten over the fact that we don't have children. We've been to the doctors, you see, and it's not me. So this is....It hurts her in a way you can't imagine.

The OS PHONE gives a muted ring.

AUGIE

I need proof. Not just my word, but DNA... something. John has to find that girl.

CHRIS

He can try, but what if he doesn't find her?

AUGIE

He has to.

Another OS RING.

CHRIS

And if we do...you mentioned DNA. That kind of testing takes time and is very, very expensive. I helped my daughter once with a science paper. I don't know how much you have in savings, but given your job...

The phone RINGS AGAIN, causing Chris to throw an exasperated look at the house.

CHRIS
Augie, you probably can't afford it.

AUGIE
I need my name back.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, PACIFIC GROVE - DAY

The Pacific Grove Mariners are at practice, their pitcher burning in fast balls like a pro. Monterey pine surround the playing field, and parents and the curious sit or stand in the dappled shadows, watching.

Tracer appears with a copy of the Monterey County Herald. He chooses a spot on the grass next to PACIFIC GROVE BOOSTER in a lawn chair. The booster is a chubby man who dresses well and looks eager to please. Tracer makes a show of opening the paper to team photos of the opponents in the upcoming championship. He folds it so that he can refer to Spreckles' enemies.

PG BOOSTER
Haven't seen you around here before.

Tracer absently holds out his hand.

TRACER
John Tracer.

The man shakes, purses his lips, trying to remember something. Then it hits.

PG BOOSTER
Yeah! The legend. The Mother Of All Fans.

TRACER
Not really.

PG BOOSTER
Scouting for the Giants, huh?

TRACER
In a way.
(nodding toward the players)
You got a great pitcher in Vasquez.

PG BOOSTER

He's our star. Better tell your son not to blink. Is he a heavy hitter?

TRACER

He's OK.

PG BOOSTER

Can't be just OK to get to the regional championship.

TRACER

What are Vasquez's folks like? Big fans?

PG BOOSTER

Aren't we all?

TRACER

The old man's in real estate, right?

PG BOOSTER

No. Where'd you get that?

Tracer shrugs.

TRACER

Old land grant name. Why not land? What do you do?

PG BOOSTER

Real estate.

Tracer grins and gestures to him, as if to say, "Gotcha."

PG BOOSTER

Everybody around Monterey Bay used to be the property game. Now what's left of us, we're living on bark.

TRACER

What's your son play?

PG BOOSTER

Left field.

TRACER

Must be buddies with the pitcher.

PG BOOSTER

Why so interested in Vasquez?

TRACER

You said he's the star. I said I'm scouting.

The chubby man nods, more or less satisfied.

TRACER

And, uh...I'm kind of looking for a house,
too.

Complete interest.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD, CREEKSIDE ESTATES - DAY

Brad rides a skateboard like a low flying jet. Highway 68 and the Santa Lucias whip by on his right; lawns and houses, on his left; farmland and the Salinas River loom ahead. He crouches for balance and hangs a hard, grinding left.

EXT. TRACERS' STREET

Brad pumps out of it and zips past a high hedge which gives him a thought. He drops the tail and does a wheel-over, stopping in his tracks. What was that thought?

EXT. HOUSE AT THE END OF THE BLOCK

More like a memory. Brad searches the hedge to which the intruder veered close before running onto the frontage road.

He sees something.

He starts to reach into the tangled growth, thinks better of it and pulls off his shirt. Using it like a potholder, he reaches into the hedge again and withdraws an object.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL, TRACER HOME - DAY

Shorty walks past the open door to Brad's room. She turns back and looks in.

INT. BRAD'S ROOM

There are obligatory posters of the San Francisco Giants and 49ers on the wall, and a homemade bow and arrows in a corner where there's a desk. Brad's shirt covers the desk like a table cloth; a can of spray paint stands in the middle of the shirt. Brad's eye looks as big as the moon as he examine the can with an magnifying glass and

blows on talc from a rubber bulb.

SHORTY
What are you doing?

It sounded like an accusation, but Brad is undaunted.

BRAD
Dusting for prints. This is the can of
paint that sprayed our car.

He sets down the magnifier and pulls a piece of cellophane tape from
a dispenser.

SHORTY
How do you know?

BRAD
Same color. The tagger ran past the
hedge at the end of the street. That's
where I found it.

SHORTY
Circumstantial.

He delicately touches the tape to the can's surface.

SHORTY
You don't know how to identify fingerprints.

He pulls the tape away. Enthralled in spite of herself, Shorty moves
closer.

BRAD
But a crime lab like I visited when I
was a Cub Scout could ID a print if they
had a good one.

