Three Screenplays

Geoffrey Abruzzi

University of Texas at El Paso, geof@xy.cx

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons, Film and Media Studies Commons, and the Fine Arts Commons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/192

This is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.
THREE SCREENPLAYS

by

GEOFFREY ABRUZZI, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

The Department of Creative Writing

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

December 2008
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................ iii

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

2. The Spring .......................................... 13

3. Waking Night ....................................... 85

4. Running Away ...................................... 143

CURRICULUM VITA ..................................... 201
I entered the UTEP MFA program with the intention of learning the craft of dramatic storytelling. My lifelong interest in films and filmmaking may have suggested film school as better first step, but I felt that my greatest weakness, one reflected in the industry, was one of storytelling. For years I have assisted films students as they shoot and edit their films. I have served as a volunteer editor, director of photography, composer, and producer on various film student projects.

I have come to see a common weakness among these students. They generally have a well-developed visual sense evident in their shot composition. Their sense of timing and pacing varies widely, but is generally strong. Most other aspects of their craft are also well developed. Consistently however, their sense of complete and dramatic stories leaves a lot to be desired. I saw this weakness in other film students and felt it in myself. For this reason I wanted to study the art of writing stories before proceeding any further.

I was fortunate that I was able to actually develop a number of screenplays while here, including three for the trilogy presented in this thesis. I have come to understand the powerful importance of drama in screenplay. At the highest level drama is caused by a stasis being upset by something, an incident, that sends the characters scrambling to adapt—and find their new stasis. This Aristotelian progression of conflict to resolution plays out, and must play out, at all levels of a screenplay.
Scenes and dialogue are microcosms of this structure. For a scene to work, for it to move the story forward, it must involve a conflict of some sort—two characters who each want different things from the other, and one must gain or lose something from the exchange. This heartbeat of desire, frustration, and gain, provides the dramatic pace of the story. This, it seems to me, is the singular insight that informs the craft of screenwriting.

The art of screenwriting, on the other hand, is more ephemeral, dovetailing more with the art of narrative prose or poetry. It involves the surprising and interesting. It could be showing the mundane world in an unexpected light, or conversely the unexpected as mundane.

**Influences**

At some level the task of listing influences is probably a task better left to audiences and critics, since many of the writers and filmmakers I most admire share little in their final end product with what my screenplays look like. Nonetheless, there are a few examples that might be illuminating.

John Sayles has probably had a huge impact on most aspiring screenwriters. His films appeal to the screenwriting connoisseur. The stories themselves are complete and beautifully crafted and don’t rely on directing and editing prowess for their effectiveness and reputation. His films are almost always multi-protagonist films, with fully rounded characters. They always have a convincing sense of place, whether it’s a Texas border
town or an Alaskan fishing town. What frequently impresses me most about his stories are their unexpected resolutions. Most notable is the film *Limbo* which builds to the anticipation of a dramatic climax, but instead delivers an emotional climax. As if to call attention to this, the film cuts off before the dramatic climax, leaving the lives of the characters hanging, though they have come to terms with each other.

The first drafts of my screenplays are always too wordy with dialogue. As a viewer, I find many films are too dependent on a certain type of unreal dialogue—unreal because it tends to work too well, and flow too smoothly. The films of Jim Jarmusch and Tsai Ming-liang are a constant reminder that natural dialogue, especially between strangers, is minimal and awkward, and often at cross purposes to the objectives of the characters. No one demonstrates the power of not speaking as well as these writer/directors. Almost every edit after my first draft involves cutting dialogue and leaving space for the characters to exist in their environment without needing to explain themselves.

Peter Greenaway—one of my favorite filmmakers, and one that my screenplays have little or nothing in common with—is another unique filmmaker, and his passions are obscure. I am fascinated by his desire to place the symbolic meanings of the films in such overt and visible positions. The symbolic is raised onto an equal footing with the other elements of the film such as plot and character. I haven’t written anything like that, but I do
feel that as I writer, it is important to play the symbolic intentions of the film with dramatic and psychological.

**Narrative Arc**

While the following three screenplays form a proper trilogy, they don’t comprise a composite narrative arc. Instead, they are connected in several other ways. They are connected first by location. While they range in the distance in which they roam, the La Mesa plaza is a central point in all the stories. It is the place that the inciting incident in all three takes place. In two, the climax takes place in the plaza, and the third, “Waking Night,” spends most of the present action dancing around the outside of the plaza.

This centrality of the plaza is significant. The plaza is a traditional communal space, where historically people would congregate, but in these screenplays the plaza is a corrosive space. Many of the characters undergo separations and joinings with people around them. “The Spring” destroys three marriages. In “Waking Night” Meghan and Marko’s relationship dissolves, while Meghan and Tuco form a friendship. In “Running Away,” Albert is set on his love for Kari, against others’ protests. Most of joinings happens just off the plaza, usually in Tuco’s bar, “El Chingon.” Many, though not all, of the separations, however, occur in the plaza.

The three screenplays are also connected by character. A single character exists in all three, Tuco, a central character
in “The Spring” and “Waking Night,” who takes the role more of an observer in “Running Away.” Since the three stories don’t follow a connected narrative arc, I felt it was important to have some characters who could tie them together. Tuco is intended to serve that purpose (along with his narrative part in each screenplay). In “Waking Night,” the middle screenplay, Tuco relates some of the first story, and some of the third. This device functions as a narrative tie between the films and Tuco’s experiences.

Finally the stories have thematic connections. Aside from the joinings and separations mentioned above, there are two other primary thematic interests of all three screenplays. All deal at some level with honesty and deception and with hope and desire. The three screenplays have examples of characters using other characters and misrepresenting their intentions; they also show the distrust created by these kinds of actions.

The central theme, though, is hope and its degenerate form, desire. It was my interest and intent to show how some hope, specifically misplaced hope, can be a destructive force, and how desire can be mistaken for hope. I also wanted to show how hopelessness can actually be the path to redemption. In “The Spring” the false hope that the spring might be a path to cleansing and redemption leads to the reverse effect. In “Waking Night,” however, Meghan and Tuco’s refusal to place any hope in other people allows them to receive a redemption from the other. “Running Away” is a merging of these themes in the same
character—Albert. At first he hopes that a relationship with Kari could give him an emotional future, but he quickly realizes that he can’t expect to gain, only to give. He realizes that what he does for Kari, not what she does for him, is the only thing that can change him.

**Chronological Sequence**

It is significant that the three screenplays are not presented in chronological order. The stories in the order presented here are: “The Spring,” “Waking Night,” and “Running Away.” Chronologically (film time) they take place in this order: “Running Away,” “The Spring,” and “Waking Night.” I considered all possible orderings, with special emphasis on chronological. I have specific reasons for settling on the current order, though I feel they could ultimately be presented in any order. Since there isn’t a single narrative arc, changing the order of the screenplays shouldn’t affect the understanding of any single screenplay.

Changing the order would affect the understanding of the relations between stories and the effect of the trilogy as a whole. If one were to write a screenplay about twins separated at birth, one whose life ends tragically, and the other triumphantly, which one the film ended on, tragedy or triumph, would affect how the film was interpreted. Reordering on this trilogy would have similar effects on the impact of the whole.
As mentioned earlier, the key thematic elements of all three screenplays are the related ideas of hope and desire. The third screenplay “Running Away” fuses the theme in the first two, and as such makes more sense following the first two. Also, the second, “Waking Night,” ends on an strongly optimistic interpretation of the hope theme. I felt it was important, thematically, to have a more tempered closing. While the dramatic ending of “Running Away” is a strongly tragic ending, it is more ambiguous on this particular theme.

The films, as ordered, also present themselves as a circle. “The Spring” presents Tuco’s story, and “Waking Night” resolves his story. “Waking Night” presents Albert, and “Running Away” gives his back-story. Finally “Running Away” both mirrors the climax of “The Spring” and provides a link to the beginning of that screenplay.

**Structure**

Each of the three screenplays has a very different structure from the others. Structurally, they move from complex to simple, intentionally. Even though all three make ambiguous statements about the world, I wanted the trilogy to end with a certain kind of clarity—not moral or thematic clarity, there is little of that here, but with a kind of narrative clarity. Whatever the audience feels about the Albert, Meghan, Francisco, Angeline, or any of the others in “Running Away,” their story is presented without subplots or digressions. The screenplay ends with their actions alone, like a gradual thinning.
“The Spring” is a multi-protagonist story. While the argument can be made that Tuco and Megan receive a little more focus than the others, it ultimately centers on three couples: Daniel and Megan, Tuco and Leora, and Andy and Maria. These six, plus a few other important characters weave in and out of the story that takes place in the space of one week. The presentation is strictly linear but hops around from character to character, and there is rarely a direct connection between adjacent scenes. When a character leaves scene A heading to scene B, an unrelated scene C, is inserted between them. This technique creates a game of narrative leapfrog, with lots of mini delayed resolutions, propelling the story forward.

“Waking Night” is more of a single-protagonist story. Meghan is the central character, though Tuco is similarly important since both of them find a sort of redemption by the end. But instead of being told as a purely linear narrative, the story is told through two parallel stories: a present action and Meghan’s back story. The telling switches back and forth between the present, which covers one night, and the back-story which takes place over several years. Each half has its own inciting incident and resolution, and they have parallel climaxes. Finally the end of the back-story leads directly to, and hopefully illuminates, the beginning of the present action.

“Running Away” is almost completely a linear narrative with one clear protagonist: Albert. The only digression from this
structure is a single short dream/flashback that dramatizes a bit of Albert’s dysfunctional childhood with his mother.

Production Considerations

One of the key considerations in writing a screenplay is its uniqueness as a literary work that serves primarily as a blueprint for another work of art—the film. The closest analogue is the stage play, but plays enjoy a greater independence than the screenplay, which is rarely read outside the film production crew and aspiring screenwriters. The screenwriter’s only path to an audience is through a produced film, and as such production considerations weigh heavily on the writing.

For this reason, a lot of material considerations go into the writing of a screenplay. The choice of every scene potentially adds to the expense and complexity of the film production, and subsequently narrows the options for production. Plays are less bound by these considerations for several reasons.

The first is simply that plays are often produced multiple times. A low budget community theater premier doesn’t necessarily preclude the play from being eventually picked up by a large-budget commercial producer. Films are usually remade only if the first production has gained lasting fame or notoriety, and then usually several decades later. A lot is riding on the production of a screenplay, and an under-budgeted production that loses the audience on issues of production values could kill any further interest in the screenplay.
Second, plays, due to the constraints of a stage, are less bound to verisimilitude than films. Play productions can get by with a few props and a maybe a backdrop to set a scene. Despite a few exceptions, film is a realist medium. A scene set in an airport needs to be believably shot in what looks like an airport. This means the producer has two expensive options: shoot in an airport, or find or build a set that looks like an airport. One of the causes of budget expansion in Hollywood films (aside from actor pay and special effects) is that Hollywood productions generally construct the location to match the scene, instead of matching the scene to an existing location.

When a screenwriter writes a screenplay, the potential market should be considered. I expect my screenplays would appeal to more to independent producers than to Hollywood industry studios with large budgets. Furthermore, having some experience in filmmaking, I have some interest in producing them myself in a “no-budget” production.

With that in mind, during the writing of these screenplays, locations, props, and cast issues have been weighed carefully for the costs and logistical difficulties they might incur. The locations are set so that everything can be filmed locally. El Paso and Juarez could fill in for the scenes that take place in a city. Mesilla and surrounding areas can potentially be used for the town of La Mesa, where most of the three screenplays take place.

Conclusion
My final goal with these three screenplays was simple. They are intended primarily as realist stories driven by character development that each deal in its own way with the same constellation of themes. I wanted the stories to lean more towards cinema verité than Hollywood production style. Finally, I wanted the stories to be producible on an independent budget.

I believe I have been successful to varying degrees. None of the screenplays presented are perfect, and I still consider them works in progress. There are specific issues I continue to deal with when revising them. They are somewhat short for feature-length screenplays. The industry estimates a page per minute of screen time, which would make these stories between sixty and seventy minutes. The stories seem full enough for me, so I have to consider whether the scenes are too short. It may be that they are so focused on moving the story forward they may miss some opportunities to further develop the world around the characters.

Another potential difficulty is ensuring that events are fully prepared. Films work best when unexpected things happen in them, but randomly unexpected events seem to be purely happenstance. The film needs to make the surprising believable when it happens, without killing the surprise. I’ve tried hard to ensure that events in these stories grow naturally out of the characters and previous events, but being so close to the writing of the screenplays for several years makes it hard to be a fair
judge of that. Some time and distance, as well as outside input, should help.

Until these films are produced, or I have given up getting them produced, they will remain works in progress. Again, these are ultimately blueprints for the film they may eventually become, and for that reason, I can’t consider them complete when the last word is written. They will only be completed once shot and edited. It may be antithetical to a writer and a writing program to try to lessen the value of the words, but a screenplay never produced is ultimately an unfinished work of art.
The Spring
by
Geof Abruzzi
FADE IN:

EXT. PLAZA -- NIGHT

In the small southwestern desert town of La Mesa, the town plaza is dark and deserted around midnight on a Saturday night. The muffled sound of jukebox rock-and-roll pushes out of “El Chingon,” a bar that occupies a prominent place on the plaza, opposite from the St. Lucia Catholic Church.

