

The Exploding Man

By

Rob Hackney

For Artist Giovanni Ricco

Panel	Description	Dialog
1.1	A trawler steams toward port off the South American coast.	
1.2	WINSTON SHERPER sits tied to a small chair at the center of the ship's brig. Two Hispanic SOLDIERS stand in front of him, one with bloodied fists. Winston has been badly beaten.	WINSTON Then it's all true. WINSTON Miguel is aboard, with the samples.
1.3	The second soldier punches Winston.	SOLDIER #2 Forget Miguel. Answer the question. SOLDIER #1 Which agency--? WINSTON ONI.
1.4	The soldiers shoot each other a glance.	SOLDIER #2 Who? SOLDIER #1 The Office of Naval Intelligence. They're CIA. WINSTON No. We're not affiliated. SOLDIER #1 Wait... why did you start answering our questions?

Panel	Description	Dialog
2.1	Winston smiles.	WINSTON I'm ready now. SOLDIER #1 Oh yeah? For what? WINSTON To blow us all up.
2.2	The second soldier punches Winston again.	SOLDIER #1 We searched the ship.
2.3	An electric arc cracks across rusted steel bulkheads behind the soldiers, startling the them.	SOLDIER #1 What the fuck is that? SOLDIER #2 Ball lightning? WINSTON We're a little closer to the coastline than I would have liked.
2.4	More electric arcing around the weathered steel room.	SOLDIER #1 You're not gonna try to tell me you're causing this, Winston.
2.5	Steam wafts from the grate beneath Winston as the soldiers step back, soldier #1 aiming his sidearm at Winston.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
3.1	Winston begins to glow, the soldiers shielding their eyes, stepping further back.	WINSTON Don't worry you guys. This shit will be unpleasant for me too.
3.2	Lightning fills the room around Winston as he glows white-hot.	
3.3	Soldier #1 fires off three shots, all melting as they near the glowing field of energy surrounding Winston.	WINSTON We never tried this at sea...

Panel	Description	Dialog
4.1	Wide as the trawler EXPLODES, a localized spherical detonation just short of nuclear.	
4.2	The shockwave races across open ocean.	
4.3	At ground zero, the ship's shattered, flaming wireframe quickly sinks.	
4.4	Establishing shot--a US Navy destroyer--the USS McFaul--cutting through rough seas. Rain beats down in sheets.	Caption: Nearby.

Panel	Description	Dialog
5.1	In the destroyer's command and control center, a RADIO OFFICER turns to his SUPERIOR as other OFFICERS rush about in background.	RADIO OFFICER AWACS have the spike, seven miles from Quito.
5.2	A pair of naval Sea Hawks orbit the water where flaming debris and the occasional charred body float.	
5.3	Scuba divers drop two at a time.	
5.4	Underwater, they swim past huge pieces of the ship.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
6.1	The USS Ronald Reagan and its support fleet, at anchor in calmer waters, further out from both Winston's position, and a few miles further out than the destroyer that's trying to retrieve him.	Caption: "The USS McFaul has Sea Hawks over his position, divers in the water now."
6.2	On the bridge, ADMIRAL JAFFE watches the horizon while OFFICERS work behind him. Standing by his side is CONGRESSMAN SCHWARZCHILD.	SCHWARZCHILD Admiral, if the guy has been captured and searched... how do we locate him? Where's the beacon? JAFFE He keeps it in his ass, Mr. Secretary. SCHWARZCHILD You're kidding. JAFFE Has to be internal, or else it fries, along with his hair and clothes.
6.3	Schwarzchild frowns.	SCHWARZCHILD Gosh. JAFFE His job, generally speaking, is not a lot of fun.