He sticks the tape to a page of notebook paper that has three other
pieces of tape on it.

SHORTY
What are those?

BRAD
I think that's a thread from my shirt.
That's part of a leaf. That looks like an
insect wing under the magnifying glass.

He offers the glass to her for closer examination.

SHORTY

Like I care.

He tapes the last piece of tape.

BRAD

I think that's my thumb print.

SHORTY

The tagger probably wore gloves.

BRAD

I thought that all along.

SHORTY

If there was any real evidence on there,
you just screwed it up. Dad's going to
be really ticked.

Brad sits back, aware that he could be in trouble, but he's not going down without companions.

BRAD

You know what Dad told me? The other day
when we were all alone.

SHORTY

What?

BRAD

Well, he was kind of feeling low because
of how Mom's upset about not paying bills,
and I guess he just....Naw, I better not.

SHORTY

What did he say?

BRAD

I promised I wouldn't.

SHORTY

You tell me!

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACERS' DEN, DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

Chris sits at a school surplus teacher's desk. She pounds away on the number pad of a personal computer, not noticing Tracer appearing in the hall. He moves to her. Tax forms and correspondence cover

the desk top. He picks up a document for a looksee.

TRACER

Sheesh. That's some penalty Eddie Durand has to pay.

She snatches the document.

CHRIS

That's his business with the IRS. Not yours.

She swivels her chair to face him directly.

CHRIS

Where have you been?

TRACER

With a real estate guy looking for a house.

CHRIS

We're behind paying for this one!

TRACER

Looking, not buying.

She turns away, agitated. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

TRACER

Honey, what's wrong?

CHRIS

You just left. Your uncle stayed until I made him lunch. You know how disreputable I think he is. He drank the cooking sherry. Th-then Augie came by, and...

Ready to burst into tears, she pushes the button of an answering machine on her desk. The voice of a CALLER is distorted by hate and electronic filtering. It's female but hardly human.

CALLER

He's a rotten father. He needs to pay back what he did. He deserves to die. Anybody who helps him needs to die.

The phone RINGS, giving both a start. They look at each other,

fearing the worst. The phone RINGS AGAIN. Tracer starts to reach for it.

CHRIS

Don't answer!

TRACER

Sweetie, we can't hide.

He picks up the handset and speaks guardedly.

TRACER

Hello?

CROSS CUT WITH:

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

Levin is on the line.

LEVIN

Tracer?

TRACER

Who is this?

LEVIN

Simon Bolivar Levin.

TRACER

Simon, I'm glad you called.

LEVIN

Good. Because if you don't get your sorry ass down here right now, I'll be sending out deputies to haul you in. Where the hell do you get off? You can't go around and threaten to kill people. Not on my watch!

Levin angrily bangs his handset down.

Tracer hangs up, trying to conceal the worry in his face.

Shorty enters distraught.

SHORTY

Mom...Dad...Brad says I'm adopted.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

FADE IN:

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

The spray can of paint is on the Livine's desk. He glares across it at Tracer, who glances to his side where Myra Savant sits in a chair like a smug avenging angel.

LEVIN

Is Ms. Savant accurate about the things you said to her?

Tracer thinks about lying. He rocks a hand.

The DA flicks the can with his pencil.

LEVIN

And you threatened her based on what your son found?

TRACER

I didn't have that at the time. But, uh...

Tracer reaches into his pocket to pull out a micro-cassette player.

TRACER

Now I've got this.

He sets it on the desk and pushes the play button.

CALLER

He's a rotten father. He needs to pay back what he did. He deserves to die. Anybody who helps him needs to die.

The ugliness of the threat stirs Myra to grudging empathy. Tracer clicks a button on the player.

MYRA

You're crazy to think that's me.

TRACER

I never said it was.

(to Levin)

But only voice analysis can determine whether it is or isn't.

LEVIN

Boy, you don't let go, do you? I have you two together in the hope we can come to an understanding.

(to Myra)

You want me to hang this guy out to dry. The trouble is, a verbal threat is a gray area. Hard to prove, harder to stick. A jury will hear that tape; they'll look at the wife and kiddies behind the defendant's table; and they'll rule that you need a thicker skin. Then what? You shout at the media? You try to make me look like a butthead because the world's not a perfect place.

(to Tracer)

Now you apologize to her.

A moment of truth.

TRACER

I'm sorry. I went off half cocked. I think you understand why now, but that doesn't make it right.

She fights being touched. She wins. She turns to the DA.

MYRA

And that's supposed to make everything all right?

LEVIN

The California Department of Consumer Affairs hands out the licenses for barbers, chiropractors and private eyes. I can complain to their review board. You can, too. You might even get a lawyer to sue this yahoo.

