

***Milk* (2008): Narrative Breakdown**

Screenwriter: Dustin Lance Black

Based on: An original screenplay based on the life of Harvey Milk.

Screenplay: <http://www.sellingyourscreenplay.com/wp-content/uploads/screenplay/scripts/Milk.pdf>

ACT ONE: PAGES 1 TO 34

San Francisco, 1978. In a pre-credit sequence, Harvey Milk, 48, is home alone dictating his will into a tape recorder, to be played only in the event of his assassination. He talks about his early days of political campaigning.

We flash back to see him making speeches to hostile crowds, making jokes to ingratiate himself with the audience.

Back in his kitchen, Harvey acknowledges that, as a gay activist, he is a potential target.

At San Francisco City Hall, President of the Board of Supervisors, Dianne Feinstein, announces that City Supervisor Harvey Milk has been shot and killed. Supervisor Dan White (one of Harvey's colleagues) is suspected.

Commentary: *Note the similarities with Serpico. Both start with the wounding / death of the protagonist before flashing back to tell their story and then returning to their (attempted) slaying at the end of the film. It's an effective 'bookend' device for a social issues biopic, as it adds a layer of emotion and ensures any victories the protagonist enjoys along the way*

are bittersweet. Sometimes knowing how a story ends can elevate a narrative and that's certainly true with Milk.

New York, 1970. Harvey meets a younger man, Scott. We learn that Harvey works for the Great American Insurance Company and that it's his 40th birthday.

Later, Harvey and Scott have sex. Afterwards, they talk. We learn that Harvey keeps his sexuality hidden from his employers, fearing he could lose his job. Harvey tells Scott that he needs a change. Scott suggests they run away together.

In Harvey's kitchen in 1978, he tells us that San Francisco was the place to go to drop out and fall in love.

There's a brief montage of Harvey and Scott in San Francisco. Harvey's 1978 voice-over tells us that by 1972, the colourful Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood where the 1960s' counterculture movement originated (The Haight) was out of bounds. The city's gay community was clustered in The Castro, a six-block square Irish Catholic neighbourhood.

Commentary: *The Haight is the colourful Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood where the 1960s' counterculture movement originated.*

Harvey takes pictures on Castro Street, capturing the empty and boarded up shops. He finds the scene 'thrilling'. He photographs a shop with a 'for rent' sign. He also encounters a hostile liquor store owner. Harvey tells Scott he wants them to open a shop together.

Commentary: *Note how the seeds of future conflict between Harvey and Scott are being sown, with the young man not taking life very seriously, while his older lover is making plans for their future. It's playful and fun now, but problems will arise later.*

Harvey and Scott open a modest camera store in the empty unit. The hostile liquor store owner warns Harvey that, as a gay man, his application to join the Eureka Valley Merchant's Association will likely be rejected. Scott gets angry but Harvey holds him back.

The encounter energises Harvey, who wants to start his own business association for gay-owned businesses. Scott is unenthusiastic about political activism.

Commentary: *There's a lot going on in the first 11 pages of the script. We've met Harvey and seen his development from closeted insurance worker in New York to liberated budding activist in San Francisco. We've met two key characters, love interest Scott and Harvey's assassin Dan. We've also seen the hostile encounter that set Harvey on the path to becoming a targeted gay activist and politician. Along the way, we've been introduced to The Castro, the backdrop to Harvey's activism. This is a good example of a strong and compelling opening that effectively sets up what is to come, including plenty of great characterisation, colour, action and conflict.*

Harvey works the crowd at a Castro Street Fair. He has now set up the Castro Village Association and the neighbourhood is thriving.

There's a long line at the liquor store and Harvey stops by to see the previously hostile owner and playfully goads him.

We see Harvey and Scott happy, with each other and in their new community.

Dictating his will, Harvey describes how his camera store started attracting activists and people looking for a home-from-home.

Commentary: Note how we move from a scene of celebration to the sobering sight of Harvey making his will, knowing full well that his life will end with the assassination he feared. It's effective, if maybe a little emotionally manipulative.

At the store, now a hang-out, Harvey holds court with his assembled entourage, including Danny, Jim, Dick and Dennis.

A union man, Baird, shows up and asks for Harvey's help in getting Coors beer out of all the bars in the area, as the company won't join the union. Baird refers to Harvey as the Mayor of the Castro, an unofficial title. Harvey promises to get Coors out of the gay bars, in return for getting the union to take on some gay delivery drivers.