Panel	Description	Dialog
7.1	A Sea Hawk hovers low over the choppy, murky water, one of the divers loading a limp body into its lowered rescue basket.	
7.2	Reveal Winston, unconscious in the basket. As he's hauled up in foreground, we look down at divers watching him rise from the surface. He has no hair left on his body, clothes completely burned away.	
7.3	As the two Sea Hawks head back to their respective ships in formation, a MEDICAL TEAM gives Winston CPR by the open side door.	MEDIC Again! Two, three, four.
7.4	On the landing pad of the USS McFaul destroyer, ground crew rush him inside on a stretcher, IV bag held above one man's head.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
8.1	Back on the bridge of USS Ronald Reagan, the Admiral's red telephone rings.	
8.2	He picks it up, looking at Schwarzkild, listening a moment.	JAFFE They have him aboard McFaul now, steaming for international waters. SCHWARZCHILD Is Winston alive? JAFFE Affirmative.
8.3	Close on Schwarzkild, over Jaffe's shoulder.	SCHWARZCHILD When can I speak with him? JAFFE He's comatose, Mr. Secretary. He'll be out for close to a week.
8.4	Establishing shot--a military hospital in New Mexico.	Caption: New Mexico.
8.5	A limousine is parked in the ambulance bay, four MOTORCYCLE COPS standing beside their rides nearby.	Caption: Four days later.

Panel	Description	Dialog
9.1	Schwarzchild sits beside Winston, now sitting up in bed. He eats custard, watching TV.	SCHWARZCHILD How are you feeling now, Winston? WINSTON Not bad. Dizzy...
9.2	Schwarzchild leans in, friendly.	SCHWARZCHILD I wanted to be the first to tell you that Admiral Jaffe's funding proposal was greenlit by my office... all based on your performance last week. WINSTON Oh, okay. Sweet.
9.3	Schwarzchild pats him on the leg.	SCHWARZCHILD This also means they're springing for a smaller transponder. They'll shoot it into your arm or thigh now.
9.4	Winston turns to Schwarzchild, smiling.	WINSTON For serious? SCHWARZCHILD Yep. WINSTON Dude.

Panel	Description	Dialog
10.1	Winston walks through the Tokyo international airport terminal with a single piece of carry-on luggage.	Caption: Tokyo. Caption: Three months later.
10.2	Riding in back of a small Japanese taxi, Winston watches scenery pass.	
10.3	Sitting in the "New York Bar" atop the Park Hyatt, Winston looks out across Tokyo.	
10.4	A waiter hands Winston a small card.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
11.1	As Winston steps onto Park Hyatt's rooftop helipad, he is confronted by OTSA DAVENPORT, flanked by an entourage of three Navy SEALs. In background, a Navy Sea King sits waiting to lift off, rotors whipping up a strong breeze.	WINSTON You're Otsa Davenport? OTSA Yeah. WINSTON No rank?
11.2	They enter the chopper.	OTSA Contractor.
11.3	Looking down at the chopper from above as it lifts off, night time Tokyo sprawling fisheyed in every direction.	
11.4	Flying low through Tokyo city's neon lights, Winston watches as they round the taller buildings, headed out toward the sea.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
12.1	The Sea King touches down on the deck of the USS Carl Vinson, a Nimitz-class carrier.	Caption: USS Carl Vinson. Caption: 60 NM East of Tokyo.
12.2	In a tight briefing room lit only by the backlit maps and surveillance photos on one wall, Otsa and an ONI official named WEST sit at the small table opposite Winston.	WINSTON The analyst seems to think there's a staff of twelve up there on any given Saturday. WEST We're looking at the topography of the eightieth floor, there may be a strong point in the north stairwell. But if you can't herd them down there, it may require a smaller blast.
12.3	Winston sits up straighter, frowning.	WINSTON Nope. I don't have control like that. It's pretty much all or nothing.
12.4	Past Winston, on Otsa as he interjects.	OTSA You told them last time-- WINSTON I told them I made it go bigger. Once. OTSA Okay, well can you just do the opposite of that?
12.5	A two shot as Winston looks at West.	WINSTON We may need to wait for a better location. WEST It has to be this weekend, Winston. They finished Burning Man.

Panel	Description	Dialog
13.1	Wide, a three shot.	WINSTON You confirmed it? OTSA They set up a meeting Monday with the client. There's been a lot of financial activity, clearing out and consolidating accounts. WEST They're preparing a considerable sum for payment. We figure Tuesday, at the very latest.
13.2	Winston's shoulders slump, looking down at his hands on the table, eyes hidden by shadow.	WINSTON How am I supposed to get the staff downstairs?
13.3	West scratches his chin.	WEST Hm.
13.4	Winston stands, packing the files and papers into a shoulder-strap messenger bag.	WINSTON Yeah. ONI will get back to me on that.