Water seeps up through the bricks that pave the walkway in the very center of the plaza--halfway between the bar and the church. The flow begins slowly, but builds, soon forming a small creek that streams out of the plaza, and down a side street.

ANNA CASTILLO, 48, a local barfly dressed in a leather miniskirt and halter top, stumbles drunk out of El Chingon. She turns back to the bar.

ANNA
Later!

She stumbles on.

As she crosses the plaza, she stumbles through the water and pauses for a moment, trying to figure out why there is water in the middle of the plaza. She looks up at the sky and over her shoulders, then shrugs and continues home.

EXT. PLAZA -- MORNING

The next morning, the spring flows more confidently having established itself on a single path to lower ground. The local priest, MICHAEL DILULIO, 32, blond with baby blue eyes and a round face, stands at the foot of the church’s stairs, watching the stream and waiting.

MARIA BENAVIDEZ, 45, wife of the local mayor, wearing a black formal dress and a freshly cut flower on her lapel, strides into the plaza heading to the church. Maria steps in the stream water and pauses.

She shakes her head, and steps out of the stream. She pulls a handkerchief from her purse and dries off the water. She continues on to the steps of the church where Michael is waiting.

MARIA
Good morning, Father Michael.
MICHAEL
Good morning, Maria. It is an unusual morning.

MARIA
How so?

MICHAEL
Our town is flooding. By any measure that is unexpected.

MARIA
Considering the disrepair in this town, I don’t think so.

MICHAEL
I guess nothing lasts.

MARIA
At least, not around here.

MICHAEL
Shall we?

Michael motions for Maria to enter the church. She heads into the church as Michael follows her.

EXT. PLAZA -- MORNING

Later that morning JORGE GRANADOS, 67 weathered and wearing work coveralls and a baseball cap, sits on a backhoe digging up the area around the spring. The vibration of machinery sends shivers down the once-smooth stream of water. Piles of excavated mud and brick surround the muddy water filling the hole that Jorge digs. A few people look on from the edges, watching the work.

Close to the work site stands ANDY BENAVIDEZ, 52, dressed neatly in cowboy boots, Wranglers, and a bolo tie, and DAVID “TUCO” PERETZ, 55, balding, a little portly with a hint of a Long Island accent. He wears a tattered leather vest over a button down shirt with fraying cuffs.

TUCO
I didn’t see anything when I closed up the bar last night, but I go out the back way, so I have no idea when it might have started.
ANDY
Yeah, Maria called me this morning at about six.

TUCO
She gets up that early?

ANDY
Yeah, early services. Michael waits out here for her. I sleep in.

TUCO
Not this morning.

ANDY
Yeah.

TUCO
What do you figure? Is it a water main?

ANDY
I’m not sure. There’s officially no water running through there, but nobody started keeping records until the sixties. It could be some old dead end line.

MARIA
Andy!

Maria enters the plaza coming from the church and heads towards the two men.

TUCO
I got to go, get the bar ready to open up. Can’t be late for the church crowd.

ANDY
Later, Tuco.

Tuco heads off towards the bar, as Maria approaches Andy.

MARIA
Did I scare him off?

ANDY
Nah, maybe the Christian thing--Jews get scared of that.
MARIA
He’s not a real Jew.

ANDY
I guess I’m not a real Catholic.

MARIA
That’s not funny.

ANDY
Sure it is.

Andy hold out his arms, palms up, but Maria pushes his hands aside, knocking a key ring out of his hands. It bounces on the ground and into the muddy pool of water.

ANDY (CONT’D)
Gee, thanks.
(to Jorge)
Jorge, can you get that?

Jorge nods and dismounts the backhoe. He climbs down into the muddy pool of water and, on his hands and knees, feels around for the keys.

MARIA
Just order others around.

ANDY
Hey, I’m not dressed for it. Anyway, Jorge doesn’t mind, and it’s his job.

MARIA
Keep telling yourself that.

Maria storms off. Jorge submerges himself and then comes up a moment later with the keys in hand. Kneeling by the pool, Andy takes them from Jorge, shakes the water off, and slides them into his pocket.

INT. KRESS APARTMENT -- MORNING

MEGAN KRESS, 22, pretty but with disheveled straw blond hair, wakes up in her bed and yawns and stretches. Her husband DANIEL KRESS, 25, stands in front of the sink in his underwear shaving and admiring himself in the mirror. The dilapidated one-room apartment looks like something out of the 1930s. Daniel strides across the dirt floor to Megan and kisses her on the forehead.
DANIEL
Megan, Megan, Megan. You drank too much last night.

MEGAN
Mmmmm.

DANIEL
I practically had to carry you home last night. Just because Tuco likes you and gives you free drinks doesn’t mean you have to take advantage of it.

MEGAN
You drank as much as me.

Daniel walks to the ill-fitting back door and rattles it open.

DANIEL
I can hold it better.

Daniel steps out the back door and pees in the yard. Maria finds a slip on her night stand and puts it on. She walks over to the old porcelain-coated sink, fills up a glass of water, and drinks it. Daniel comes back inside and gives Megan a light kiss.

DANIEL (CONT’D)
This town’s getting kind of old. Maybe we should head out soon. To California, maybe.

MEGAN
That’s what you said last spring.

DANIEL
Now I mean it.

Daniel wets down a wash rag, rubs a bit of soap on it, and washes himself.

MEGAN
You know I’d love that.

DANIEL
The ocean--

MEGAN
Yeah, the ocean.
DANIEL
Maybe I could dig up enough work in the next couple of weeks to get some bus tickets.

MEGAN
Let’s figure out something for now. Today. Daniel and Megan.

DANIEL
What about now?

MEGAN
Let’s go for a nice walk today. Maybe we can go swimming in the river.

DANIEL
That water’s dirty.

MEGAN
Come on, people have been swimming in it like that for a hundred years.

DANIEL
Yeah, but they didn’t live very long.

MEGAN
Whatever.

DANIEL
I’m going into town to see what’s happening. I’ll see you later this afternoon.

Megan frowns.

DANIEL (CONT’D)
I promise.

Daniel kneels on the bed and kisses Megan. They fall on each other and start laughing. Daniel gets up, finishes dressing, kisses Megan once more and leaves.

INT. MAX’S HOME -- AFTERNOON

MAX ARGENTO, 56, works in low light to prepare some marijuana. An MIA flag covers one window while a “Don’t Tread on Me” flag covers the other admitting a tiny bit of filtered light.
As he breaks the pot into small pieces, he pushes up the sleeves of his flannel shirt, revealing a complete sleeve of tattoos on each arm, dominated by the USMC “Semper Fi” logo on each shoulder.

Maria paces the room as Max continues to pick seeds out of a small stash of marijuana, and he prepares it for a water pipe. Maria speaks quickly as she paces.

MARIA
Yeah. Overnight sometime. I think I was the first to see it. They’re out there digging it up now. Jorge is.

MAX
Lots of pressure?

MARIA
I guess. There’s a whole stream flowing out of the plaza. Is that ready yet?

MAX
Patience.

MARIA
Anyway, Andy’s out there trying to look in charge. He doesn’t even know what he’s doing. He said there’s not supposed to be water lines under there.

MAX
Probably some historical easement.

MARIA
I don’t know why he always has to look important. He doesn’t really know anything. He was a real estate broker for Christ’s sake.

As Maria talks about her husband, she grows more agitated.

MARIA (CONT’D)
I really ought to divorce him, but Father Dilulio says I shouldn’t. I’ll file for an annulment--I didn’t know he was a bastard when he married him.

MAX
You shouldn’t do that.
MARIA
Why?

MAX
Where would you go?

MARIA
I don’t know.

She looks at Max for a moment.

MAX
Not here. I live alone. From now to eternity.

MARIA
Are you done there?

Max hands the bong to Maria, who crosses herself, then inhales as Max holds a lighter to the marijuana.

MARIA (CONT’D)
Whoa.

MAX
Special concoction.

In a few moments Maria relaxes. They make love without ever kissing.

EXT. PLAZA -- EVENING

The last golden light of dusk highlights the sharp angle of the Caterpillar as Jorge locks some tools inside the cab. A constant hum, the only noise in the empty plaza, comes from a pump draining the water out of the muddy hole into a nearby drain. Andy stops by to talk to Jorge.

JORGE
No good, Boss.

ANDY
What do you mean?

JORGE
I don’t know where this water is coming from. I dug up half the plaza, shut off the upstream pipes.
ANDY
How is that possible?

JORGE
I don’t know. I even turned off the wells. It’s not our water.

ANDY
What then?

JORGE
Maybe it’s a spring.

ANDY
That doesn’t just happen, does it?

JORGE
It does now. Enrique came by to look at the water. It’s not treated, so it can’t be city water.

INT. ANNA’S HOME -- EVENING

Still dusk, in the bedroom, Daniel dresses as Anna lies in bed smoking.

ANNA
Yeah, I almost tripped in it yesterday. I thought I was drunk. Actually, I was drunk.

DANIEL
Did you tell anyone?

ANNA
No. I just slept it off. By the time I saw it for real this morning, they were already digging everything up.

DANIEL
That’s cool. Maybe I can pick up some temp work. I’m so broke right now.

Anna smiles sarcastically at Daniel who is too busy dressing to notice. She pulls a prefolded wad of bills in a paperclip out of her purse.

ANNA
Here you go.
Anna puts the money on the night stand.

    DANIEL
I can’t.

    ANNA
Sure you can. Here.

    DANIEL
I’ll pay you back.

    ANNA
Sure.

Daniel takes the money from the night stand and gets up to leave. He pauses at a tourist snow-globe of Paris sitting on a dresser. He picks it up and shakes it.

    ANNA (CONT’D)
You want that?

    DANIEL
You mind?

    ANNA
Sure. I’ve never been there anyway. My old man used to promise to take me but never did.

    DANIEL
Thanks.

Daniel takes the snow globe and leaves.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- EVENING

The bar is empty except for Tuco, cleaning up at the end of the day. The light of dusk outside seeps in the windows as Tuco wipes down tables and stacks the chairs upside down.

LEORA PERETZ, 40, Tuco’s wife, enters from the back door and sits down on one of the bar stools. Tuco pauses for a moment when she enters.

    TUCO
Leora.

    LEORA
Hello, David.
TUCO
You want a drink?

LEORA
Sure.

Tuco walks behind the bar, pulls out a wine glass and a bottle of red wine, and pours a glass for Leora.

TUCO
You should have seen the mess out there today.

LEORA
I did.

TUCO
Andy was running around trying to look in charge. Jorge knows what he’s doing and really doesn’t need help.

Leora finishes the glass of wine and holds it out to Tuco to fill, which he does.

TUCO (CONT’D)
Other than that, it was a slow day. Max was going on about the water leak. I wouldn’t be surprised if he thought the government was behind it.

Leora knocks back the entire glass in a single gasp. She pauses for a moment, then wipes the wine from her lips.

LEORA
Why are we still here?

TUCO
I have to clean up.

LEORA
That’s not what I mean.

TUCO
We’ve been through this. Over and over. Do you think talking about it again is going to change my mind? This is a good town. These are good people.

LEORA
Gentiles.
TUOC
So?

LEORA
So...they’re different. We don’t fit in.

TUOC
You don’t fit in. That’s because you don’t want to.

LEORA
There’s not a synagogue for a hundred miles.

Leora finishes her glass of wine, and holds it out for Tuco to fill. Tuco pauses, eyeing Leora.

LEORA (CONT’D)
David!

Tuco fills the glass, which Leora drinks quickly.

TUOC
You knew me when we married, Leora. You even said you wanted to travel.

LEORA
Travel means going home at the end.

TUOC
This is home. Look at those kids--Daniel and Megan--they’re not from here, but they fit in.

At the mention of Daniel, Leora’s look turns wistful, but then she catches herself. Tuco watches this but says nothing.

TUOC (CONT’D)
“When in Rome do as the Romans do.” Like it or not.

EXT. PLAZA -- EVENING

On the plaza the golden light is gone, now overwhelemed by the sterile blue mercury vapor lights that ring the plaza.

ANDY
So what are our options?
JORGE
We can’t stop it without more digging, but we could channel it to a drain.

ANDY
Could we make it pretty, like a fountain, or a reflection pool?

JORGE
Sure. I can’t do it myself, though.

ANDY
Why not?

JORGE
I just need another set of hands.

ANDY
Ok, I’ll get someone.

Tuco and Leora exit the bar. Leora walks over to Andy as Jorge walks away, and Tuco locks up the bar.

ANDY (CONT’D)
Good evening, Leora. You are looking beautiful.

Andy takes Leora’s hand and kisses it. Leora withdraws her hand.

LEORA
Thank you. You sure have a mess here.

ANDY
We’re working on that. We’re going to need your tenant for help.

Finished locking up, Tuco walks over to Andy and Leora.

ANDY (CONT’D)
Tuco! I’m going to need Daniel to help Jorge out here this week. Can you tell him to stop by tomorrow morning?

TUCO
Sure. I’m headed home now.

LEORA
I wish people would stop calling you “Tuco.” David is a good name.
TUCO
So is Tuco. Anyway, it’s not often that a Jew gets to pretend he’s Mexican.

ANDY
That’s true.

LEORA
Great. I’m married to “The Ugly.”

INT. KRESS APARTMENT -- EVENING

Megan sits in bed at home reading a book. A small bedside lamp barely keeps the darkness outside. Daniel enters and sits on the side of the bed. Megan tries not to look up from the book.