Jim, Dick, Scott and Danny successfully get Coors beer out of all the gay bars. Harvey, in voice-over, tells us that the success led to the hiring of the first openly gay union delivery drivers. His movement is gaining momentum and power.

Commentary: *The device of having Harvey dictate his will and then using his voice-over to narrate the events he is describing raises the question of memory – seeing the scene play out suggests that’s what really happened, but his narration speaks to memory and recollection that might be flawed, intentionally inaccurate or unintentionally romanticised. For example, while the term ‘Mayor of The Castro’ is coined by Baird, in voice-over, Harvey concedes that maybe he himself invented the title. So, what other aspects of the story did he invent?*

Harvey and his friends are alerted to cops on Castro Street. They arrive to see cops attacking people outside a gay bar. Harvey and the others try to break up the fight. Scott gets hit in the head with a police nightstick.

Back in the apartment, Harvey cleans Scott’s wound. Harvey talks of having someone within the government to look out for gay interests. Harvey decides to run for office with Scott as his campaign manager. He says that Coors looks like it might cave to union demands, scoring a victory for Harvey and helping him get votes. Scott is unenthusiastic but Harvey’s mind is made up.

Commentary: *Harvey is shown throughout as a positive and proactive character. He understands that while working outside the system has merit, in order to bring about change, he needs to be on the inside, where the decisions are made. Instead of increasing hostility, he finds ways to bring people onboard, such as the union, who would otherwise not be sympathetic to the cause.*

Harvey sets up a soapbox on Castro Street next to a cop and makes a speech calling out the incident at the gay bar that resulted in 14 people going to hospital. Harvey announces his candidacy for San Francisco City Supervisor.

There is then a montage of the camera store entourage handing out flyers, while Harvey glad-hands as many people as possible of all backgrounds, not all of whom are interested.

Harvey's attention is then captured by teenage Cleve. Harvey tries to recruit him, but Cleve isn't interested, in Harvey or politics.

In Harvey's kitchen in 1978 dictating his will, he tells us how tough life was for young gay men who had no one to help them. He talks of suicides and arrests, while others ended up in San Francisco, some turning tricks, like Cleve.

Commentary: While Harvey is attracted to Cleve, the scene is about far more than this. Harvey recognises himself in Cleve, who has come from Phoenix, where he cannot live an openly gay life. Harvey's motivation for his activism comes across clearly in this scene. He wants to make life better for gay men, starting with improving life in The Castro.

Harvey talks with a cop at the scene of a murder. The cop refers to the victim as a 'fruit', who was walking home with his 'trick'. Harvey knew the man. He tells the cop that the two were lovers. Harvey points out that there would be lots of witnesses if Castro residents thought the police had an interest in keeping them safe.

Harvey and his entourage discuss his need to engage with the city's 'gay leaders', who are lending their support to mainstream political candidates. These leaders include David Goodstein, publisher of leading gay magazine, The Advocate. One of the volunteers then alerts Harvey to a death threat that someone has sent by mail.

Later, in the apartment, Harvey shows the death threat letter to Scott, who wants to call the police. Harvey makes light of the threat, but Scott sees the danger.

Commentary: *Note how this short scene accomplishes three things. Firstly, it shows us how Harvey's rising profile is leading to him becoming a target of the threatened violence that we know will play out in a tragic way. Secondly, it shows Harvey's cavalier attitude towards becoming a target. Thirdly, it escalates the conflict brewing between Harvey and Scott. In the prior scene, Harvey questioned Scott's lack of leadership in his political campaign, even though he's the campaign manager. Scott's disengagement with the campaign is clear, and this is amplified by the fact that Harvey is becoming a target.*

Harvey and Scott go to see Goodstein and his lawyer, Rick, the 'gay establishment'. We learn that Goodstein had been in a similar position to Harvey; he was fired from his job at a financial institution due to his sexual orientation. Harvey wants the endorsement of The Advocate. However, Rick tells him that the San Francisco political world does not readily accept newcomers. Goodstein wants Harvey to 'quiet down'. Harvey tells him that he's not a candidate; he's part of a movement. Election day arrives. Harvey loses, coming 10th in a field of 32 vying for six seats.

In voice-over, Harvey tells us that he ran again in 1975, with a few changes. We then see Harvey trying on a second-hand suit and sporting a clean-cut image.

Harvey tells us that he lost in 1975, albeit with more votes.