Panel	Description	Dialog
14.1	Winston waits on a Tokyo subway platform, standing head and shoulders above the rush hour CROWD.	
14.2	Riding the packed train, Winston senses eyes on him, glancing over to see two JAPANESE MEN with cold stares.	
14.3	Winston sits at a hole-in-the-wall noodle stand on a busy Tokyo street surrounded by other street vendors. He eats from a bowl with chopsticks, watching the CHEF cook.	WINSTON (to chef) Those guys, watching from across the street. Are they Yakuza or something?
14.4	The chef follows his eyeline to the two guys who were watching Winston on the train, now watching him from a news stand across the busy street.	CHEF Yakuza? Government. Same thing. Yes.

Panel	Description	Dialog
15.1	In his hotel room, Winston pours two drinks. Otsa stands by the bed, black and white photos of a Tokyo skyscraper's top floors spread out all over the sheets.	WINSTON What if I can't single him out? OTSA Blow it anyway.
15.2	Close on Winston, Otsa silhouetted large in foreground.	WINSTON In all the time I've done this-- OTSA I know. WINSTON I can't live with collateral damage. I said it from the beginning.
15.3	Looking down on them from above as Otsa sips his drink, Winston still holding his while looking at the photos on the bed.	OTSA You'll find somewhere safe. I'm just saying. If you can't... it's a choice between a handful, and potentially millions of people. That's an easy one. WINSTON Is it? WINSTON What happens if I fail?
15.4	Over Winston's shoulder, mid-shot on Otsa.	OTSA If you don't end the program tomorrow morning, an agent with no family carries a backpack nuke to the sky deck on seventy-five in the afternoon.
15.5	Reverse of panel 4, mid-shot of Winston, over Otsa's shoulder.	WINSTON Jesus. You guys don't think they might start taking it personally, if we keep nuking Japan?

Panel	Description	Dialog
16.1	Establishing shot, the KIH Biotech building in downtown Tokyo. The building from the photos.	Caption: KIH Biotech. Caption: Shinjuku district, Tokyo.
16.2	Winston stands in the KIH lobby, approached by TAYAMOTO.	TAYAMOTO Mr. Sherper! Hello.
16.3	They shake hands.	TAYAMOTO You are very fortunate to see him on a Saturday, but we must be brief.
16.4	Wide as they walk to the lifts.	WINSTON Of course.
16.5	Inside the lift, Winston watches the floor number display as they ascend to the top of the tower, past 62.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
17.1	SEIMEI HANDAN stands at a backlit wall of x-rays, considering each in turn.	
17.2	Wide as Winston is let into the room by Tayamoto.	TAYAMOTO Handan san, please meet Winston Sherper.
17.3	Handan turns to him briefly, expressionless.	
17.4	Handan turns back to the wall.	
17.5	Winston approaches, looking at the X-Rays over Handan's shoulder.	HANDAN Mr. Tayamoto has told me that your firm wishes to purchase our H5J patents. WINSTON Right. But that was just the lie, to get me up here.
17.6	Handan turns to Winston, offering his full attention now. In background, Tayamoto has his phone in his hand.	TAYAMOTO I'm calling security.

Panel	Description	Dialog
18.1	Handan holds up a hand to Tayamoto.	HANDAN Wait.
18.2	A wide shot of the room, two shot of Winston and Handan with Tayamoto watching nervously in background.	WINSTON We want to buy Burning Man. WINSTON You could name your price.
18.3	Handan turns away again, to the X-Rays.	HANDAN That item has been promised to another client. WINSTON Which is why we're offering such ridiculous compensation. HANDAN Perhaps you would like to see.
18.4	In foreground, Handan still studies the X-Rays. Behind him, Winston, hesitant but seeing his opportunity.	WINSTON The prototype? HANDAN Yes. WINSTON Definitely. Let's go.

Panel	Description	Dialog
19.1	Winston follows Handan through a maze of hallways, Tayamoto trailing them.	HANDAN In the eleventh century, cities were sacked many times by warmonger merchants who profited from such chaos, and the savage men in their employ.
19.2	Handan swipes his card at a white panel inset against the white wall.	HANDAN Agents given torches and accelerants, sent running through the streets.
19.3	The panel in the wall slides away to reveal a control room.	HANDAN The original "burning men", you see?
19.4	They follow Handan into a secure lab facility with banks of control terminals and screens, big glass windows overlooking a quarantined laboratory floor--a large surgical room with bed, couch, tv, and three DOCTORS in full quarantine suits.	HANDAN In seventeen fifty-five, several hundred influenza patients were rounded up with the same inherent goal. HANDAN The outbreak was small. Poorly-managed. HANDAN But its intent was tactically sound.
19.5	A three shot looking up from the doctors' POV at Winston, Tayamoto and Handan standing at the control room windows, all three looking down at the lab floor.	HANDAN The notion would seem to be a rich, if underreported, part of our cultural history.
19.6	Looking down at the lab floor, over Winston and Handan's shoulders. At the centre of the room, on a plastic covered couch, watching TV, sits TASHI.	WINSTON Is that him? Tashi?