DANIEL
I’m home, babe.

MEGAN
(not looking up)
You can’t be home. You never left, so you can’t be coming in the door.

DANIEL
Come on--

MEGAN
No, yesterday you said you wouldn’t go out today, that you’d spend it with me. So if you didn’t go out how could it be you arriving home at eight thirty?

DANIEL
I went out...and...got you something.

Megan looks up at Daniel.

DANIEL (CONT’D)
Close your eyes.

Megan sighs at Daniel’s theatrics, but closes her eyes. Daniel takes her hand and puts the Paris snow globe in it.

Megan opens her eyes and looks at the globe. She shakes it lightly and stares at the Eiffel Tower inside, watching the snow fall around it.
DANIEL (CONT’D)
Remember when we first met? You told me you wanted to live in Paris. You told me you went there in high school.

MEGAN
I’m surprised you remember.

DANIEL
Yeah, and you wanted a apartment that overlooked that cemetery so that you could read.

MEGAN
Père Lachaise.

DANIEL
Yeah, remember that?

MEGAN
That was a long time ago.

DANIEL
That can still happen.

Megan puts the snow globe on the night stand, closes her book and puts it there too. Daniel kicks off his shoes and climbs into bed. He puts his arms around Megan’s waist and rests his head on her breasts. She puts her arms around him and caresses his hair.

DANIEL (CONT’D)
I’m sorry.

MEGAN
Why?

DANIEL
I’m not a very good provider for you.

MEGAN
It’s not--

DANIEL
Shhh. I’ll find some more steady work.

MEGAN
That’s ok.

A loud KNOCK on the door makes Daniel sit up with a start, like a scared animal.
DANIEL
Who is it?
Tuco speaks from the other side of the door without entering.

TUCO
It’s me.

Daniel relaxes.

DANIEL
What do you want?

TUCO
Get your lazy ass over to the shop tomorrow morning. Jorge needs help this week.

DANIEL
Yeah?

TUCO
Yeah.

They hear Tuco SHUFFLE off.

DANIEL
(to Megan)
You see? Ask and ye shall receive.

MEGAN
I wonder if you are blessed or cursed, sometimes.

DANIEL
Cursed?

MEGAN
Being lucky can be a curse.

INT. JORGE'S WORKSHOP -- MORNING

Jorge hammers together a large cylindrical wooden mold about eight feet in diameter. The bright light of the desert morning illuminates the shop through the open carport door. Daniel arrives looking half asleep.

JORGE
You’re late, man. It’s almost lunch time.
DANIEL
Sorry, I overslept.

JORGE
I might have to report you.

DANIEL
Come on, Jorge.

JORGE
This is a professional job. Can’t have people coming and going when they please.

DANIEL
Jorge!

JORGE
Ha! I scared you.

He laughs at Daniel.

JORGE (CONT’D)
No big deal, man. If I had a pretty wife like yours I’d want to sleep in too. How’s she doing?

DANIEL
She’s still sleeping.

JORGE
Never let your wife sleep alone. Too much temptation.

DANIEL
Not Megan. What do you need me to do?

JORGE
I’ve got something easy for you--help you wake up. I need some stuff.

Jorge walks over to his work bench and finds a slip of paper, and hands it to Daniel.

JORGE (CONT’D)
Here’s a list of what I need--mostly the cement.

DANIEL
Jorge, I don’t have a truck.

Jorge holds out a set of keys.
JORGE
Go to McCoy’s. The town has an account there. Maybe you’ll be awake by the time you get back, ready for some real work. Not errand-boy stuff.

Daniel gets into an old beat-up truck with “Town of La Mesa” stenciled on the side, and drives off. Jorge shakes his head and chuckles to himself as Daniel pulls out. He returns to working on the wooden mould.

INT. KRESS APARTMENT -- MORNING

Megan drags herself out of bed and over to the sink. She splashes water on her face and rubs her eyes. She leans her head into the sink and washes her hair in the sink.

After rinsing her hair of soap, she grabs a towel and dries her hair a little. Next, she removes her slip, naked except her panties, and gives herself a sponge bath.

EXT. KRESS APARTMENT -- MORNING

Outside the house, FELIPE CASTILLO, 17, sits on a berm, spying on Megan, watching her bathe. Felipe is thin and muscular, with a shaved head, and some Japanese tattoos on his arms. His body language is introverted with his head sunken and his shoulders turned inwards. The sound of an approaching truck startles Felipe, who relocates to the back side of the house.

Daniel drives by in the town truck. He doesn’t see Felipe and he doesn’t stop.

After the truck leaves, Felipe finds a new spot right outside the house and continues watching through an open seam. Megan dries herself off and begins to dress. Megan finishes and makes to leave.

Felipe relocates a few hundred feet from the house.

FELIPE
(whispering)
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
eight, nine, ten.

Felipe walks nonchalantly along the road in front of the house. In a second, Megan exits the house and locks the front door. Felipe passes her as she locks the door.
FELIPE (CONT’D)
Good...morning.

MEGAN
Good morning.

FELIPE
It’s nice out.

Megan nods and walks off in the opposite direction. Felipe stands outside the door and watches Megan walks off, his face blank.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- NOON

The dark, musty interior shields the patrons from the bright summer sun outside. Tuco sits lazily behind the bar. Max, Anna, and a couple of other customers sit around the bar.

BETTINA MEYERS, 55, enters dressed in a tie-dyed skirt, blouse and silver and turquoise jewelry.

TUCO
Morning, Bettina.

BETTINA
Good morning, David.

MAX
That’s “Tuco” to you, Betty.

BETTINA
And “Bettina” to you, Maximilian.

(to Tuco)
David is such a nice name. Why do you go by “Tuco”?

TUCO
My wife put you up to this, I’m sure. Why do you go by “Bettina”?

BETTINA
I never liked Betty. It reminds me of Betty Crocker.

MAX
And you can’t cook?

BETTINA
Not a pot roast. I’m a vegetarian.
MAX
We know.

BETTINA
Mind if rest here for a bit?

TUCO
Sure.

Tuco gets a glass off the shelf and hands it to Bettina, empty. She pulls out a small jug of oddly colored liquid, and pours some into the glass. Anna sniff it at frowns.

ANNA
What is in that? It stinks.

BETTINA
Only the good stuff. That stuff you’re drinking will ruin your body.

Anna cups her breasts in her hands, sizing them up.

ANNA
This body still works.

Tuco eyes her when she makes this comment, but doesn’t say anything.

BETTINA
That’s some mess outside. I wonder where the water came from.

MAX
That’s what I’ve been saying. They need to test it for radiation.

BETTINA
Good heavens, radiation?

MAX
There isn’t supposed to be a water line there, so where does the leak come from?

BETTINA
A spring?

MAX
No. Think. When would you want water to be a secret?
TUCO
When?

MAX
When it’s dangerous. And when is water dangerous?

ANNA
When you drown in it.

MAX
But there isn’t enough here to drown in. The only explanation is that this water is radioactive.

TUCO
Radioactive?

MAX
The atomic test sites aren’t far from here. They contaminated an aquifer and now they’re trying to channel it to the ocean.

BETTINA
Don’t you think that’s a little far fetched?

MAX
Why? Because it scares you?

BETTINA
Because Jorge never found pipes.

MAX
Too deep.

BETTINA
It’s just a new spring. Water is purifying, the most venerated symbol in ancient cultures.

MAX
Yeah, just behind penises.

BETTINA
Water and fertility are always tied together. We are born in water. (MORE)
For the first nine month of our lives we breathe water, but once we’re born, we forget how. This spring is here to teach us something.

ANNA
It’s just water.

BETTINA
You’re Catholic, right, Anna?

ANNA
I guess.

BETTINA
Think how often god wanted to teach a lesson with water? The flood, parting the sea for Moses. Jesus walked on water. John baptized with water. Maybe he sent this to teach as well.

ANNA
What are we supposed to learn?

BETTINA
We’ll find out, but I think it’s to cleanse our souls and show us love.

MAX
Or mud, maybe?

BETTINA
Max, you have no sense of beauty.

EXT. PERETZ'S HOME -- NOON

Daniel, driving the truck filled with bags of cement, pulls into the driveway of Tuco and Leora’s house. Leora is outside hanging laundry. Daniel gets out of the car and walks over to Leora.

DANIEL
Good morning, Leora.

LEORA
What are you doing here, Daniel?

DANIEL
Tuco’s not here, is he?
LEORA
No. Where were you yesterday?

DANIEL
With my wife.

LEORA
I heard you were with Anna?

DANIEL
Come on, Leora, Anna hits on me, what can I do? You’re my beauty.

LEORA
I really wish you’d go.

DANIEL
No you don’t.

LEORA
No I don’t.

DANIEL
Why do you get jealous of Anna but not Megan?

LEORA
I don’t know. Megan isn’t my competition.

Daniel gets behind Leora, puts his arms around her, and guides her to the truck.

DANIEL
You have no competition.

LEORA
I wish I could resist you. I wish I could just tell you to leave.

Daniel maneuvers Leora to the open door of the truck. He turns her around to face him, and lifts her onto the seat of the truck.

DANIEL
So tell me to stop.

Daniel leans her back on the seat, lifts her skirt. As Daniel goes down on her, Leora closes her eyes.

LEORA
(whispering)
No, don’t stop.
They make love. After a few moments resting in the truck, Daniel dresses. Leora goes inside, and comes back out. She wipes away tears and holds back more.

LEORA (CONT'D)
Please don’t come back again.

She puts her arm around Daniel and kisses him goodbye. She also slips a small wad of cash into his back pocket.

LEORA (CONT'D)
Please.

DANIEL
I’ll see you later.

LEORA
No.

Daniel smiles at Leora, gets into the truck and drives off.

INT. JORGE'S WORKSHOP -- NOON

Jorge sits around, while his wife, SUSANNA, 62, unpacks lunch that she has brought for him. He takes a burrito and eats. Two young children, AMY, 8, and PEDRO, 11, his grandchildren, wander around the shop playing with tools. Pedro picks up a power drill, points it at Amy.

JORGE
Pedro, put that down! It’s not a toy.

PEDRO
Sorry.

AMY
No, he’s not.

JORGE
Go play outside. This is work here. Very important.

The kids run outside, leaving only Jorge and Susanna in the shop.

JORGE (CONT’D)
I sure do miss being a kid. I sure could get away with a lot.

SUSANNA
You get away with a lot now.
JORGE
But adults have worries. It’s what kills us all.

SUSANNA
That’s why you need to retire. Come home. Let them find someone else to do all...this.

She waves her hand, gesturing at everything in the shop.

JORGE
I don’t want to be a burden on Anthony and Carlos, and no old folks home.

SUSANNA
They wouldn’t let that happen.

EXT. JORGE’S WORKSHOP -- NOON

Daniel pulls up into the driveway in the truck. Amy and Pedro run to him.

PEDRO
Can we help?

AMY
Can we?

DANIEL
Sure.

Daniel pulls some lighter items out of the back of the truck and hands some to each of them. He points into the shop.

DANIEL (CONT’D)
They go in there with your grandpa.

The kids run into the shop. Daniel hefts a bag of cement and carries it into the shop.

INT. JORGE’S WORKSHOP -- NOON

Jorge rises to his feet as Daniel enters.

JORGE
Man, you took your time, slowpoke.
DANIEL
You get what you pay for, old man.

JORGE
You call me an old man, but someday you’ll be as old as me.

DANIEL
Yeah, and you’ll be a hundred and fifty then.

SUSANNA
I’ll let you get back to work. Goodbye.

JORGE
Goodbye, dear.

SUSANNA
Think about it, please?

JORGE
I will.

SUSANNA
Amy! Pedro! We’re going. Come on.

The children each take one of Susanna’s hands, and they walk out.

DANIEL
Your wife is some cook, Jorge.

JORGE
You need to get your wife to learn to cook.

As Susanna and the kid’s turn the corner out of sight, Bettina rounds the corner into their view.

JORGE (CONT’D)
Ahh, it’s the spacey woman.

Bettina enters the shop. Daniel returns to unloading the cement.

BETTINA
Good afternoon, gentlemen.

JORGE
Good afternoon, Miss Bettina. What can we do for you?
BETTINA
I thought I’d peek in on your work.
You’re working on the pool for the spring? Hello, Daniel.

After putting down a bag of cement, Bettina takes hold of his muscular arm and walks with him back toward the truck.

BETTINA (CONT’D)
(to Daniel)
You certainly keep yourself fit.

DANIEL
I work hard.

BETTINA
Yes. But you need to stop poisoning yourself.

EXT. JORGE’S WORKSHOP -- NOON

Daniel throws a bag of cement on his shoulder.

DANIEL
Poison?

BETTINA
That food you eat, and the alcohol. Did you know that the meat you eat is filled with hormones? Men have grown breasts from all the hormones in chickens.

DANIEL
Hasn’t happened to me yet.

Daniel walks back into the shop with cement as Bettina follows.

INT. JORGE’S WORKSHOP -- NOON

Daniel drops the cement bag on the pile with the other bags. Bettina sidles up close to Daniel.

BETTINA
If you ever want to know more just drop by. You won’t interrupt.

She steps back from him and addresses both Daniel and Jorge.
BETTINA (CONT’D)
I have something for this project.

She reaches into her bag and pulls out a small canvas pouch and hands it to Jorge. He looks in the pouch and pulls out a large green polished crystal stone.