MYRA

I see.

Her mouth tightens, and she gets up. She walks to the double doors, stops, turns with a final comment to Tracer, maybe to Levin, too.

MYRA

I hate your kind.

She exits.

TRACER

Thanks for working out an understanding.

LEVIN

Get out of here.

Tracer picks up the cassette player.

TRACER

Are you going to analyze this?

LEVIN

Compared to what?

TRACER

Her voice.

LEVIN

Oh, sure, I'm gonna run out right now
and ask for a freaking sample.

Tracer activates the rewind button, then hits play.

MYRA'S VOICE

I hate your kind.

He ejects the micro-cassette and pats it onto the desk top.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY

Tracer turns out of the DA's wing and stops to drink at a water fountain. From there he sees

THE SNACK BAR

where a blind man sells candies, newspapers and the like. It's also where Myra engages in animated conversation with Faith Hunter. If Myra weren't talking, Tracer might think they were coeds discussing last night's date.

The women separate. Faith Hunter walks up to Tracer, eyeing him playfully.

HUNTER

Made yourself a heck of an enemy, John.

TRACER

Wha'd she say?

HUNTER

All men are scum.

He studies her legs. They are well proportioned, shapely with muscle.

TRACER

What did you say?

She follows his gaze. Her features suddenly harden.

HUNTER

I agreed with her.

She moves past.

CUT TO:

CHRIS

listening with a deadpan expression.

TRACER (OS)

How do you get to hate men?

CHRIS

Marry one.

WIDER - INT. TRACER KITCHEN - DAY

The family is seated at the dinner table. Enthralled, the children watch their father slowly put a finger on their mother's chin and speak with a doll's voice.

TRACER

Nice.

CHRIS

Grow up in an abusive home. The father's a brute, or he's not there. Some women can overcome it, but the drumbeat can be overwhelming. Poor role modeling, poor self-esteem, poor choices. Definitely poor choices. Add the drumbeat to someone's who's psychologically frail, she or he can end up in a pretty crazy dance.

TRACER

You left out too much TV.

Chris thinks that's relatively trivial.

TRACER

Or not doing homework before 9 o'clock.
Forgetting to cut the lawn all the time.

Brad casts his sister a puzzled look as their mom gets it.

CHRIS

Oh, and arguing about who's to feed the
dog.

TRACER

The garbage.

CHRIS

The dishes.

SHORTY

You guys.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE, CITY OF MONTEREY - DAY

The building MOVES IN AND OUT OF FOCUS as

TRACER

adjusts the zoom lens of his camera.

EXT. GREENBELT ACROSS THE STREET

Just off the sidewalk there's a woman at his side clutching a Styrofoam cup of coffee. A bandanna covers orangey red hair fashioned into a helmet of curls. Dark glasses in Sparkle Plenty frames cover her eyes. She wears a sweat suit, size hippo. She sounds like she would very much rather be spending the early morning hour back in her bed.

CHRIS

How do you know she's a runner?

TRACER

She left me in the dust.

CHRIS

Like you're so in shape.

TRACER

She left Brad in the dust.

CHRIS
(pointing excitedly)
There she is!

INTERCUT APARTMENT BUILDING

Rotating her arms, Faith Hunter moves purposefully to the sidewalk where she finishes her stretching sequence.

Tracer fires away while Chris has graver doubts.

CHRIS
But what if I can't keep up?

TRACER
Sprain your ankle.

CHRIS
What if she recognizes me?

Tracer lowers the camera just in time for Chris to quickly hand off her coffee.

CHRIS
Here!

She sets off.

EXT. STREET

Chris quickly realizes the pace is deceptive.

Hunter speeds up, angling toward the greenbelt.

Chris takes a chance by cutting down the embankment.

Hunter keeps to the trail.

EXT. GREENBELT

Breathing hard, propelled by momentum, Chris lurches across level ground.

Hunter levels off about twenty yards ahead. She has no idea she's being followed.

And Chris will lose her unless she sprints hard.

Hunter thinks she hears a locomotive chugging up behind her. She looks over her shoulder.

Chris' last chance. With a loud groan, she sprawls to the ground.

Hunter comes back.

HUNTER

Are you OK?

No, Chris is not OK. But she can't get the words out. She makes sure her glasses are strait and her wig is on. The she manages—

CHRIS

I'm new. At this.

Hunter offers a hand to help her to her feet. Chris tries out a Southern accent.

CHRIS

Thank you ever so much.