He goes to tell us that he ran again in 1976. This time, it was for the California State Assembly. He participates in a public debate with his opponent, Art Agnos, who is described as being part of the 'political machine'. Later, the two men talk privately. Art tells Harvey that his pitch is too much of a downer for voters. The words resonate with Harvey. Scott prepares dinner, while Harvey confers with his team. Scott becomes exasperated at the intrusion and drives everyone out the apartment. Scott half-jokingly warns Harvey not to discuss politics at the table. Harvey promises him that if he loses again, he won't run for a fifth time.

Commentary: *Once again, we have escalating tensions between Scott and Harvey. It's clear that Scott isn't fully supportive of Harvey's political ambitions and this conflict is now spilling out. Having Scott drive Harvey's political team out of their apartment is a good visual representation. In addition, we're aware that this conflict could escalate, as we know that Harvey continues to pursue his political ambitions and becomes Supervisor (indicating that he loses his bid for the higher office of California State Assemblyman).*

Harvey runs into Cleve and invites him into the camera store. They talk about revolution and Harvey re-asserts the need to fight. Cleve suggests jokingly that he might run for office.

Commentary: *Note how the scene also works to heighten the impending physical threat to Harvey, as he initially fears a stranger is after him. The script is especially good at keeping all the dramatic plates spinning – Harvey and Scott’s relationship; the spectre of violence; and Harvey’s burgeoning political career. Each of these interrelated aspects of the story moves on organically, with many scenes doing double or even triple duty to keep each element of the narrative driving forward.*

Harvey tells us in voice-over that he lost the election.

Jim is enthusiastic that the loss was smaller than the previous two, but the news fails to cheer Harvey. Jim unfurls a map. He tells Harvey that if an initiative on district elections passes, a new district will be created around The Castro. If this happens, Harvey is sure to win a race for Supervisor in a landslide. Harvey is outwardly resistant but clearly inwardly excited.

Overall: *Harvey has come a long way since we met him in New York, and this act ends on both a high and a low. Now on page 34, we’ve reached a point where, following three straight losses, Harvey finally has a tangible chance to become the country’s first openly gay man elected to major political office. However, this means breaking his promise to Scott that he’d quit if he lost the third race.*

It’s clear that Harvey’s commitment to the cause and his belief that the only way to achieve real change is to work from the inside is now the

dominating factor in his life and there is little doubt heading into Act Two that he will run again.

While we know that Harvey's story has a tragic end, this does not take away from the interest in seeing how he develops further as a character and the impact he will have on the gay movement as his political career progresses.

Also note how this section is a good example of a fact-based film sticking to the 'spirit of the truth'. We don't need to see repetitive and redundant scenes of Harvey actually running and losing each time – a few key scenes and some voice-over make sure we get the message that his fledgling political career is, so far, falling flat.

ACT TWO PART 1: PAGES 34 to 52

In the next scene, the gang – minus Scott – is gathered at the camera shop watching coverage of the defeat of pro-gay legislation in Florida. The change means that gay people can lose their jobs and be prosecuted for their lifestyles. The news threatens to spark a riot in The Castro.

Harvey receives a call from a young boy in Minnesota. The boy is gay and wants to kill himself because his parents are taking him to a hospital to be ‘fixed’. Harvey tells him to leave and to get on a bus. He tries to reassure the boy. The young man tells him that he can’t leave as he’s in a wheelchair. A man’s voice is heard in the background and the line goes dead. Harvey is shaken up by the call. He’s then alerted to the unrest in the streets and heads out to quell the rioters.

Commentary: *Note how the story covers its issue from all the angles, including violence; taking the protest to the streets; the political realities; the impact on young people growing up in small towns, etc. We see all this through Harvey’s eyes and experience his reaction. It’s an effective way to build a layered picture of the world in which the story takes place.*

In a gay bar, Cleve takes a lead role in getting everyone out on the street to protest the Florida decision, as the violence and anger grows among The Castro residents. Harvey asks permission from the police to lead a march.

Commentary: *Note a key moment of character development with Scott. Back on page 16, he jumped into the violent clash started by the police. However, on page 36, he watches Harvey get involved but hangs back.*

Harvey succeeds in corralling the crowd to march to City Hall. Anger is bubbling as the crowd passes cops who beat their nightsticks against their shields and try to incite violence.

At City Hall, Harvey gives a rousing speech, telling the crowd that the Florida decision will coalesce the movement, creating 'a national gay force' He goes on to say that they must give young people across the US – including Minnesota – hope. The crowd explodes with support.

We then see Harvey take his message of hope to a wider audience.

Commentary: Note how Harvey listened to Art Agnos who told him he needed to give the voters optimism.