BETTINA (CONT’D)
Four very rare green Garnets. They help direct energy flow.

DANIEL
What are they for?

JORGE
They are pretty.

BETTINA
They’re for you to set in the pool. Mount then on the outside, ninety degrees apart, in the cardinal directions--north, south, east, west.

JORGE
Since they’re pretty I’ll do it. Just no virgin blood.

BETTINA
Don’t joke, Jorge. This is important. We need to direct its energy. To keep it pure.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

Things are still slow in the bar. Max drones on, but no one pays attention to him.

MAX
Really, it was Pope Innocent the Third that’s to blame. 1215, the fourth Lateran Council solidified the status as heretics, and legalized what had been going on since 1209.

Megan enters the bar, Tuco sees her and nods in the direction of the back door. Megan returns the nod and heads back into the store room.
MAX (CONT’D)
It was at the slaughter at Beziers that the immortal words were uttered “Neca eos omnes. Deus suos agnoset”—Kill them all—

TUCO
I’ve got to unload a shipment in the back. I’ll be back in a few minutes. Can you all behave?

MAX
Of course, Herr Tuco.

TUCO
(to Max)
You’re the worst of them. I think I’ll keep an eye on you.

Tuco heads through the back door. As soon as the door swings shut behind him, Max hops up on the counter and swings his feet over so he stands behind the bar.

MAX
Last call.

Max tops off his beer glass, then fills the glasses of the rest of the people in the bar.

INT. BENAVIDEZ HOME -- EVENING

Andy and Maria return home. Andy’s bow tie hangs, untied, from the collar or his tux. Maria removes a corsage from her red evening dress.

ANDY
I hate these functions. They’re a waste of my time.

MARIA
Your time, not mine?

ANDY
You know, I’ve said before, the mayor’s wife should pick a couple social causes. That should be your crusade.

MARIA
So your job requires me to do work?
ANDY
Only if you want to.

MARIA
I don’t see my name on that paycheck.

ANDY
I don’t see your name on any paycheck.

Maria glares at Andy.

ANDY (CONT’D)
I’m sorry, I didn’t mean that. I just thought you’d be interested in the school board stuff.

MARIA
I might if I had children.

ANDY
That minefield. We’ve been over on this.

MARIA
And never resolved it.

ANDY
You’re too old to go through pregnancy.

MARIA
Was that the answer ten years ago?

ANDY
We didn’t have this argument ten years ago.

MARIA
The problem then is the same as the problem now. You can get it up, but you can’t get it off. Maybe I’m not woman enough for you.

ANDY
It’s a medical condition. You know that.

MARIA
They make pills for that nowadays. I think you’ve just run dry down there.

She motions toward his groin.
MARIA (CONT’D)
Maybe we could adopt.

ANDY
And disrupt our life to let someone else’s child into our house?

MARIA
Can you stop thinking about yourself?

INT. KRESS APARTMENT -- EVENING

Daniel returns from work to find Megan lying in bed wearing a revealing two-piece lace nightie. She puts her arms around Daniel, kisses his neck and whispers in his ear.

MEGAN
I’ve been waiting for you.

DANIEL
All day?

MEGAN
All day.

DANIEL
You don’t want to eat first?

Megan lets go of Daniel and walks over and sits on the dining table, and removes her top.

MEGAN
Sure.

As Daniel walks to her, Megan lies back on the table. Daniel gently kisses her.

DANIEL
I don’t know if this table will hold you, let alone both of us.

The both laugh, breaking the mood.

MEGAN
You’ve just seemed so distant lately. I wanted to seduce you.

DANIEL
Yeah, that’s my fault.
MEGAN

It’s no one’s fault. Just kiss me.

Daniel kisses Megan. They make love on the table.

INT. BENAVIDEZ HOME -- EVENING

Lying together in their bed, Maria faces away from Andy. Andy kisses Maria’s bare shoulder. She doesn’t react. He caresses her arm and shoulder.

ANDY

I’m sorry. After twenty years, we know each other’s buttons. I know you want a child, but you know I don’t. If it’s not fair that I get what I want and you don’t, would it be any more fair for you to get what you want and I don’t? And it’s not like there’s a compromise—you either have a kid or you don’t. But does this have to affect everything else? Can’t we put this behind us? We stayed here because you didn’t want to move east. We bought this house because you liked it. It’s not like I win all the arguments.

MARIA

A baby is not a house.

Maria turns off the light.

EXT. PLAZA -- MORNING

The noise of the backhoe fills the plaza crushing stones under its immense weight as it moves into position. Jorge drives, maneuvering the end of the arm which suspends the cement pool from chains. The garnets are set into the sides of the pool as Bettina specified.

Daniel guides and rotates the pool as Jorge lowers it. Bettina is there with a compass. Outside the bar, the barflies, including Max and Anna, stand with their drinks, watching.

BETTINA

A tiny bit clockwise. This one is the north stone.
Daniel rotates the pool according to Bettina’s request.

BETTINA (CONT’D)
There. Perfect.

Jorge lowers the pool into place and Daniel removes the ropes. The pool begins to fill up. Max Walks over to have a look. Jorge dismounts the back hoe.

MAX
Looks nice. But did anyone test this water for radioactivity?

BETTINA
Max!

MAX
I’m serious. I’m not going near that water. I’ll throw my nephew in, so when he grows a third arm I’ll sue the town.

Anna walks over.

ANNA
We should get Father Dilulio to bless it. Then it will be filled with holy water.

BETTINA
All water is holy, Anna. All water is holy.

JORGE
Either way, I just care that this works.

ANNA
What’s supposed to happen?

DANIEL
When the water fills to this spot, it will drain out the sewer line.

BETTINA
That’s a shame.

They all stare at the pool as the crystal-clear water inches up to the overflow level. When it reaches that level the extra water drains out the overflow.

JORGE
And now I break for lunch.
DANIEL
Yeah, it’s Friday. I got to talk to “Da Mayor” so I can get paid.

EXT. BENAVIDEZ HOME -- NOON

Daniel knocks at the door of Andy’s house. After a few moments, Maria opens the door but remains inside.

DANIEL
Is Andy here?

MARIA
No, he’s off doing good or fighting evil.

DANIEL
He hasn’t caught me yet.

MARIA
So I hear.

DANIEL
So what do you hear?

Daniel slides up to door jam and leans against it.

MARIA
Nothing really.

DANIEL
That’s too bad. Your husband hired me, so maybe he can’t see the evil in front of his face.

MARIA
Or hiding in his own home.

Daniel pretends to look around inside the house.

DANIEL
In his own home?

MARIA
He doesn’t really keep his house in order.

DANIEL
And his wife?
MARIA
She’s a bit of a devil, too.
Daniel, seeing an opening, gets up close to Maria.

DANIEL
And what does the devil say?
He kisses Maria.

MARIA
The devil says yes.
They kiss again. But then, Maria pushes him away.

MARIA (CONT’D)
But I say no.

DANIEL
Have it your way, but tell your husband I dropped by for what he owes me.
Daniel walks off, leaving Maria standing in the doorway.

EXT. PLAZA AFTERNOON
Daniel arrives back in the plaza, but it is deserted. Jorge is not there. Daniel kicks around the plaza a bit, but, sleepy from the afternoon sun, he crawls into the front-end loader and takes a siesta.

EXT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON
Maria approaches the outside of the bar in the bright afternoon sun. She walks inside.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON
Max drinks inside the bar. Maria walks the the bar and pretends to ignore him.

MARIA
Tuco, have you seen my husband?

TUCO
Not since this morning.
MARIA
If you see him tell him Daniel was by looking to get paid for the week.

TUCO
Sure thing.

Maria nudges Max, catches his eye, and then walks outside. Max waits a couple moments, Then gets up.

MAX
Time for me to get going.

He leaves some cash on the bar, then walks out.

EXT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

Max steps outside to find Maria waiting for him.

MAX
Pretty soon I’m going to start thinking you’re out to get me.

MARIA
I need something. Now.

MAX
Ok, but don’t walk with me. Wait five minutes.

Max walks off, leaving Maria to wait.

INT. MAX’S HOME -- AFTERNOON

Maria, still nervous from her encounter with Daniel, is pacing Max’s bedroom. Out of her sight, Max prepares a pipe, this time with a yellowish white substance.

MAX
Close your eyes.

Maria closes her eyes. Max turns her around so she stands at the foot of the bed, facing the bed. Max pushes up tightly behind her and reaches around with the pipe and lighter. With her eyes still closed, he puts the pipe in her mouth and lights the crack.

MAX (CONT’D)
Inhale.
Maria inhales and is surprised by what she inhaled. She quickly collapses into an ecstasy where she hardly notices Max, and is completely compliant. Max pushes her forward onto the bed and lifts her skirt.

EXT. PLAZA -- AFTERNOON

Daniel sleeps in the front-end loader of the Cat. Andy walks up and shakes him.

    ANDY
    He’s not coming back.

    DANIEL
    (a little groggy)
    Wha, who?

    ANDY
    Jorge. He isn’t coming back.

    DANIEL
    What happened?

    ANDY
    He quit. No notice or anything. I’d give him a bad reference, but I don’t think he’ll be applying for another job.

    DANIEL
    Why not?

    ANDY
    Some kind of lottery. He’s worth a million and a half.

    DANIEL
    Shit! Speaking of money--

    ANDY
    Of course, if he chooses the buyout, he’ll probably only get seven hundred grand, but at his age, who cares?

    DANIEL
    Do you have my pay for this week?

Andy pulls a check out of his shirt pocket and holds it out to Daniel. As Daniel tries to take it, he snaps it away.
ANDY
One thing. I need a maintenance guy now.
Full time. On call. You interested?

Daniel gets the check from Andy and examines it.

DANIEL
Sure.

ANDY
You start now.

Andy begins to walk away.

ANDY (CONT’D)
Oh, and finish up here.

Andy leaves.

EXT. PLAZA -- AFTERNOON

Daniel sits on the ground finishing up the installation of the pool. He runs a caulk gun along the seams between the pool and the ground. Bettina stops by to look in on the work.

BETTINA
Where’s Jorge?

DANIEL
There is no more Jorge.

BETTINA
Huh?

DANIEL
Quit. No notice, anything.

BETTINA
That doesn’t seem much like him. Was he angry?

DANIEL
No, just rich.

BETTINA
Since when?

DANIEL
Since he won the lottery, the lucky bastard.
BETTINA
That’s not luck.

DANIEL
That’s all it is.

BETTINA
No, his wife’s been asking him to retire. He couldn’t because of the money.

DANIEL
What difference does that make?

BETTINA
Like I’ve been saying all along--the water is blessed. There’s a power in it.

DANIEL
Bullshit.

BETTINA
It’s not. Jorge was completely covered in the water. Tuco told me. He’s the only one that was baptized in the water.

DANIEL
Don’t you need a priest to be baptized?

BETTINA
Baptism is an ancient pagan rite that the Christians stole. It’s the immersion in water that holds the power.

DANIEL
You’re nuts, and you’re going get others believing your ravings. Jorge thought you were nuts too.

BETTINA
You don’t have to believe for the blessing to work. This isn’t Christianity.

DANIEL
Dive in if you like. I won’t stop you.

Bettina looks away.

BETTINA
Not right now. Maybe later.
EXT. ST. LUCIA CHURCH -- AFTERNOON

Bettina leaves Daniel and passes by the St. Lucia church. Michael stands outside of the church with a hose watering the hedges.

BETTINA
Good morning, Father.

MICHAEL
Good morning, Bettina.

BETTINA
Father, what can you tell me about baptism?

MICHAEL
What do you want to know?

BETTINA
Not being a Christian, I wonder what the meaning is...to a Christian, that is.

MICHAEL
It’s a cleansing of sins. A purification, I imagine.

BETTINA
But I thought it’s performed on babies.

MICHAEL
Yes.

BETTINA
I thought babies are free of sin.

MICHAEL
They are.

BETTINA
Then what is there to cleanse?

MICHAEL
They still have the original sin, I think.

BETTINA
So an unbaptised baby is still a sinner.
MICHAEL
Um...Yes. Actually, let me look into that. I don’t want to give you the wrong information.

BETTINA
That’s OK, Father. I was just curious.

MICHAEL
Perhaps the main point is symbolic.

BETTINA
That’s fine, father. Thank you.

Bettina leaves Michael to his watering.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

On a hot, lazy afternoon, Leora tends bar in place of Tuco. The usual barflies are there, including Max and Anna. Nobody pays attention to anyone else.

MAX
Of course the Protocols were, at the time, thought to be evidence of a Zionist cabal. In truth, though, they were the exact opposite—evidence of an anti-Zionist cabal. They are thought to have originated in Russia. At the time the Czar was vulnerable. The Okhrana was trying to provoke action by the Czar—

Bettina enters the bar and sits on a stool.

BETTINA
I’d like a beer.

The patrons and Leora look surprised.

ANNA
That’s a surprise from you, Bettina. No carrot juice today.

BETTINA
No, I need a drink.

Leora pours Bettina a beer. Bettina drinks half of the pint, then puts down the glass and wipes her lips.
ANNA
Wow. What brought this on?

BETTINA
It’s started.

LEORA
What has?

BETTINA
The spring. It’s blessed.

MAX
Not this again.

BETTINA
No, it’s true. Even you’ll have to believe me. Remember Jorge?