(taking a step)

Ooops. I think I twisted something.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GREENBELT - DAY

The passenger's door of the minivan is open with Tracer sitting toward the curb, eating a doughnut. Chris limps up and takes it from him. Sweating, she plops on the curb, leans her back against the van and begins replenishing her blood sugar.

TRACER

What did you find out?

CHRIS

No pain, no gain. Two years of college. Joined the Navy. If I had really hurt myself, I couldn't walk. Military police. Knocked on Levin's door about six weeks ago. I should do something about my hair.

TRACER

Where's she from?

CHRIS

Santa Monica.

TRACER

"This number is no longer in service."

CHRIS

She doesn't act crazy or sound crazy or....

Chris is too tired to keep playing devil's advocate.

CHRIS

But there are so many coincidences, I'd say yes. If our hypothesis is correct. Please be a dear and run by what sounded so utterly riveting at two o'clock this morning.

She pulls off her scarf and wig while—

TRACER

She despises her real father because he's weak. She hates her mother, but that's how she's been trained to be. Mommy Dearest talks about a man from the past, a white knight, the perfect father figure. The daughter follows his footsteps into the military, then literally follows him. But he's still a man, still a father, and that plays back to hating dear ol' dad. She wants Augie; she doesn't want him. She's obsessed about anyone connected with him.

CHRIS

I read her as strong and willful. Life nailed into tight little compartments. She's practicing for the marathon. Can you imagine how much hostility could be unleashed if she weren't doing that?

He shakes his head.

TRACER

But her name isn't Belinda Lotz. The DA's office must have done a background check before she was hired, so wha'd she do? Fake a whole identity?

CHRIS

Maybe not. It's legal to have a second name. I've got one tax client who's an "also known as." You just have to keep the same Social Security number and make sure all income is reported. It's not like hiding who you are. If anyone decided to call Belinda Hunter Faith Lotz on who she is, she could explain it. New place, new name, why not? This is California.

TRACER

I suppose she could have done it years ago when she left home.

CHRIS

Well. At least we're convinced.

TRACER

So now all we need is due cause to get the authorities to ask, "Are you a nut case?"

CHRIS

A "please" might help.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LOTZ' APARTMENT, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Mrs. Lotz twists a lock. The door opens the width of the restraining chain. A slice of Tracer's face appears. Mrs. Lotz shoves the door hard.

INTERCUT - INT. HALLWAY

But the toe of his cowboy boot acts as a wedge.

Warily, she watches him hold up a photograph of Faith Hunter taking the morning air in Monterey.

TRACER

Please.

His boots slips back.

The door closes, but the chain clanks away. Then the door swings wide to allow him entry.

CUT TO:

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S INNER OFFICE - DAY

Levin's interphone buzzes, and his secretary's VOICE crackles.

SECRETARY (OS)

Mr. Tracer on line three.

Levin doesn't want to answer, but curiosity gets the better of him.

LEVIN

Levin here.

CROSS CUT WITH:

EXT. PHONE BOOTH AT I-5 REST STOP - DAY

TRACER

Simon!

LEVIN

What do you want?

TRACER

Like to meet with you.

LEVIN

Can't today. Besides, the preliminary results aren't back on that tape.

TRACER

Bet you twenty bucks it isn't Myra Savant.

LEVIN

Then what the hell was the point?

TRACER

Hey, it's someone's voice. That's what I'd like to talk to you about tomorrow.

LEVIN

Tomorrow's Saturday.

TRACER

Say, one o'clock. We'll have a barbecue.

LEVIN

I'm tied up.

TRACER

I know, but I can't go to the game myself. You brings the steaks and the beer.

LEVIN

Are you out of your mind?

TRACER

I don't know, Uncle Simon. Am I?

The DA's features tense.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACER HOME - DAY

The NATIONAL ANTHEM PLAYS OVER; BOYS' VOICES kick in; and Tracer pushes a lawn mower through the high grass.

The DA pulls up in a Mercedes SL.

Tracer helps him carry grocery bags to the house.

MEANWHILE:

AT THE LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD IN EL TORO PARK

The public address system BROADCASTS the "Star Spangled Banner." The Spreckles Giants and Pacific Grove Mariners line the infield, caps held against their hearts.

Brad sings off key.

Chris and Shorty stand proudly in the crowd.

Augie casts a troubled look toward the stands.

Augie's wife doesn't look so enthusiastic.

CUT TO:

LATER - EXT. TRACER'S BACK YARD

Tracer tosses a match into his rusting barbecue. The charcoal ignites like a Molotov Cocktail because it's been soaked in gasoline. He turns to a picnic table on the patio.

Beer in hand, Levin morosely studies the photograph of Faith Hunter. He looks up as Tracer levers the cap off another bottle.