In voice-over, Harvey tells us that San Francisco changed the voting rules to allow Supervisors to be elected directly by neighbourhoods, who could choose a true representative of their community. He goes on to tell us that another district close to The Castro vowed to stay 'Conservative, Irish, Catholic'. Their candidate is Dan White. We see him deliver a lacklustre speech that warns of the threat posed by 'social radicals, social deviants, and incorrigibles'.

Scott leaves Harvey. Harvey is in shock, but he is described as being unable or unwilling to reverse his choice to run for office. The Florida decision has made him more resolute, even if it means going on without Scott.

The Castro entourage continues to plan for Harvey's run for office under the new district rules. He's up against Rick Stokes for the neighbourhood

seat. We meet the new campaign manager Anne, Scott's replacement. She tells the team that Stokes has the support of Goodstein and The Advocate. There is some reluctance among the gay men to accept Anne as part of the team.

Anne uses this hostility to her campaign's advantage when she and a group of fellow lesbians shows up at a Stokes event to support Harvey. This leads to her acceptance among Harvey's entourage. Harvey is on the street campaigning in the waning days before the election. A young boy hands him a flyer promoting Dan White's campaign.

At the camera shop, Harvey, Anne and Cleve discuss Harvey's endorsement by the San Francisco Chronicle. Scott's name comes up and Harvey feels a lingering bittersweetness.

Later, a drunk Latino, Jack, shows up at the camera shop. Harvey is alone. They have sex.

Election day arrives. In voice-over, Harvey tells us that everyone showed up for him, women, teamsters, minorities and seniors.

A huge party is held to celebrate Harvey's win. Scott stands outside with the crowd. Harvey brings Jack inside. Harvey sees Scott and calls to him, but Scott recedes into the crowd. Someone reveals that Dan White also won his district.

Harvey is interviewed on TV. He promises to be a Supervisor for all the people.

An emboldened Harvey and his entourage and supporters, including Jack, walk to City Hall for Harvey's swearing in.

Scott watches Harvey and Dan on TV being interviewed together about diversity on the Supervisor's board. Dan comments that references to 'social deviants' in his campaign literature were aimed at drug addicts, not the gay community.

Harvey approaches Dan and tries to open a dialogue. Dan is at first resistant but tentatively agreed to work with Harvey.

Harvey shows Cleve around City Hall. It's clear that Harvey has no intention of toning himself down to fit in.

In his office, Harvey tells his team that his first priority is a gay rights ordinance, similar to the one that was thrown out in Florida. Harvey wants it passed unanimously, but Jim tells him that Dan White won't vote for it. Dan asks Harvey about attending his son's christening. Harvey says he'll be there. After Dan leaves, Harvey asserts the importance of having Dan as an ally.

Overall: On page 48, Harvey finally achieves his goal of becoming an elected official. Though, the moment is bittersweet as he has lost Scott along the way. The next challenge is about to begin as Harvey goes to work to deliver on his promises. Foreshadowing the ending, he is about to become colleagues with his eventual assassin, Dan White. Once again, the spectre of Harvey's assassination hangs over the story as

Dan and Harvey are brought together as uncomfortable bedfellows on the Supervisors' board.

A few questions to consider at this point in the narrative:

- > What is Dan's motivation in asking Harvey to the christening?*
- > Does he genuinely want to engage with Harvey for political reasons, or is he simply underlining his commitment to traditional values (religion and his conventional family unit)?*
- > Does knowing how the story ends change our interpretation of how Dan interacts with Harvey at this stage of the story?*

Harvey's motivation is clear – he wants Dan's support for his Ordinance and the rest of his agenda. However, there are questions over whether Harvey is calculating or a little naïve to how politics really works, thinking that by engaging with Dan, they can work together.

ACT TWO PART 2: PAGES 52 to 77

Harvey arrives home to find Jack has broken into the apartment and has made a romantic dinner. Harvey is a little freaked out but relents and they enjoy a romantic interlude. Harvey offers to give Jack a key to stop him breaking in again.

Commentary: *Note the casual exchange between Harvey and Jack about the soap opera All My Children that takes on special meaning in the context of the story. A character was killed, and Jack tells Harvey that he knew it was going to happen. Harvey asks if he always sees it coming.*

Harvey attends the christening of Dan's son at a Catholic church. After the ceremony, Harvey and Dan talk about the ordinance, which is aimed at ensuring workers can't be fired for being gay. Dan tells Harvey that his constituents wouldn't approve of such a measure. Dan then asks Harvey what he thinks of the psychiatric centre in Dan's district. Promising to get the centre out of his district was a part of Dan's campaign. Dan wants a quid pro quo, where they look out for each other's interests.