LEORA
Of course.

BETTINA
Remember what he did on the Sunday the spring opened up?

ANNA
What?

BETTINA
He went in the water. Fully submerged. And now he’s been blessed.

MAX
And what form did this blessing take?

BETTINA
He won the lottery.

MAX
Wow. Lucky bastard.

BETTINA
It’s not luck. It’s a blessing. And it’s starting.

ANNA
But, Bettina, I splashed through the water Saturday night. Why hasn’t anything happened to me?
BETTINA
Maybe, because you only got your hands and feet wet. All baptisms I know of, Christian included, are about submerging the head or the whole body.

LEORA
So I go and do this, and I’ll get rich?

BETTINA
I don’t think so. The blessing Jorge needed was money. He didn’t need anything else—he’s happy—so that’s what the blessing gave him. My guess is that it gives you what you need.

LEORA
How does it know what I need?

BETTINA
You know. It uses you.

LEORA
What if I don’t know?

BETTINA
You do, even if it’s unconscious.

MAX
I think you mean subconscious. Unconscious is what I get after a night of heavy drinking. And this spring is about as likely to produce happiness as a night of drinking. No, scratch that—the drinking is a shorter way to happiness.

Bettina shakes her head at Max’s comments and looks to Leora, but Leora looks out the window towards the spring.

EXT. KRESS APARTMENT -- AFTERNOON

Felipe spies through the window on Megan. He sees Megan and Tuco inside talking. Megan sits on the edge of her bed, and Tuco stands next to her. Felipe can’t hear what is going on inside except for occasional unintelligible muffled voices.

Megan seems frustrated. Tuco is more calm. Tuco sits down and puts his arms around her, pulling her to him in a comforting fatherly way.
Releasing the hug, Tuco tousles up her hair a little. Megan looks up at him and smiles weakly. It looks like she has just been crying. Tuco brushes her hair from her eyes and kisses her on her forehead. He takes a small wad of cash from his pocket and puts it in Megan’s hand. She kisses him on the cheek.

Tuco stands up and leaves. Seeing Tuco head for the door, Felipe retreats to a safe distance, and watches him leave the house.

A few moments later, Megan exits the house with a basket of laundry and starts hanging the laundry on the clothes line. Felipe approaches.

FELIPE
Hello.

MEGAN
Hi.

FELIPE
I’m Felipe. I live--

He gestures down the street.

MEGAN
I know. Your Anna’s son.

FELIPE
Yeah, all my life. Where’s your husband at?

MEGAN
He’s working.

FELIPE
Yeah, working. Probably at my mother’s.

MEGAN
What’s that mean?

FELIPE
He’s at my mom’s a lot. She pays him.

MEGAN
I doubt that. What’s he doing for her?

FELIPE
He’s...you know...fucking her.
MEGAN
That’s...that’s bullshit. That’s total bullshit. Who do you...just get the fuck out of here.

Megan storms inside her house and tries to slam the door, but Felipe is already in the doorway.

FELIPE
I’m sorry, but it’s true.

MEGAN
I told you to leave.

Felipe recognizes the snow globe on the night stand.

FELIPE
You don’t believe me? Ask him where he got that globe. Ask him what he had to do to get it.

MEGAN
Please, just--

Felipe tries to put his arm around Megan to comfort her. He tries to mimic the comforting hold he saw Tuco hold her in, but Megan pushes him away.

MEGAN (CONT’D)
Don’t ever fucking touch me. Fucking pervert. Get the fuck--

Felipe grabs Megan again, but this time without any tenderness. He pushes her back up against the door jamb. With one hand he grabs her breast and kisses her, holding her hair with the other hand.

Megan violently pushes Felipe away. This time she runs, leaving Felipe standing in the doorway of the house. He puts his hand to his lips and watches her run off. When she is out of sight, he walks off in another direction.

EXT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

In a fast walk, Megan enters the plaza, glancing behind her to see if she was followed. She sees Daniel working on the pool but doesn’t go to him. Catching her breath, she enters the bar.
INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

Bettina, Leora, Anna, Tuco, and Max are there. Tuco sees that she is disheveled and out of breath.

    TUOC
    Are you ok?

Megan sits at the bar.

    MEGAN
    Could I have some water?

Tuco gets her a glass of water.

    TUOC
    So, are you ok?

    MEGAN
    I’m fine.

Megan notices Anna in the bar.

    MEGAN (CONT’D)
    I just wanted to stop by and see my husband.

    BETTINA
    Megan, have you heard about Jorge?

    MEGAN
    No, did something happen to him?

    BETTINA
    Nothing bad. He quit work.

    LEORA
    Apparently he won the lottery.

    BETTINA
    It proves my theory.

    MAX
    That’s not proof in the scientific sense.

    BETTINA
    Whatever. The point is, his full immersion in the spring brought him what he needed most. Enough money to retire with his family.
MEGAN
Has anyone else gone under?

BETTINA
Not yet. It’s not something to do lightly.

MAX
You’re just afraid to be proven wrong.

BETTINA
I’m afraid of no such thing.

TUCA
Whatever you believe, you got a fringe benefit out of it.

MEGAN
What’s that?

TUCA
Daniel got hired full-time in Jorge’s job. He’ll have a steady income.

MEGAN
He won’t really be able to keep it. We were planning to move on to California pretty soon.

Megan looks at Anna to see how she reacts to this news, but Anna plays it cool. Instead, Leora is surprised by the news.

LEORA
Really? He, uh, never mentioned it.
When I talked to him.

MEGAN
I didn’t know you talked to him often.

LEORA
No, just now and again.

Megan gets up from her stool.

MEGAN
Thanks for the water, Tuco.

Megan exits the bar. Leora watches her through a window, as Megan goes to Daniel in the plaza, puts her arms around him and kisses him.
INT. BENAVIDEZ KITCHEN -- EVENING

Andy and Maria clean up after dinner. Maria clears dishes with one hand, drinking wine from a glass in her other. Andy rinses the dishes and puts them in the dishwasher.

ANDY
Why do you want a kid so bad? Because you can’t love me anymore? What happens when you stop loving the kid?

MARIA
I guess we don’t have to worry about that.

Maria, a bit drunk, stumbles out of the kitchen.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BATHROOM -- EVENING

Maria continues into the bathroom. Inside she locks the door, and pulls a vial with crack out of her purse, along with a pipe.

Hands shaking, she prepares the pipe and smokes a hit off the pipe. For a moment, she falls into a catatonic stupor. As if struggling against a huge weight, she pulls herself up and stumbles out into the bedroom forgetting the drugs on the sink.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- EVENING

Andy and Maria enter the bedroom at the same time, and Maria falls into his arms.

ANDY
Drank too much again?

Andy carries Maria to the bed and undresses her. Maria absently caresses him.

MARIA
(faintly)
Andy, Andy, Andy, Andy--

Andy, surprised by this affection, kisses Maria, and is not rebuffed. Sensing an opportunity, he completely undresses her, caressing and kissing her.

He then quickly undresses himself and lies next to her.
Andy lies on top of Maria and makes love to her. Maria seems aware and goes along with it. As Andy approaches climax, Maria starts sweating and shaking, wiping her hands over her face as it trying to pull something off that is smothering her.

Frantically gasping for air, she pushes Andy off of her. Andy lies on the bed next to her as Maria’s symptoms subside and her breathing returns to normal. After she is normal, Maria rolls away from Andy, curls up fetally with a pillow and silently cries.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- EVENING

The bar is closed and empty except for Tuco and Leora. Leora sits at the bar with a drink, and Tuco cleans up.

LEORA
Your mother sent me a letter. I got it today.

TUCO
Oh, yeah? How’s she doing?

LEORA
You don’t know? You should talk to her.

TUCO
That’s her choice.

LEORA
Do you remember Aaron?

TUCO
Aaron Somin?

LEORA
Yeah. He died a month ago. Leukemia.

TUCO
Wow. I haven’t heard from him since we left Philly. Did he end up marrying?

LEORA
Rachael Volokh.
TUCO
Rachael? You mean Psycho Rachael?

LEORA
She wasn’t psycho. We were friends for a year.

TUCO
She was crazy. She’d throw herself at guys--and she was hot back then. Then when they got somewhere private, she’d freak out with any physical contact. I don’t mean groping, I mean just putting your arm around her, holding her hand.

LEORA
Did you ever take her out?

TUCO
Once. I was, I don’t know, maybe sixteen. I took her to Manayunk. I was trying to impress her. After we ate, we caught a cab to Penn’s Landing.

LEORA
Did you put your arm around her?

TUCO
I never got that far. I was a nervous sixteen year old. I could barely get up the nerve to talk to her that night.

LEORA
Chickened out?

TUCO
You know how it is when you’re that age. I’d been maneuvering all that night to kiss her. That was the end game for everything.

LEORA
And?

TUCO
My friends came and ruined everything.

LEORA
She and Aaron married about five years ago.
TUCO
Who knew. Any kids?

LEORA
No.

The conversation pauses as Tuco returns to cleaning.

LEORA (CONT’D)
I don’t know why you’d ever want to leave there. It’s...home.

TUCO
It’s not the life I wanted. This is the life I wanted.

LEORA
But our family, our friends, our people are all back there.

TUCO
And that’s why I’m here. You didn’t object when I talked about moving out here. You didn’t seem to mind when we first came out.

LEORA
I thought it was a passing fancy. I didn’t realize how different things are here. I feel like an outsider.

TUCO
That’s because you refuse to open yourself to them. It’s you that is keeping yourself on the outside. These are good people if you give them a chance.

LEORA
They’re so alien. There are no Jews here. There’s nowhere to eat kosher.

TUCO
“When in Rome--”

INT. ST. LUCIA CHURCH -- EVENING

In an office room in the church, Michael talks with Felipe.
MICHAEL
But she’s married, Felipe.

FELIPE
But her husband don’t treat her good.

MICHAEL
Either way, that’s her choice.

FELIPE
He sleeps around, Father. Lots of women.

MICHAEL
Does she know?

FELIPE
I tried to tell her, but she got mad.

MICHAEL
People don’t want to hear that kind of news. It will take her time to realize it, but you have to let her do it on her own time.

FELIPE
She’s a beautiful girl, Father. I want her so bad. I dream about her when I close my eyes.

MICHAEL
Felipe.

FELIPE
I know she’ll love me, if she knows me. I just have to keep trying.

MICHAEL
Felipe, you have to let it happen. You can’t force it.

FELIPE
I know she’ll love me. I just have to show her.

MICHAEL
But she’s married, Felipe.
EXT. TOWN STREETS/PLAZA -- NIGHT

Leora walks the streets of the town, by herself, late at night, crying.

    LEORA
    (to herself)
    Something has to give. He doesn’t understand. I need to do something drastic--wake him up--throw some cold water on him. Something has to give. Something. He won’t, so I have to.

She wanders into the plaza.

    LEORA (CONT’D)
    If he won’t do anything, I’ll have to.
    I’ll have to leave him. Oh, god, I can’t do that. I can’t, I can’t.

She stops when she sees that she is next to the spring. She looks at her reflection in the pool and sees how disheveled she is from crying.

    LEORA (CONT’D)
    Something has to give.

She then steps into the water and sits.

    LEORA (CONT’D)
    Something.

She closes her eyes and leans back into the water fully submerging herself. Under the water she opens her eyes and sees the stars through the water. She then hears, muffled through the water and distant, the sound of Tuco’s voice.

    TUCO
    Leora!

Leora sits up out of the water and wipes the water from her face. At the edge of the plaza Tuco sees Leora emerge from the spring and rushes to her.

    TUCO (CONT’D)
    Leora!

On the steps of the church, Michael sends Felipe off. He hears Tuco, sees Leora, and rushes to the spring. Michael and Tuco arrive at the spring at the same time.
MICHAEL
Are you OK, Leora?

TUCO
Oh, good god, don’t tell me you are falling for that nutcase’s story?

Michael extends a hand, and helps Leora out of the pool.

MICHAEL
Did you fall?

TUCO
No, she was hoping for a miracle.

MICHAEL
A miracle?

TUCO
That nutcase, Bettina, has been putting ideas in her head.
(to Leora)
So do you feel different? Have the seas parted? Did you get your miracle?

Still holding Michael’s hand, Leora brings his hand up to her lips and kisses it. She turns to Tuco and smiles, seeing the bitterness in his face.

LEORA
Yes. I got my miracle. Something had to give, and I got it.
(to Michael)
Is there somewhere I can stay tonight? I’m not going back to my husband.

TUCO
What? What are you talking about? Leora?

MICHAEL
You could stay at a guest room at the church.

TUCO
You’re going to help her with this? She’s not even Catholic.

MICHAEL
I do what she needs.
LEORA
Thank you, Father.
(to Tuco)
Goodbye, David.

TUCO
Father?  Father!  Leora!

Michael and Leora head towards the church, leaving Tuco speechless at the pool.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- MORNING

Andy dresses as Maria remains sleeping in bed. He walks into the bathroom.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BATHROOM -- MORNING

In the bathroom, Andy stares into the mirror, examining his face. He is tying his tie, when he notices the crack and pipe left out on the vanity. He examines the stuff closely, and looks back into the bedroom and the sleeping figure of his wife. He takes the drug stuff and exits the bathroom.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- MORNING

In the bedroom Andy sees Maria stirring. Andy avoids his wife and exits to the dining room.