LEVIN

Maybe I hired a rogue. But so far I have only your word for it.

TRACER

For the sake of discussion, will you accept it as a given?

LEVIN

Do I have a choice?

Tracer taps his bottle against Levin's and knocks back a drink.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD

The SOUNDS of the crowd and game surrealistically wind down as Faith Hunter steps out of the entrance tunnel. She stops to reconnoiter. Now there is only SILENCE.

TRACER (VO)

Faith Hunter is obsessed. But there's another obsession going on that has nothing to do with her.

CUT TO:

LATER - EXT. TRACER'S BACKYARD

Steaks sizzle. A couple more beers have Tracer and Levin more comfortable with each other.

TRACER

I'm sure you can understand how a son might please his father. Maybe the father doesn't like baseball. Never liked it. But the son does, and that just tickles the heck out of the old boy.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE PARK

A PG batter hits a pop fly. There is STILL NO SOUND from this location.

TRACER (VO)

So he gets a little enthusiastic at the games.

LEVIN (VO)

The way I hear it, you go ballistic.

Brad back peddles. The center fielder gives him room. Brad catches the ball to retire the Mariners.

TRACER (VO)

Now, imagine if the father or someone else close to the boy really likes baseball.

Chris and Shorty jump to their feet, mouths open for cheering.

Augie moves his hands together enthusiastically.

TRACER (VO)

The question kept going around in my head. Why was Augie arrested at such a critical time for the Giants?

RACK FOCUS TO HUNTER

sitting right behind the coach, locked in her troubled psyche, staring at the back of Augie's head.

EXT. BACKYARD

Tracer turns the steaks.

TRACER

When it comes to arrests, your office usually leaves that for the authorities in the jurisdiction involved.

EXT. BALL PARK - (NO SOUND AT THIS LOCATION)

The scoreboard shows a 1-0 game in favor of Pacific Grove.

TRACER (VO)

In this case, it should have been the Sheriff's Department, not an investigator from your office. But I know, I know. You've been under pressure from radical feminists.

Brad is on deck. He swings a couple of bats.

TRACER (VO)

Someone gave Hunter permission to act quickly. At a really bad time for the team. Whatever happened next—Augie's guilt or innocence—wasn't so important as the fact that a psychological blow had been struck against the team.

The PG pitcher watches Brad step up to the plate.

TRACER (VO)

But why? Why give the Giants' opponents that kind of edge?

Chris and Shorty stand, calling out encouragement.

Faith Hunter rises from her seat. As in a daze, she moves along the backstop to come out where the Spreckles bench is.

Chris sees Hunter.

EXT. BACKYARD

Trace platters the meat.

TRACER

I scouted PG.

LEVIN

(resigned)

I figured it had to be something like that.

TRACER

Yeah. Got a great pitcher. But you know that. He's your nephew.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE PARK

Shorty looks to be saying, "Mom?"

LEVIN (VO)

What do you want?

Chris is moving rapidly out of the stands.

Hunter rounds the corner of the backstop. There's nothing between her and the bench. Between reason and obsession. Between the pistol she has in her hand and Augie's head.

TRACER (VO)

I want DNA tests on Hunter and Vonotti, followed by a big press conference, how sorry you are etc., etc.

Chris runs.

LEVIN (VO)

Then throw the book at Hunter?

TRACER (VO)

No. She needs therapy.

NOISE EXPLODES AT THE PARK as Chris wrestles with Hunter for the pistol. Wife & Mother versus Marathon Woman & Miss Ninja. No contest! But Brad has a baseball bat. And Shorty isn't about to

lose those near and dear. By the time Father Chuck stomps on Hunter's gun hand, the lady is down and out.

EXT. BACKYARD

The DA warily watches his host set the meat on the table.

LEVIN

OK. Deal.

Tracer gestures for the Levin to sit.

TRACER

One other thing. I need a new car.

LEVIN

My office is not responsible for that! No more than we are for thinking Faith Hunter what's-her-name was normal. If you think you can...can blackmail me with a innuendo and vague accusations like you did when Nuestra Familia—

TRACER.

Simon! I did not blackmail you then. You had to cut a few corners to do the right thing. I understood. I understand now. But look at it from my point of view. I need some...restitution...for... let's call them errors in judgment. If you like, I'll be the first to tell the press that nothing you did was illegal. But it will look bad. That's all. It looks bad.

Levin's grimace droops with tired defeat.

TRACER

So does my car.

Levin sees a piece of meat. He chews on it. He jabs his fork at Tracer.

LEVIN

Get the damned radio so we can hear the game.

FINAL FADE.

THE END