Harvey is under pressure to vote against Dan's bill to get the psychiatric centre out of his district. Harvey is told the centre is a Youth Campus and would have negative implications for families if it's moved. Harvey is torn. He asserts a theory that he thinks Dan might be a closeted gay. Anne, now Harvey's aid, tells the team that California State Senator Briggs wants a state-wide referendum that would lead to all gay teachers and their supporters being fired. The team is crestfallen, but Harvey is excited as the fight is coming to California.

Briggs talks to reporters from the steps of City Hall. A large group of protestors has also gathered. Briggs talks about protecting the kids from 'gay perverts and paedophiles'. Not surprisingly, things soon get ugly and the bigoted senator is whisked away.

Dan watches Harvey being interviewed on TV calling out Briggs' plans to 'legislate bigotry'.

Commentary: *This is an interesting scene, as it shows Dan's reaction to Harvey's denunciation of Briggs' proposal. Given that we know what violent action Dan takes, these earlier scenes are important in giving us hints of his motivation.*

At an upscale party, Harvey finds out that Jack has locked himself in a closet. Goodstein and his lawyer Stokes are there. They tell Harvey that there are important people at the party and they don't want a scene.

Harvey tries without success to get Jack out of the closet, but he's upset Harvey was late. He assumes Harvey was with Scott or someone else.

Later, Goodstein, Stokes and the Democratic Party establishment meet to discuss Briggs' proposal, support for which is showing at 75% in the polls. Goodstein wants a measured reaction. Harvey's forthright reaction shocks the room. Goodstein asks him to leave.

Commentary: *This highlights in stark terms how Harvey's brash style comes into conflict with the Democratic political machine. Harvey wants to take his activism into City Hall but finds himself having to work with*

those who do not share his passion and who take umbrage at his (and his team's) flamboyantly blunt approach.

After the party, the gang meets at Cleve's apartment. Scott arrives with a new boyfriend. Harvey's big idea is to get all California's closeted residents to come out, even against their wishes, in order to get widespread support. Harvey challenges everyone in the room to call anyone who doesn't know they're gay. Dick goes with Cleve to call his father.

Commentary: *Harvey's challenge to his friends to 'out' themselves is a little reminiscent of a scene in *The Boys in the Band* (1970, 2020), in which Michael challenges his party guests to call someone and tell them they love them. Filmed twice, Mart Crowley's story began life as a landmark play, which premiered Off-Broadway in 1968.*

Later, Harvey tells Scott that he thought he was finished with politics. Scott replies that he's not finished with the movement. Scott isn't impressed with Harvey's 'out everyone' stunt, calling him a hypocrite and reminding him that he was closeted back in New York. Harvey tells Scott he misses him. Jack calls to Harvey from down the street. When Scott asks what he's doing with Jack, Harvey replies simply 'he needs me'.

Commentary: *The script makes clear that Harvey's Achilles heel is that he's a sucker for anyone who needs him, even if it means potentially damaging his career. Characters need weaknesses and, with Scott's accusation of hypocrisy, this scene highlights two of Harvey's. Added to the previous scene at the Democrats' party, in which his abrasive style*

resulted in him being asked to leave an important meeting, we certainly get a rounded picture of Harvey in this mostly sympathetic biopic.

At an in-progress Supervisors' meeting, at which the vote on Dan's psychiatric centre will be held, Harvey is agitated after withdrawing support from Dan, drawing his ire.

Commentary: *Note the 'get in late' principle of scene design coming into play here, as we enter the meeting part-way through after the inciting action (i.e. Harvey withdrawing support from Dan) has happened and opening with the reaction.*

On a recess, Dan asks Harvey why he turned on him. Harvey replies that he didn't have all the facts and will help Dan revise his proposal, so no kids are displaced. Harvey tells Dan that he only needs one vote to get his plan to pass, so he could get another Supervisor on board. Dan grabs Harvey and tells him that he'll vote against his 'Queer Law'.

Commentary: *This scene is important as it escalates the conflict between Harvey and Dan, as well as showing us that Dan has a temper and a violent streak.*

In voice-over, a flat Harvey tells us that referenda were planned across the country to repeal Gay Rights Ordinances.

A TV report from Kansas, where one such referendum has been held, highlights wide support for repealing the state's ordinance. Briggs is there. The next stop for the anti-gay movement is California and a referendum on a Proposition to repeal the California ordinance (Prop 6)

Commentary: *With the threat of a referendum on a Proposition to repeal Prop 6, we have a ticking clock scenario, added to the one already operating with regard Harvey's assassination.*

In his apartment, Harvey looks at the earlier death threat, while outside a riot is brewing.