INT. BENAVIDEZ DINING ROOM -- MORNING

He places the drugs conspicuously on the table, near to the front door of the house. He finishes tying his tie, as he hears his wife running the shower, and exits the house.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BATHROOM -- MORNING

Maria exits the shower, dries herself and looks at herself in the mirror, wiping the mist off the mirror with her hand. She continues to the bedroom.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- MORNING

She dresses quickly, then exits the house, walking right past the drugs that Andy has left out, without noticing them.
INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- MORNING

Tuco unlocks the front door and enters the bar, and locks the door behind him. The bar is dark inside, but Tuco doesn’t turn on any lights. Instead, he goes behind the bar and pours himself shot of tequila and knocks it back.

He walks to the window and peeks out the church. He returns to behind the bar and pours himself another drink.

EXT. KRESS APARTMENT -- NOON

Megan walks towards her house carrying a sack of groceries. Standing on the berm near her house, she sees Maria knocking on her door.

Megan stops, then moves to a spot by an old weathered fence where she can see, obscured from view.

She sees Daniel answer the door, wearing nothing but a pair of boxers, his hair disheveled. Megan can hear nothing of what they are saying, but she sees Maria touch Daniel’s hair. She runs her hand down Daniel’s chest.

Megan drops to the ground but continues watching.

Daniel grabs her hand when it is on his abdomen, and turns Maria around and pushes her back against the door jamb. Daniel looks around for anybody watching, then pushes up against Maria and kisses her neck. He then rushes her inside and closes the door.

Megan sits dumbfounded on the ground. Staring at the house. After a few moments she gets up, and walks haltingly toward the house. As she gets closer, she finds a crack in the door jamb and stares in. She continues to watch through the crack as she hears the sounds of the two making love.

EXT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

Megan walks crying into the plaza to the front door of the bar. She tries to open the door, but it is locked. She shakes the door and then BANGS on it.

MEGAN

Tuco? Tuco! Open up!

(whispering)

Please?
Crying, Megan sits down with her back against the door. Bettina approaches and sees Megan crying. She sits next to Megan and puts her arm around her to comfort her.

    BETTINA
    What’s the matter, dear?

    MEGAN
    I need Tuco.

    BETTINA
    I can help you. What’s happened?

    MEGAN
    I...I can’t.

    BETTINA
    Is it your husband?

Megan looks at Bettina, but doesn’t respond.

    BETTINA (CONT’D)
    I’m so sorry. You go ahead and cry.

    MEGAN
    I’ve been crying. I need Tuco.

    BETTINA
    What you need to get over that boy. What did he do?

    MEGAN
    Don’t you mean who?
        (to the door)
    Tuco!

    BETTINA
    You know about the spring, right?

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

Tuco sits at table with a nearly empty bottle of tequila in front of him. When he hears Megan through the door, he gets angry, and stands up suddenly, knocking over a couple of chairs and the tequila bottle. He heads to the door, but trips over one of the fallen chairs, and falls to the ground.

For a moment he tries to get up, but his strength fails him, and he stays lying on the floor, and falls asleep.
INT. ANNA'S HOME -- AFTERNOON

Anna and Felipe are in kitchen. Felipe sits at the table as Anna fixes some lunch.

FELIPE
Her husband don’t love her. I’m better for her.

ANNA
Felipe, she’s married.

FELIPE
Yeah, that don’t stop you and her husband.

ANNA
What are you talking about?

FELIPE
Oh, come on. The whole town knows. Megan’s the only one that doesn’t. Everyone’s afraid to tell her.

ANNA
It’s different with me and Daniel. We’re not talking love. You are.

FELIPE
Don’t lecture me.

ANNA
Felipe, You have to consider what she wants. Have you talked to her.

FELIPE
I tried, but she didn’t want to listen..

ANNA
Well, talk to her. I can’t tell you what to do. Just don’t expect much. She’s not really like that.

INT. KRESS APARTMENT -- AFTERNOON

Daniel lies in bed, mostly naked, smoking a cigarette. Megan enters their home.
DANIEL
You’ve been gone for a while. I thought you were going shopping. Did you forget the groceries?

MEGAN
I think I left them outside...earlier.

Daniels gets up and goes to the door and looks out.

DANIEL
Where’d you leave them?

MEGAN
Over by the fence, I think.

Daniel goes over to Megan and puts his hands on her shoulders, but she turns away from him.

DANIEL
Why’d you leave the food out there?

MEGAN
I didn’t want to come in. You had someone else in here.

Daniel looks away, then looks back at Megan, who stares at him directly.

DANIEL
Look, I’m sorry.

MEGAN
No you’re not. You’re not.

DANIEL
Megan, she threw herself at me. She’s my boss’s wife--she threatened my job.

MEGAN
But what about the others?

DANIEL
There are no others. Just you, baby.

Megan picks up the snow globe.

MEGAN
And I suppose you got this in Paris?
DANIEL
I got it at the flea market.

MEGAN
Not from that drunk, Anna?

DANIEL
What are you talking about?

MEGAN
Don’t patronize me! I think I’m the only one in town that doesn’t know.

DANIEL
Give me a break. You want to know? Ok, yeah, I fucked her. I don’t know how many times. And she wasn’t the only one. You sit around on your ass and pick flowers. One of us had to make money.

Megan takes a swing at Daniel with the globe.

MEGAN
How? How could you?

DANIEL
Come on, you uptight--

Megan storms out of the house.

DANIEL (CONT’D)
Come back when you cool off.

EXT. PLAZA -- NIGHT

The plaza is deserted on Saturday night with the bar closed. Megan enters the plaza carrying the snow globe, shaking it and staring at the Eiffel Tower with snow falling around it. Her eyes are red and her face streaked with tears.

She sees the pool and walks over to it. She looks down into the water and sees her reflection. As she stares at herself in the water, she sees the reflection of Felipe appear behind her.

Megan tries to turn around, but Felipe grabs her arms and forces her to bend further over the rim of the pool. Megan resists and drops the snow globe which shatters on the ground.

MEGAN
Stop! Let go of me! Help!
Felipe pins her against the pool with his body, holds both her wrists in one hand and tries to caress the front of her neck with his free hand. He leans forward and kisses her ear and neck.

Megan rams her head back into Felipe’s face and busts his lip.

MEGAN (CONT’D)
I told you to stop. Help! Someone Help!

Felipe pushes Megan’s face down into the water for several seconds, and then grabbing her hair, he pulls her face back out of the water.

FELIPE
Shut up. Don’t scream. I’m trying to help you. Just listen to me.

MEGAN
Help me! Help me!

FELIPE
Quiet!

Again Felipe pushes Megan’s face into the water. He holds her under the water even longer this time. When he lets her up, Megan chokes and gasps for breath.

FELIPE (CONT’D)
Listen, it’s not what you think. Please listen to me.

MEGAN
Let go! Help! Let go!

Felipe pushes her under again and holds her under.

FELIPE
Listen, you bitch. Listen to me. I love you. I do. That fucking husband of yours, and my fucking mother--

Tuco opens the door to his bar, and stumbles out into the plaza, groggy and hungover.

FELIPE (CONT’D)
You’ve got to listen to me. You’ve got to believe me.

Megan goes limp in the water. Felipe lets go of her and lurches back, leaving Megan face down in the water.
TUCO

Megan?

He rubs his forehead and eyes and looks around the plaza and sees Felipe and Megan. Felipe looks back at Tuco and meets his eyes for a moment.

TUCO (CONT’D)

What the hell?

Felipe bolts, and Tuco runs to Megan, and pulls her out of the water and lays her on the ground. He feels her neck for a pulse, and finding nothing, tries to perform CPR.

After compressing her chest and giving her mouth to mouth for a minute he gives up and pulls her up to him and holds her.

TUCO (CONT’D)

(quietly)

Megan!

(loudly)

Help! Someone call an ambulance!

Please, someone!

EXT. PLAZA -- NIGHT

Later the Plaza is bustling with Sheriff's cars and an ambulance, officers and EMTs. Daniel sits on the bumper of the ambulance, looking at Megan’s body. Maria and Andy stand around in formal clothes as the police direct the scene.

Maria sits on a bench detached from the events. Andy, Anna, and Tuco stand around an officer who takes statements.

ANDY

Everyone in the town liked her. I don’t what would have caused the young man to do this.

OFFICER

Had you had prior complains from the victim? Or any other people in the town?

ANDY

He was a bit hot-headed, like any teenager. He got in a fight last year, but it was settled without a complaint. Nothing this extreme.
OFFICER
(to Anna)
You’re his mother?

Andy walks over to Maria and stands behind her.

OFFICER (CONT’D)
Did he ever mention the victim?

ANNA
He had a crush on her.

OFFICER
And?

ANNA
I tried to discourage it.

OFFICER
You weren’t worried about something like this?

ANNA
I don’t know...not really.

OFFICER
And his father?

ANNA
(after a pause)
His father isn’t in his life.

OFFICER
Who’s the father?

Anna pauses longer and glances at Andy, who look back sternly.

ANNA
Him.

She nods toward Andy.

ANNA (CONT’D)
Andrew Benavidez.

Maria freezes when she hears this.

OFFICER
The mayor?
Maria gets up, walks over to Anna, and stares at her. The officer puts out an arm to restrain Maria.

MARIA
When?

ANNA
Felipe’s seventeen.

MARIA
Seventeen?

ANNA
Seventeen.

OFFICER
(to Maria)
Ma’am, please.

Maria turns from Anna to Andy.

MARIA
Seventeen? When you were telling me we were too young for kids? Seventeen years ago when you didn’t want to get tied down?

ANDY
It was an accident. It was a one-night stand. I didn’t want to keep it.

MARIA
How is screwing another woman an accident? And all this time I just though you were impotent. But clearly you have it in you. I must just repulse you.

ANDY
Sometimes you do.

MARIA
It cuts the other way too.

ANDY
Is that why you have the drugs?
MARIA
Maybe.

ANDY
Is that why you’re sleeping around?

MARIA
Maybe. Maybe I want a man. One who can get it up and keep it up.

ANDY
I could, if you weren’t so--

OFFICER
Ok, enough of this. Back off.

The officer pushes Maria back until she sits on the bench as before. He turns to Andy and puts some distance between the two.

MARIA
Do you want to see disgust?

OFFICER
Ma’am!

MARIA
Fuck you.

OFFICER
I’m going to ignore that this time. Keep quiet so I don’t have to arrest you too.

ANDY
(to the officer)
I’m sorry. We’ve been going through a rough patch.

OFFICER
Yeah, a twenty-year rough patch, it looks like.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Andy and Maria return home. They both look tired, but Maria is practically asleep. Andy supports her, and she leans her head on his shoulder. It is the only moment of tenderness between the two. Andy gently sits her on the bed. He removes her shoes, and her dress leaving Maria in a slip. He lays her down and covers her with the bed sheets and turns out the light.
INT. BENAVIDEZ DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

In the dining room he picks up the drugs and pipe, still sitting there from the morning. After examining them for a moment, he goes to the kitchen.

INT. BENAVIDEZ KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Andy dumps the crack into the sink garbage disposal, runs some water and turns on the disposal for a few seconds. He shuts off the disposal and the water and throws the vial and pipe into the trash, pushing it to the bottom so the objects are obscured by other trash.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Back in the bedroom, Andy undresses and gets in bed.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- MORNING

Maria, dressed in her church clothing, finishes dressing by putting in some earrings. Andy is still asleep in bed.

Maria opens the cabinets frantically looking for the drugs. She looks in the bathroom trash, but finds nothing.

INT. BENAVIDEZ BEDROOM -- MORNING

Her noise wakes Andy who sees her rummaging in the bathroom. He goes back to sleep.

INT. BENAVIDEZ KITCHEN -- MORNING

In the kitchen, she looks in the trash. She sees nothing, and doesn’t dig further.

Maria storms out.

EXT. ST. LUCIA CHURCH -- MORNING

Michael stands outside the church waiting. He looks at the center of the plaza where the spring is, cordoned off by police barriers and do-not-cross tape.

He looks at his watch and then heads back into the church.
INT. ST. LUCIA CHURCH -- MORNING

Michael enters the church. There is only one person there for the service; it is Leora. She sits at the very front pew. Michael approaches her.

MICHAEL
It looks like Maria won’t be with us this morning.

LEORA
I hardly know her. I hardly know anyone in this town.

MICHAEL
Are you sure you want to do this? It is not something to be taken lightly.

LEORA
I’m tired of being different. When in Rome--

Michael walks Leora to a baptismal font. Leora freezes when she sees it.

LEORA (CONT’D)
Did the spring cause all this?

MICHAEL
Perhaps. Perhaps not.

LEORA
It was so violent.

MICHAEL
Purification is usually that way. Sometimes by water, but sometimes by fire.

LEORA
I’m ready.

EXT. MAX’S HOME -- MORNING

Maria, still dressed in her church clothing, arrives at Max’s front door. She KNOCKS. There is no answer. She KNOCKS again. Still no answer.
MARIA
(quietly)
Max?  Max?

She BANGS some more, but there is no answer.  She keeps BANGING for another minute.

EXT. ANNA'S HOME -- MORNING

Daniel KNOCKS on Anna’s door.  Anna answers and lets him in.  They both sit, somewhat distant from the other.

ANNA
They found Felipe.  He was hiding by the river.  Under the bridge.

DANIEL
Did you sleep?