Panel	Description	Dialog
20.1	Closer on Tashi, who looks up at them now, meeting Winston's gaze.	
20.2	A two shot on Winston and Handan at the window.	HANDAN Yes. But I must apologize. Tashi is, as I say, promised to the original client.
20.3	Close on Winston's arm, hanging by his side. The hairs begin to stand straight up, an electrical arcing between two of them.	
20.4	A wide shot from behind the three men standing in the control room, as Winston takes a step backwards from the window.	HANDAN A matter of honor, over finance. WINSTON I understand. HANDAN Perhaps we could show you one of the others.
20.5	Close on Winston, as he freezes, shocked. A very feint glow in the depths of his eye.	WINSTON Huh? WINSTON They're in production?
20.6	On Handan and Tayamoto, over Winston's shoulder.	HANDAN Of course. By this time next month, we will have five more. Ten by November. WINSTON Are they here as well? HANDAN Unfortunately not. Mr. Tayamoto can make arrangements for you to tour our other facilities.

Panel	Description	Dialog
21.1	Tayamoto waits outside the eighty-eighth floor men's room, looking at his phone.	
21.2	In one of the stalls, Winston sits, speaking into his own cell phone.	WINSTON It's your call, Otsa. OTSA (on phone) I need to bring West in.
21.3	Closer on Winston.	WINSTON Buddy, I have about three minutes before Handan's aide comes in to confirm that I'm definitely shitting, and not on the phone to my superiors. WINSTON What's my move? OTSA (on phone) I don't know what to do. WINSTON If we go today, we might lose the other four. If we don't, we definitely lose the prototype. WINSTON So what is your call? SFX Click.
21.4	Winston glares at the phone in his hand, furious. His eyes glow, more than before.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
22.1	Outisde the restrooms, Tayamoto looks at his watch.	TAYAMOTO Mr. Sherper?
22.2	Tayamoto pushes on one of the empty cubicle doors.	
22.3	Tayamoto pushes on another, bright light hitting him as he does.	TAYAMOTO Is every--
22.4	Reveal Winston over Tayamoto's shoulder, glowing white hot, still sitting on the toilet.	TAYAMOTO Oh my God! TAYAMOTO ... TAYAMOTO Are you okay?
22.5	Winston stands, grabbing Tayamoto, sparks flying around them as electricity arcs off Winston and onto the stainless steel handrails and sinks, door handles, etc.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
23.1	Standing in his control room still, Handan turns at Winston's voice.	WINSTON (off panel) Handan san!
23.2	Winston, still glowing, approaches Handan at the same place they stood before, at the windows. His footsteps leave charred holes in the tiled floor.	WINSTON Where is he?
23.3	Over Winston's shoulder, we see that the laboratory floor below is now empty.	WINSTON Where's Tashi?
23.4	Close on Handan, he seems almost amused by Winston's sudden glowing appearance.	HANDAN Shipping and Handling.
23.5	On Winston, struggling to hold all the energy in, over Handan's shoulder.	WINSTON You knew who I really work for. Why would you bring me here, and show me? HANDAN Because they need to know that I can't be stopped by an assassin now. HANDAN We have advanced the schedule. And now we have a nuclear option.
23.6	A two shot.	WINSTON You don't want to die. HANDAN Of course not. WINSTON Where is he? Which level? HANDAN B-4.