Cleve arrives to tell Harvey that the crowd is on the move. Harvey tells him to lead the crowd to City Hall, so he can meet the crowd and quell the uprising, thus gaining support. When Cleve expresses uncertainty that he can take a lead role, Harvey replies that he must step up as, 'I won't always be here'.

Commentary: *These two scenes highlight that Harvey understands that he's a target and could face violence. Maybe he even realises that his time is limited.*

Cleve gives a speech to the crowd, but quickly loses control. The crowd makes its way to City Hall.

Harvey manages to get inside City Hall before the crowd arrives. He emerges and gives a speech that succeeds in subduing the potential riot.

Harvey gains positive press coverage for his actions. However, Harvey realises that the job is far from done, as Prop 6 still has 60% support. He wants more visibility. Harvey strikes upon the idea of taking up a populist issue. He picks dog poop.

So, we next see Harvey getting press coverage for his war on dog poop. At the Supervisors' vote on the San Francisco gay rights ordinance, all except Dan vote for the measure.

Harvey goes to see Mayor Moscone to get the ordinance signed. Harvey wants the mayor's support over the Prop 6 referendum, promising the gay community's support in return.

Harvey goes to Dan's office. Dan is agitated as he looks at the positive press coverage of the ordinance being signed. They have a tense conversation, in which Dan asks Harvey to introduce an initiative on Supervisor pay increases in return for support on defeating Prop 6. Harvey tells Dan that he is up for re-election next year and supporting Supervisor pay rises would look bad. Dan abruptly ends the meeting.

Commentary: *Note how the conflict between Harvey and White is escalating as we build towards the ending that we know is coming.*

At Harvey's lavish birthday party, Harvey and Scott talk. Referring to Jack, Scott tells Harvey he can do better. He also reminisces about Harvey's earlier, more intimate, birthday parties, and gives him a birthday kiss.

Commentary: *Scott wishing Harvey a 'happy 48th' is a reminder of just how much time has passed. While the story moves forward seamlessly, it's been eight years since we met Harvey at the subway station in New York. Also, interestingly, Harvey says to Scott that when he goes home to Jack, he doesn't have to discuss politics. However, remember that it was Harvey's commitment to running for office that drove Scott away.*

Later, as the party is breaking up, Dan unexpectedly arrives. He's drunk and over-friendly as he approaches Harvey. Dan rambles on for a bit then gives Harvey what's described as a 'weird' birthday hug. Dan tells Harvey that he learned a lot from him, about getting exposure and having 'an issue'. Harvey tells Dan that three out of the four relationships he has had ended in suicide. He blames himself for telling them to remain hidden. Harvey tells Dan that's what 'living this life is like for most of us'. The words are seemingly lost on Dan, whose parting cryptic comment to Harvey is that he's got his own issue that will get him into the papers.

Overall: *In this section of the story, politics takes over as Harvey navigates City Hall and tries to further his gay rights agenda. The members of the camera shop entourage are now in the big time as they help Harvey to work within the system. We learn more about Harvey's assassin, Dan White, including his mental torment and temper. In the pivotal birthday party scene, we also find out the reason behind Harvey's need to 'save' people and the depth of his commitment to his cause.*

The main impetus of Harvey's fight has become the referendum on Prop 6 on firing gay teachers, which continues to gather momentum and has added a further 'ticking clock' to the story. As a result of all the political manoeuvrings, the Scott subplot has taken a bit of a back seat, as their relationship ends, and Harvey gets together with the unstable Jack. However, Scott remains on the fringes of Harvey's success.

Entering Act Three, we are well aware of how the story ends (the ultimate ticking clock), which continues to cast a pall over the events.

ACT THREE: PAGES 77 to 104

The next scene takes us into the heart of the Gay Freedom Day parade, which has attracted 375,000 people. Harvey rides on top of a car. Dan talks to the press from a street corner, decrying instances of nakedness among the parade attendees.

Anne gives Harvey a death threat that was received in the mail. Harvey is due to give a speech and the letter states that he'll get a bullet as soon as he steps to the mic. Anne tells him he doesn't have to go up there, but Harvey is insistent. He gives a rousing speech, in which he encourages all gay people to come out. At the end, he is surprised to find himself unharmed.

Commentary: *There is a growing suggestion that Harvey expects to be killed (not a death wish; more accepting it as a fait accompli), which is expressed in this scene. This element develops in parallel to seeing examples of Dan's extreme behaviour. Now on page 79, these two elements are clearly converging as we head towards the tragic ending.*

Harvey learns that Briggs is on his way to the parade. Cleve suggests a face to face meeting. Harvey tells his team to gather the press.