ANNA
On and off.

DANIEL
Is this our fault?

ANNA
Do you think it is?

DANIEL
Yes.  She found out.  Yesterday.  That’s why she was out.

ANNA
You did something to make her mad, not to kill her.

DANIEL
But we both lost someone last night.  It feels like punishment.

EXT. EL CHINGON BAR -- MORNING

Maria approaches the locked door of the bar.  She knocks, but there is no answer.  She knocks again, then puts her ear to the door.

MARIA
I hear you in there, Tuco.  Open up.
After a pause, she walks over to spring, and picks up a loose brick from the construction. She walks back to the door and POUNDS it with the brick. After a moment, Tuco opens the door. He looks like he slept in the bar. He lets her in.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- MORNING

Maria enters and Tuco locks the door behind her.

MARIA
I need a drink.

Tuco walks around behind the bar.

MARIA (CONT’D)
Bourbon. On ice.

Tuco gets two glasses, and pours two bourbons on ice. He hands one to Maria, and begins to drink the other himself.

MARIA (CONT’D)
I’m not sure which I prefer. Now, or before all this.

TUCO
Megan’s dead. Leora’s gone. I don’t give a fuck about your marriage.

MARIA
How did this happen?

Tuco finishes his bourbon and pours himself another.

TUCO
It was that new-ager, Bettina. All her theories about miracles.

MARIA
But nobody believed her.

TUCO
No, but they wanted to.

INT. ANNA'S HOME -- MORNING

Anna and Daniel are still sitting. Daniel stands up, walks toward the exit door. Anna gets up to follow him. She takes some cash out of her pocket. Daniel is halfway out the door.
ANNA
If you think we’re being punished, do you know what we should do?

Daniel stops in the doorway and turns back to Anna. Anna puts the money on a table in Daniel’s sight.

DANIEL
What?

ANNA
If you already have the punishment, you might as well commit the crime.

Daniel looks at the money and then back to Anna. Anna walks right up to him, gently pulls him back into the house, and closes the door.

FADE OUT.
Waking Night
by
Geof Abruzzi
FADE IN:

EXT. PLAZA -- NIGHT

An eerily illuminated Catholic church looms over one end of the La Mesa Plaza. At the opposite end stands the "El Chingon" bar, its painted sign fading and stucco cracked and falling. A communal square with a derelict fountain divides them. Shuttered stores and houses line the other sides of the plaza.

The faint, muffled SOUNDS of rock and roll jukebox MUSIC emanate from the bar into the deserted plaza.

From a side street, MEGHAN, 23, enters the square followed by MARKO, 32. Meghan is thin with close cut blond hair, she wears fashionable clothing and long leather trenchcoat that accents her tall, thin body. She deliberately walks several paces in front of Marko, forced to follow her.

Marko's tall, muscular, and darkly tanned body, spiked, peroxided hair, and expensive jewelry contrasts a deep scar on his chin. He follows Meghan into the plaza, but not directly, instead zigzagging across her direct path.

MEGHAN
The last bus.

MARKO
You were the one that thought this was the stop.

MEGHAN
You were the one that was supposed to know.

In the center of the plaza is a dry fountain with a rim made of formed concrete, and polished, decorative stones set on the outside. Meghan approaches the fountain and sits on the rim.

MARKO
I was asleep. I wasn't keeping track.

MEGHAN
Forget the excuses. What do we do now?

Marko lights up a cigarette.
MARKO
Probably call Albert, I'm not sure how far he is, but we can kill time.

Distressed by the cigarette smoke, Meghan gets up and puts some distance between herself and Marko.

MEGHAN
Well?

Marko pulls out his cell phone and opens it up.

MARKO
Fucking town.

MEGHAN
No service?

She pulls out her phone.

MEGHAN (CONT’D)
Nada.

MARKO
The fucking dark ages.

Marko looks to Meghan. She only shrugs and shakes her head.

MARKO (CONT’D)
I could understand the jungles of Borneo, but this is the fucking USA. How the fuck could some one live here? No cell phones, no cable TV, just one lousy fucking bar. They're all inbreds because there's nothing else to do. They're all fucking their cousins.

MEGHAN
Done?

MARKO
No.

He stops his rant anyway. Meghan gestures over to the bar where there is a pay phone by the entrance.

MARKO (CONT’D)
I knew the seventies were coming back in, but this is just fucked up.
Meghan holds out her hand with change in it. Marko stamps out his cigarette, walks over takes the money, and walks over to the pay phone.

Meghan watches him as he tries to use the phone, an alien object for Marko. From a distance, Meghan sees Marko remove the handset, look at the instructions, hold the handset to his ear, hang up the handset and remove it again, dial a number, wait, insert some coins, wait, insert some more coins.

Then after a long time Marko BANGS the handset against the phone several times before hanging up. He walks a few steps towards Meghan, then turns back to the phone, looks in the coin return slot, removes a coin and pockets it, and finally returns to Meghan.

    MARKO (CONT' D)
    No answer. Albert's probably at the bus station to pick us up. The right bus station.

Marko steps behind Meghan, who nervously looks back at him uncomfortable having someone behind her. Marko rubs Meghan's shoulders, completely oblivious to her discomfort.

    MEGHAN
    Did you enjoy the time-machine trip?

    MARKO
    This place is psycho.

    MEGHAN
    I doubt where we were going is much different.

    MARKO
    Doesn't matter. There we'd be with friends.

He pauses following a thought.

    MARKO (CONT' D)
    Anyway, we weren't going there for the nightlife, or the town.

    MEGHAN
    What do we do?

    MARKO
    What do you want to do?
MEGHAN
  (motioning to the bar)
  I guess we can wait in there, until you
  get through to your friend.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- NIGHT

The inside of the bar is dark, with a cramped, low ceiling. Worn, mismatched tables and chairs take up the floor space, and the far corner of the bar has a small, empty, raised stage. A half dozen patrons, mostly alone, all middle aged or older are scattered throughout the bar.

The bartender, DAVID "TUCO" PERETZ, 57, sits on a stool behind the bar and watches Meghan and Marko enter with a slight nod. Tuco shows his age, with a gut, and wisps of grey in his otherwise jet-black hair.

Meghan and Marko approach the bar.

MARKO
  I assume you don't make martinis?

TUCO
  I could pour you a beer and call it a martini.

MARKO
  Just a lager of some kind.

Tuco begins to pour a beer, and Marko pulls out his pack of cigarettes, his money, rolled up in the pack. He pulls out five dollars and puts it on the bar. He then pulls out a cigarette and lights up.

MEGHAN
  I wish you wouldn't.

MARKO
  That's why they call it a wish.

MEGHAN
  Fine.

Tuco puts the beer for Marko on the bar next to the five, and takes the money. He pulls a lever on the register, pulls out change and puts it on the bar next to the beer.
MEGHAN (CONT’D)
An IPA, please.

Meghan pulls her ID out of her wallet to show Tuco, but he waves it away.

TUCO
Not much use around here. Cops come by when they're bored, but on a Saturday night, they'd rather be closer to some action.

Meghan puts the card away and pulls money from her wallet, as Tuco pours the beer. Meghan places a five on the bar and takes the beer.

MEGHAN
Keep the change.

Marko walks to a table on the other side of the bar, but Meghan sits down on a bar stool, and takes a sip of her beer. Marko sees that Meghan isn't following.

MARKO
What?

MEGHAN
Don't let me stop you.

MARKO
Is it this?

He holds up the cigarette.

MEGHAN
No, it's just you.

MARKO
Fine.

Marko continues to the table and sits down with his beer. Meghan turns her back to him and faces Tuco.

TUCO
Trouble in paradise?

MEGHAN
It was never Paradise. What's your name.

TUCO
Tuco.
MEGHAN
Meghan.

TUCO
I knew a Megan.

MEGHAN
Knew?

TUCO
Yeah, well, she died.

MEGHAN
Maybe I shouldn't get to know you.

TUCO
Maybe you shouldn't.

MEGHAN
Tuco. That's a familiar name.

TUCO
"The Good, the Bad and the Ugly."

MEGHAN
Oh, yeah. The ugly. That your real name?

TUCO
No, it's a nickname.

MEGHAN
The ugly guy isn't too flattering.

TUCO
Well, I can't play "Blondie."

MEGHAN
I suppose not.

MARKO
(from across the room)
You got anything good in this jukebox?

TUCO
I don't think so. Just what's there.
(to Meghan)
No offense, but why?

MEGHAN
Why what?
You seem like a nice person.
Intelligent. You boyfriend seems a bit of a lout.

Meghan and look back at Marko who is now sitting at a table with MAX ARGENTO, 58, a rough one-percenter wearing a worn leather jacket, a POW/MIA t-shirt, and shit-kickers. His hair is in a braided pony tail, and he has a fu-manchu. His wrists and neck are covered in tattoos.

Marko is gesticulating as he argues with Max. Max leans from him hands braced in a defensive posture that Marko clearly hasn't noticed.

Why not? Anyone else will be as bad.
People only really care about themselves.

Amen.

Marko used to call it "enlightened self interest." One semester of college, and all he can remember is the excuses they taught him.

Those are big words.

I don't think he understands them.

Tuco sits back on his stool, staring emptily for few moments. Meghan, thinking Tuco has left the conversation, looks around, checking out the others in the bar.

But what about you?

Meghan turns back to Tuco.

Huh?

What about you?
MEGHAN
I don't--

TUCO
"Enlightened self-interest" only works when everyone looks out for their interest. He looks out for his. Do you look out for your interest?

Meghan shrugs.

TUCO (CONT'D)
Then it's one sided, and you will always lose.

MEGHAN
I would either way.

The sounds of a SCUFFLE from the other side of the room breaks their conversation. Marko and Max, locked in a fight, stumble blindly knocking over several chairs and a table.

MEGHAN (CONT'D)
Mother--

She turns back to Tuco, but he has already leapt from behind the bar to break up the fight. Several other patrons try to hold Max and Marko away from each other, as Tuco gets between them and pushes them away.

TUCO
I want both of you out of my bar. Right now.

MAX
This fucker had it coming.

TUCO
I don't care what happened, just get the fuck out of my bar. Max, you know me better.

MAX
(to Marko)
This isn't over. Until then, the last you'll see of me is my ass, so if you want to kiss it, now's your chance.

Max turns his back to Marko and walks out. Tuco turns to Marko.
TU

You, too.

MARKO

Too bad. I was enjoying my piss beer.

Marko straightens himself out, then turns to Meghan.

MARKO (CONT'D)

Come on. We'll spend our money at some other establishment.

Meghan storms past Marko, and pauses to stare down Tuco.

TU

(to Meghan)

Sorry, but no fights in my bar. I've had enough of that shit. You come in with the lowest common denominator, you can't expect me to exempt you just because you flirt with the bartender.

MEGHAN

I wasn't flirting with you.

She storms out.

MARKO

You thought she was flirting with a gerry-case like you?

Marko follows Meghan outside.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Meghan at sixteen walks through a quiet street at night, her long platinum-blond hair stands out against the her dirty clothes and backpack. Tears have smudged her eye liner, though she is no longer crying.

She walks aimlessly, looking at the buildings she passes for a place to sleep. She finds a spot hidden from the street, pulls off her backpack, and sits down. Removing her jacket, she pulls it over her arms and chest like a blanket.

A couple walk past her, arms locked. When they notice her, Meghan looks away to avoid their eyes but looks up again after they're past and sees the woman clinging tighter to the man’s arm.
Megan dozes off and is awakened by three young men who, beers in hand, are trying to wake her by kicking her feet.

YOUNG MAN #1
Hey, she’s awake.

YOUNG MAN #2
What’s your name?

MEGHAN
Stop it.

YOUNG MAN #2
Come on. Tell me.

MEGHAN
Go away.

YOUNG MAN #3
Let’s go, guys.

Young Man #1 holds his beer out to Meghan.

YOUNG MAN #1
You want a drink?

MEGHAN
Leave me alone.

YOUNG MAN #2
Do you have a body under that jacket?

Young Man #2 pulls the jacket from Meghan, and tosses it to Young Man #1.

YOUNG MAN #2 (CONT’D)
Looks like she does.

YOUNG MAN #1
Not bad either.

MEGHAN
Give it back!

YOUNG MAN #3
Guys. You’re drunk.

YOUNG MAN #1
So what?
YOUNG MAN #3
I’m out of here.

Young Man #3 walks off, disgusted. While the two other men are distracted by their friend, Meghan jumps up and tries to grab her jacket back from the man that has it. This ends up in a tug of war with the young man using his size to throw her around.

The young man swings the jacket around, throwing her into Young Man #2, who grabs her and tries to kiss her. Megan struggles, but can’t break free from his grip.

Young Man #1 tosses the jacket onto the ground and grabs Meghan’s hair pulling her head back.

YOUNG MAN #1
Don’t worry. We’ll pay.

SETH
She’s not for sale.

Meghan and the two young men turn to see SETH PARKER, 37, dressed in an impeccable Italian suit and overcoat, standing in front of an idling Mercedes.

SETH (CONT’D)
If you’re wondering whether I’m armed, the answer is yes, and if you don’t believe me, do you really want to find out?

The two young men release Meghan and back away a little.

SETH (CONT’D)
Want a ride somewhere?

Meghan looks at Seth but doesn’t answer.

SETH (CONT’D)
Just away from these guys. I promise.

