



for the last four or five years it has been Evelyn's responsibility to clear the driveway and by extension to take care of all outside-of-house damage due to the elements--mostly hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. Whatever it is that looks out for her, squirrels, and idiots was protecting the house. Now, we'd left outside a garbage can that was empty and hence fair game for the

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up-to-90-mile-an-hour winds to pick up and throw around. We were at work when the storm hit its stride and I knew I would never see my beloved garbage can again. I'd painted the house number on it, but not the street or the town. I expected we would never see it again. Driving home I saw a similar can blowing down a street about five miles from the house. I was tempted to see if it had our house number. We got home and found our can had moved about fifteen inches. I don't know how Evelyn does it.

I guess I should not chuckle at destruction done by the storm, but on the major road near my house I saw only one thing that really was destroyed by the storm (aside from some trees down). It was a sign and it was pretty messed up by the storm. I suppose had the owner known to put up a couple of pieces of plywood, it could have been save, but who expected such a bad storm? The sign was out in front of a small house and proclaims the owner is a palmist, a tarot reader, and a seer. The future is no mystery to this woman, supposedly.

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Happiness is the perpetual possession of being well  
deceived.

-- Jonathan Swift

A FEW GOOD MEN  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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Capsule review:  A \_ F \_ e \_ w \_ G \_ o \_ o \_ d \_ M \_ e \_ n is an entertaining courtroom drama with some good dialogue. The script raises issues and then unfortunately handles them in a very superficial manner. Nicholson's Colonel Jessep is so despicable and vile that the film bypasses a discussion of issues and is more the story of the slaying of a monster. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4). Very minor spoilers.

Rob Reiner has proved himself to be a fine director, though his scripts have occasionally been better directed than written. His latest film has just such problems.  A \_ F \_ e \_ w \_ G \_ o \_ o \_ d \_ M \_ e \_ n is his film version of Aaron Sorkin's Broadway play with Sorkin himself writing the screenplay. Any court martial play invites comparison to Herman Wouk's "Caine Mutiny Court-Martial," and in several major aspects,

Sorkin's play falls short.

Marine Pfc. William T. Santiago, stationed at Guantanamo, Cuba, just did not measure up to the high standards set by the U.S. Marine Corps. He is killed in a hazing incident perpetrated by Pfc. Lawson Downey and Lance Cpl. Harold W. Dawson. A mis-matched set of Navy lawyers is given the task of providing the defense in the court martial. And over the whole idea is the shadow of Col. Nathan Jessep (played by Jack Nicholson), who commands the Marines at Guantanamo. We know almost immediately that Jessep is the source of all the evil that has taken place. Little effort is spared in the script to make Jessep as vile and politically incorrect as possible. The goals of our three defense lawyers--Lt. Cmdr. JoAnne Galloway (played by Demi Moore), Lt.(j.g.) Daniel Kaffee (played by Tom Cruise), and Lt. Sam Weinberg (played by Kevin Pollak)--are first, to stop conflicting with each other; second, to put together a case to help Downey and Dawson; and third, if possible, to at the same time bring down the incredibly nasty Col. Jessep. The result is a fun, entertaining, Kleenex-like sort of movie that is a long way from the classic that some critics are claiming it to be.

While I enjoyed the film, it did not work for me as a drama for three very strong reasons. The first is that the three lawyers are trying to defend two men who to better their position in the Marines were willing to stuff a rag in a man's mouth, seal his mouth and bind him with duct tape, and (in so doing) cause the man's death. It is a little hard to root for the lawyers defending them. It is even harder to root for this team of lawyers. In their own way they are every bit as unprofessional as Jessep. Kaffee and Galloway start out at each other's throats for the good reason that neither

is particularly good as a lawyer. Cruise's Kaffee, slick and just a bit slimy as a lawyer, is lackadaisically doing his job and prides himself on his long list of low-effort court cases. Moore's Galloway is hopeless in her efforts to control Kaffee, and it is only Pollak as the sweet, healing, wise, Jewish lawyer who is able to hold the team together. These are flat, unengaging characters, and they are not written very well. But the film could have survived that if Nicholson's Jessep had been better written.

The third complaint is in the portrayal of Jessep. If the other characters are flat, the disgusting Jessep is linear. It is difficult to believe that this tactless, rather disgusting man could be given a position of prominence as he has been in this film. And it is a serious mistake to oversimplify the negative characters of the film, making them easier to detest. At no point do we see anything in the film from Jessep's point of view. How much would it compromise his character to show a little merit in his arguments? Bringing him down has much more dramatic impact if it is regrettable but necessary than if it is dragon-slaying. That brings me back to how much better a similar story was handled in the play "The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial" or nearly as well in the film T\_h\_e\_C\_a\_i\_n\_e\_M\_u\_t\_i\_n\_y. A\_F\_e\_w\_G\_o\_o\_d\_M\_e\_n is a film whose conflict was asking to be fleshed out, but which preferred not to risk having the audience agree with the wrong side.

In the final analysis, we have a film that is entertaining without being provocative, but is enjoyable for mindless entertainment. From me it gets a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. I am a little surprised at the positive critical comment it has gotten elsewhere.