Briggs' car is diverted to the pier, where the police, the mayor and Harvey are waiting, along with the media. The script describes it as a 'showdown'. The mayor tells Briggs that it's not safe for him to go to the parade ground. Harvey goes to shake Briggs' hand for the cameras and challenges the senator to a public debate. Cornered, Briggs has little choice.

Briggs and Harvey meet for a public debate in a school gym. Briggs expresses his view that gay people only want to be teachers so they can 'convert' kids to homosexuality. Harvey counters that he was born to heterosexual parents and taught by heterosexual teachers. The crowd is clearly on Harvey's side.

Commentary: *Note how Harvey doesn't rise to Briggs' offensive opinions; he simply states his reasoned viewpoint. This gives Briggs the rope with which to hang himself, while Harvey keeps the audience firmly on his side.*

At City Hall, Briggs makes a statement to the press reaffirming the aims of Prop 6.

We return to Harvey in his kitchen dictating his will. He tells us that the gay community was 'genuinely frightened' about Prop 6 and pessimistic over the chances to defeat it. Harvey explains that the aim was to ensure that when the measure passed, 'all hell would break loose'.

Back in Harvey's office, he wants to debate Briggs' in other parts of the state, specifically conservative Orange County.

Later, Jack gets mad at Harvey when he refuses to go on a gameshow that Jack has arranged. Jack accuses Harvey of being ashamed of him. Harvey tries to placate him and offers to get him a job. The scene ends with Jack throwing a piece of pottery at Harvey. It misses and lands on the street. Harvey goes to clean it up.

Commentary: *Note another example of 'get in late' in the scene between Jack and Harvey; we don't need to see the build-up, just the fallout. Also*

note the dynamic in this scene, with Harvey trying to reassure Jack and cleaning up the mess he created. A good example of using visual images to tell the story.

Harvey and Briggs debate in Orange County. Harvey faces an uphill battle in front of a hostile, conservative crowd. The debate focuses on child molestation, with Briggs' asserting that kids need to be saved from gay teachers. Harvey destroys the argument and puts Briggs on the back foot. However, the crowd's anger towards Harvey continues to rise.

Harvey returns to the camera store, but instead heads for a café to avoid Jack, who's in the apartment.

In the café, Harvey sees Dan talking on TV, asserting his support for Prop 6. As noted in the script, 'it feels as if Dan is talking directly to Harvey'.

Commentary: *This short two-scene sequence cleverly unites Harvey's personal and political lives, both of which are turned to the negative at this point in the story.*

In the next scene, Harvey is pulled out of a vote on his dog poop ordinance to take a call from Jack demanding to know when he'll be home. Harvey is angry but keeps his cool.

Later, Harvey catches up with Dan. They have a contentious conversation over their lack of mutual support. Dan (in what is described as a 'very dark' manner) tells Harvey that he won't trade votes. Dan goes on to tell Harvey that he won't be humiliated. Dan's attitude alarms Harvey.

Commentary: *Dan's mental instability is on full display in this scene, as he veers from self-righteousness to anger to stark emotion.*

Harvey has a light-hearted encounter on the street then returns home to find that Jack has hung himself. Harvey tries to save him, but it's too late. Scott, Anne and Cleve comfort Harvey. One of the many notes that Jack left reads, 'Beware. The ides. Of November'.

We return to Harvey's kitchen, where he tells us that he had no time to mourn Jack as he had to keep fighting.

In the next scenes, we see Harvey dressed up as a clown interacting with people on the streets.

The day of the vote on Prop 6 arrives. From the early numbers coming in, it looks like a big defeat is coming Harvey's way, with districts reporting support for the Proposition. Harvey tacitly tells Cleve that if Prop 6 passes, he should make sure there is a riot. Harvey gets a call from the young man from Minnesota who was on the verge of suicide. He's now in LA and having a good time. He thanks Harvey for saving his life. Harvey then learns that LA County voted down Prop 6. The tide is starting to turn. Presumed defeat turns into glorious victory.

Commentary: *A little dramatic licence at play here, as Harvey gets the emotive call, reminding him of why he continues to fight.*

Later, Harvey celebrates the victory. He gives an optimistic speech, sending out a message of hope to the young people. The mayor is in

attendance. The script notes that Harvey is now in San Francisco's political elite.

We see Dan at home watching Harvey's victorious speech on TV.