Panel	Description	Dialog
23.7	Back in the elevator, still glowing, Winston watches the numbers descend.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
24.1	Winston storms out of the elevator on B-4 glowing brighter, looking around.	
24.2	A semitrailer big rig truck waits by exit boom gates as big steel doors roll open further ahead.	
24.3	Winston sprints, chasing it up the exit ramp, out onto the crowded Tokyo street, still white hot, leaving smoking footprints in the concrete road.	WINSTON Fuck!
24.4	Wide from above as PEDESTRIANS stop and stare at Winston watching the truck leave in background, they all form a wide circle around him, filming him with cellphones.	
24.5	A mid-shot, Winston reaches into his pocket, removing a cell phone that melts in his glowing hand.	
24.6	Winston looks up at the stunned crowd.	
24.7	Winston approaches the pedestrians, some of them scattering while some keep filming nervously.	WINSTON English? Do any of you speak-- PEDESTRIAN Hai. Yes. WINSTON I need you to call someone for me.

Panel	Description	Dialog
25.1	The Japanese pedestrian now holds his phone up to Winston's face at arm's length, a huge crowd gathered around, trying to make sense of the glowing stranger.	WINSTON Burning Man has left the building. Tashi's on a semi, headed directly North from KIH Tower. Big red shipping container. I didn't get the rego. WINSTON Listen, I can't hold this charge much longer, and at this point there's only one way to let it go. WINSTON While you've got the satellite up... WINSTON See if you can find me an open space with no people.
25.2	Standing at his eighty-eighth floor office window, Handan watches the scene on the street below.	HANDAN (Japanese) All grown up now, Winston.
25.3	Winston runs through Tokyo's quieter streets, glowing brighter than before, lighting up the dark scenery. Around him, street lights explode and electrical arcing sends sparks showering down.	
25.4	He stops running at the main gate of the closed Tokyo National Stadium, a football (soccer) ground.	
25.5	Winston holds his hand against the card swipe lock on a staff door, melting it and the door.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
26.1	Winston runs out onto the field at Tokyo National, dropping to his knees in the centre circle, looking skyward.	
26.2	High over Tokyo city, looking over the "shoulder" of a Police helicopter, as Winston EXPLODES, going off like a small nuke, a white hot spherical dome with accompanying blast winds and mushroom cloud.	
26.3	A pair of US Navy Seahawks fly low through Tokyo, toward the pluming smoke.	
26.4	As they hover over the stadium's twisted remains, a lone figure lays sprawled at ground zero.	

Panel	Description	Dialog
27.1	Winston wakes in Bethesda Naval Hospital, looking at Otsa, who works on a laptop.	Caption: Bethesda Naval Hospital. Caption: Five days later.
27.2	Otsa looks at Winston.	OTSA Hey, champ.
27.3	Winston blinks at Otsa.	WINSTON Any deaths? OTSA No. WINSTON Did you get the truck? OTSA No.
27.4	A two shot as Otsa stands, folding his laptop.	WINSTON Someone needs to interrogate Handan. OTSA That may not be possible. You know, politics and all. WINSTON What do you mean?
27.5	Mid-shot on Otsa as he rubs his neck, uncomfortable.	OTSA The US has done plenty of business with KIH and Handan. WINSTON So? OTSA There's a lot they could leak that would damage us.

Panel	Description	Dialog
27.6	A two shot as Otsa leaves the room, waving.	OTSA We can't take the hit if Burning Man goes live. WINSTON Handan knows where that truck was going. He knows where the other packages are. OTSA Yeah. All food for thought. We'll talk more soon. Get some rest.

Panel	Description	Dialog
28.1	Establishing shot, a group of ONI buildings at one corner of Bethesda base.	
28.2	Winston, now dressed smart casual, sits opposite West, in West's office.	WINSTON Depending on the population size, two to three million in under a month.
28.3	West taps a pen on his desk, considering the question.	WEST Depending on the population size, two to three million in under a month. WINSTON Is it a virus? WEST Yeah.
28.4	On Winston, over West's shoulder.	WINSTON Which one? WEST It's something new. WINSTON If it came down to it, me and him on the street, would I survive?
28.5	Reverse of panel 4, over Winston's shoulder on West.	WEST Probably. If you charged up first, the spores would fry, same as bullets. WINSTON So how do we find him? WEST I'm not entirely sure. There were problems with the satellite coverage.

Panel	Description	Dialog
28.6	A side-on two shot.	WEST More than likely, we'll need to wait. WINSTON Until they release him? WEST Right. At that point, you'll go in. WINSTON People will be infected. WEST Hopefully not too many. The quicker the better, obviously. If our people and infrastructure can keep it contained to one area...
28.7	Winston frowns.	WEST (off panel) You can take them all out at once.