Commentary: *Note how continuously bringing Dan into the story, such as having him watching Harvey on TV, keeps the spectre of Harvey's assassination hanging over the story, as well as heightening Dan's emotional downfall.*

In a revealing scene, Harvey tells Cleve that he's a bad winner and a little disappointed that he didn't lose, so that a riot would break out. He suggests they march on Washington DC. Cleve tells him to just enjoy the moment.

At City Hall, Harvey is greeted with a new level of respect. Dan tells him that he has resigned. Harvey is pleased but confused. Harvey watches Dan walk into a sombre meeting with the Police Officers' Association.

Later, Harvey sees on the news that Dan has asked for his job back. The news transitions to another story, about the Jonestown massacre.

Commentary: *The Jonestown massacre took place in Guyana in 1978. Hundreds of people living on a settlement, under the control of Jim Jones' San Francisco-based cult, died from apparent cyanide poisoning in an act of so-called 'revolutionary suicide'.*

Harvey goes to Dan's office. Dan is outside talking to the press. They share a moment at distance. The script describes it as bearing 'the awkwardness of a relationship lost'.

A frustrated Dan tells the press that his supporters convinced him to continue in his job.

In the mayor's office, Harvey expresses his suspicions that Dan's meeting with the Police Officers' Association may be connected to him asking for his job back. Harvey thinks he was promised something or was threatened. The mayor is unimpressed. Harvey says that without Dan, measures that he blocked could finally pass. He adds that if the mayor takes Dan back, he'll lose the gay vote. The mood softens towards the end of the conversation. Harvey playfully goads the mayor that a 'homosexual' with power is 'rather scary'.

At the opera, Harvey watches Tosca jump to her death.

Dan takes a call from the press asking for his comment on news that the mayor won't give him his job back. White says he hasn't heard anything about it.

Late that night, Harvey calls Scott. They enjoy an intimate conversation, with hope that things may be rekindled. They watch the sun come up, giving Harvey an opportunity to celebrate life and enjoy a moment of peace.

Dan is also up, surrounded by junk food wrappers and coke cans.

Commentary: *Note the build-up to the climax. With just a few pages to go, we conclude the Scott subplot, leaving their relationship in a loving and hopeful place. Harvey is revelling in his newfound political power. We've also seen the emotional build up and events that send Dan over the edge. The junk food reference is also relevant.*

The next day, Dan sneaks into City Hall through a window (avoiding the metal detectors). We also see Harvey arrive.

Dan goes to the mayor's office, while Harvey talks with Supervisor Feinstein about Dan's likely replacement.

Dan argues with the mayor about getting his job back. The scene ends with Dan brandishing a revolver.

The mayor's secretary hears three shots.

The mayor dead, Dan leaves the office and heads to Harvey's.

Harvey is talking on the phone about marching on Washington DC. Dan arrives and the two men take a walk to Dan's old office.

Harvey walks in first and Dan shoots him several times.

We flash back to Harvey dictating his will. He tells us about a young person calling to thank him, and talks about hope for a better world.

At a sparsely attended memorial service, Scott asks Anne where everyone is.

Back in his kitchen, Harvey says that if he's assassinated, his only wish is for everyone to come out.

Outside, Scott and Anne see a candlelight march of tens of thousands, led by Cleve. The group marches to City Hall. In voice-over, Harvey calls for the movement to continue to give all marginalised groups hope.

Harvey finishes this thought in his kitchen before putting down the microphone and shutting off the tape recorder. His story is told.

At the camera store, a sign reads: 'We're Very Open'

The script concludes with end notes that tell us Dan was found guilty of manslaughter.

The defence argued that junk food caused a chemical imbalance.

The verdict led to the most violent uprising of the gay movement.

Dan was released after five years and committed suicide two years later.

We also learn the fates of Scott, Anne, Cleve and the other key members of Harvey's entourage.

Overall: *The story wraps up neatly, if tragically, with the end we knew was coming from the opening pages. The recorded will serves as a suitable bookend to the narrative, allowing us to hear Harvey's thoughts on his own life and to leave us his legacy in his own words.*

A little Hollywood dramatic licence may well have come into play in the final scenes, with the suggestion that no-one showed up to Harvey's memorial before the heart-warming reveal that in fact everyone showed up.

While Harvey's death was tragic, the screen story is upbeat, showing us how his life made a huge impact on the gay movement, and how others picked up his mantle after his passing.

The award-winning screenplay (and film) of Harvey Milk's life is a fitting tribute and a significant contribution in its own right to the movement to which Harvey gave his life.

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