Meghan grabs her backpack and jacket, and walks past Seth into the passenger seat of the Mercedes.

MEGHAN
Thanks.

Seth closes the passenger door behind her and, with Meghan isolated inside the car, turns to the two men.
SETH
Sorry. Mine.

INT. SETH’S CAR -- NIGHT

Seth gets into the driver seat of the car, and drives off.

SETH
Can I take you to your car or your apartment?

MEGHAN
I don’t have anywhere to go right now.

SETH
Where do you live?

MEGHAN
I just got into town yesterday.

SETH
You were trying to sleep there? It’s not a good neighborhood.

MEGHAN
Where's a good neighborhood?

SETH
Someone like you shouldn’t be sleeping on the street.

MEGHAN
I don’t have much choice.

SETH
I tell you what. When was the last time you’ve eaten?

MEGHAN
Yesterday.

SETH
Let me buy you some food.

MEGHAN
I shouldn’t.
I’ll buy you some food and pay for a hotel for you. That’s all. Just a good Samaritan.

I don’t know if I trust you.

I can afford it. You can’t.

Meghan nods but looks away.

Seth puts some cash on the counter and an old Motel Clerk, 68, takes the money and puts a form on the counter. Meghan stands behind Seth and watches.

Sign this.

Seth signs the form, which the clerk takes and places two keys on the counter.

Room 235. It’s around back, near the pool. Second floor.

Seth takes one of the keys.

We only need one key. Thanks.

Check out is at eleven.

Seth and Meghan stand in front of the door. Seth holds the key out to Meghan.

Thanks.

My pleasure.
Meghan takes the key and they both stand there for a few uncomfortable moments.

MEGHAN

Goodbye.

SETH

Sorry. Of course, goodbye.

Seth turns to leave and gets ten paces away before Meghan speaks.

MEGHAN

Do you want to come in?

Seth turns back to Meghan. They look at each other for a moment. Megan unlocks the door. Seth smiles and walks back to Meghan.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. PLAZA -- NIGHT

Meghan sits on the wall of the dry fountain. She sees something shiny among the dirt. She reaches down and picks it up and sees that it is a penny. She cleans the dirt off the penny and sees that it is still quite new. Looking back at the bottom of the empty pool, Meghan brushes away some of the accumulated dirt and sees that there are quite a few coins, and the pool was clearly once a wishing pool, now dried up. She drops the penny back into the pool.

Marko sits next to Meghan and puts his arm around her.

MARKO

I just talked to him. He's a couple of hours from here, but he's going to head down.

Marko massages Meghan's neck.

MARKO (CONT’D)

It's been a stressful night. You'll feel better when you get somewhere familiar. These little inbred towns are so unnatural. We're like foreigners here. Albert knows how to deal with them better.
MEGHAN
It's not that. I grew up in towns like this. They didn't used to be like this.

MARKO
You stay with me. You know I'm going somewhere.

MEGHAN
That's not--

A truck SCREECHES to a stop near them, and two guys jump out of the bed. LARRY, 34, a skinhead covered with tattoos, and a long blond beard, and SKIZZ, 17, an awkwardly skinny boy with severe attention deficit, and nervous twitch. Moments later Max gets out of the driver’s side of the truck. Meghan is momentarily too surprised to do anything, but Marko jumps up at the chance to finish the fight he started.

MARKO
The "fucking cousins" crew--

SCREAMING in a berserk rage, Marko races into the fight by charging head first into Larry. He headbutts Larry in the stomach and pushes him back with force into the corner of the truck, knocking Larry down.

Marko turns to Skizz and charges. Skizz tries to duck, but Marko gets an arm around his neck and spins him around. From behind him, Max hits Marko's back with a wooden Louisville Slugger baseball bat, and Marko crumples, releasing Skizz, who staggers away to catch his breath.

Larry, his hand on his back, approaches Marko and kicks him in the stomach several time.

Meghan gets up and runs toward the bar.

MAX
Skizz!

Skizz runs after Meghan and pushes her from behind. She flies headfirst into the ground, cutting a gash in her forehead, and scuffing up her hand and cheek.

Skizz grabs her arm and lifts her up. With Larry taking care of Marko, Max rushes over to Meghan and Skizz to help him drag her off to a side alley, out of the light of the plaza.

While Skizz holds Meghan, Max strikes her hard on one cheek.
MAX (CONT’D)
So you're the bitch's girl? Or are you
the bitch?

When Meghan says nothing, Max strikes her hard on the other cheek.

MAX (CONT’D)
Huh?

Max punches Meghan hard in the stomach with the butt of the
baseball bat. Meghan buckles over, struggling to breathe as she
falls to the ground.

MEGHAN
(delirious)
Little Bo Peep had so many sheep--

Max throws the baseball bat to Skizz.

MAX
Watch her. We'll be back in a few
minutes.

SKIZZ
Let Larry watch her. What are you going
to do to him?

MAX
Do what you're told. Don't let your eyes
off her.

Max rushes back to the plaza but turns back to Skizz.

MAX (CONT’D)
Don't kill her.

He runs off.

SKIZZ
Fuck.

Meghan lies moaning on the ground.

SKIZZ (CONT’D)
Fuck.

Skizz hears the sound of the truck tailgate SLAMMING and the truck
PEELING OUT.

SKIZZ (CONT’D)
Fuck.
Meghan's breathing evens out, her moaning stops, she straightens out her body, and rolls onto her back, inadvertently showing her figure.

Skizz wipes his mouth as her looks at her.

SKIZZ (CONT’D)
(to himself)
Fuck.

As Meghan sits up, Skizz's reflex is to take an offensive posture with the bat, but Meghan puts up her hand with a "wait" gesture. She stands up shakily and finds a trash can on its side to sit on.

MEGHAN
Can I go?  You've got nothing with me.
It's Marko he's pissed at.

SKIZZ
Max'll be back in a few minutes.

MEGHAN
Left you to babysit?

SKIZZ
Fuck.  He doesn't really trust Larry.
Larry's a junkie. Max trusts me.

Skizz walks around Meghan, looking over her body.

SKIZZ (CONT’D)
Do you know why he left us alone?

MEGHAN
I don't think there's enough time.

Skizz walks over to the end of the side street and peeks onto the plaza. Seeing nothing to stop him, he puts the baseball bat down, far enough from Megan to be safe, and walks back to her.

As he walks behind Meghan, a moment of terror flashes across her face, which she quickly overcomes.

MEGHAN (CONT’D)
(with a supressed tremor)
Hmmmmm--

Skizz puts his hands on Meghan's ass, then runs them up and forward to her breasts.
He moves his hands down, but Meghan tugs his arm, and he moves around her until he is in front of her with his hands again on her ass.

Skizz leans in to kiss Meghan, and when he does, she bites his tongue hard and then kneels him in the balls.

He falls backwards, clutching his groin.

SKIZZ

Fuck!

Skizz stumbles to his feet, and backs away from Meghan.

SKIZZ (CONT’D)

Ugly whore!

(to himself)

Not fucking worth it.

Skizz takes a few steps back toward the plaza, as if to leave, then picks the baseball bat off the ground, and walks off, leaving Meghan alone.

Meghan takes a few moments to compose herself and walks cautiously back toward the plaza. Hugging close to the wall of a building to avoid being seen, she peers into the plaza. The plaza is quiet, Max and his gang are nowhere to be seen, and neither is Marko.

Meghan hears the clunk of a door shutting and sees Tuco locking up the front door on the bar. Meghan glances again to make sure no one else is in the plaza, and then stumbles into the plaza.

EXT. PLAZA -- NIGHT

After locking the door, Tuco rolls down a metal security grate over the bar's only window and latches it closed with a padlock. After he double-checks the padlock and the door lock, he turns to leave and sees Meghan stumbling toward him, roughed up and bleeding.

Tuco looks away, then back towards Meghan. Another moment, and he finally walks toward Meghan.

TUCO

Max?

Meghan nods.

TUCO (CONT’D)

Where's your boyfriend?
MEGHAN
I don't know.

Tuco shakes his head.

TUCO
This is the kind of shit--

He looks away again, as if trying to find a way out.

MEGHAN
Don't worry. I don't need your help.

TUCO
It's not that. Max is, well, volatile. You should get indoors. I can help you with that.

He gestures at her face.

MEGHAN
Some town you have here.

TUCO
It's not mine. Hasn't been for a while.

INT. TUCO'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The kitchen is a large well-made adobe room with rustic cabinets, though it has not been well maintained, and shows excessive wear.

Meghan rests against a granite counter while Tuco looks through the cabinets.

TUCO
Here you go.

Having found some peroxide and a washrag, he hands them to Meghan. The washrag is neon green with a big "Mr. Yuck" frown printed on it.

Meghan takes notice of the "Mr. Yuck."

TUCO (CONT'D)
Don't worry. It's never been used for poison. Not that I know of anyhow.

MEGHAN
Kitch like this sells well on eBay.
TUCO

Perhaps.

Tuco retreats to the opposite side of the room and sits down to observe. Meghan dabs peroxide on the rag, and wipes down her wounds.

TUCO (CONT’D)
I'm not sure who's worse, Max or you boyfriend...What's his name?

MEGHAN

Marko.

TUCO

Marko.

MEGHAN

And I don't like that term.

TUCO

What "boyfriend?"

MEGHAN

"Friend."

TUCO

What's wrong with that?

MEGHAN

He's not my friend. Never has been.

TUCO

So you're in it for, what, sex?

MEGHAN

Or other things. It's definitely not love.

TUCO

That sounds a bit mercenary.

Meghan stops cleaning her wounds and stares at Tuco.

MEGHAN

Have you ever been in love?

Tuco shrugs and nods.
MEGHAN (CONT’D)
Believe me, whoever you thought you loved, whatever torch you might still be carrying for them, it's just the same mercenary instincts. Nobody does anything for anyone else that doesn't benefit them in some way. Who's more honest?

TUCO
I'm definitely not benefitting any by helping you.

A KNOCK on the door startles both of them. Tuco stands up and motions to Meghan to hide on the other side of the refrigerator.

Tuco unbolts the latch on the door and opens it partway. In the doorway stands Max carrying his baseball bat. Behind him stand Larry and Skizz. Skizz looks down, his face roughed up.

MAX
Evening, Tuco. You're up late.

TUCO
Just trying to catch up on the books before I go to sleep.

MAX
Hmm. You got company?

TUCO
What is this, Max?

MAX
Have you seen those kids you kicked out? Either one?

TUCO
Not since I kicked you out too. You looking to apologize?

Max stretches his head inside to look around..

TUCO (CONT’D)
It's late, Max.

MAX
You sure that girl isn't in here? Her boyfriend told us she's a pro.

(MORE)
MAX (CONT'D)
You wouldn't be getting a little action?
Forgetting your vows?

TUCO
Max--

Max backs off to leave.

MAX
If I find out that you're hiding that
girl--

TUCO
Goodnight, Max.

Tuco closes the door and watches the peep hole, staying there until he hears the sound of the truck STARTING and DRIVING OFF.

TUCO (CONT'D)
He's gone.

Meghan comes out of her hiding place. Tuco trembles.

TUCO (CONT'D)
This is what I get for trying to help
someone. It doesn't pay in this town.

Tuco looks out the back windows to see if the coast is clear.

TUCO (CONT'D)
You're going to have to go. Max will be
back, and I'm too old for fights. The way
out back is clear.

MEGHAN
Can I just catch my breath for a little bit?

TUCO
It's nothing against you. I like you,
really, but I have to live in this town.
I know Max, and he'll play this out until
he wins, or someone makes him stop. I'm
not the person to stop him.

MEGHAN
Don't worry. It's not the first time
I've been abandoned. I didn't really
want the help.
Meghan puts the peroxide and rag down on the counter and walks to the back door.

    TUCO
    Yeah, well, we'll see you later.

    MEGHAN
    Probably not.

Meghan exits.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. SETH’S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Meghan sits on the edge of Seth’s platform bed, dressing. The walls are adorned with several modern abstract paintings. Meghan is criss-crossing some straps from her boots around her calf. Seth walks in adjusting his bow tie and sits across from her.

    SETH
    Remember, there'll be some important people there. Stay with me, and don’t say anything to ruffle anyone.

    MEGHAN
    I won’t say anything bad.

    SETH
    If anyone asks, you're nineteen, OK?

    MEGHAN
    You told me already.

    SETH
    And easy on the champagne when we get there.

Meghan stands up and looks at Seth.

    SETH (CONT’D)
    It’s important.

Meghan grabs a strapless dress from the bed and slides it on. She kisses Seth and sits on his lap.

    MEGHAN
    I promise to be good.
INT. PARTY HOUSE -- EVENING

Dozens of people of all ages sit and stand around the room, in conversations. Seth with his arm around Meghan’s waist enters the room. As they make their way across the room, Marko approaches them.

MARKO
Seth.

SETH
Marko.

MARKO
I’m not surprised to see you here. Who’s your friend?

SETH
This is Meghan. She’s my new special friend.

Marko takes Meghan’s hand and kisses it.

MARKO
Pleased to meet you.

MEGHAN
It's good to know I'm a "special friend."

MARKO
Very special, I'm sure.

SETH
She doesn't realize how special.

MEGHAN
I'm new in town, and Seth has taken me under his wing, so to speak.

MARKO
He's a generous guy, except when he's supposed to pay me.

Seth spies someone in the crowd.

SETH
I’ll be right back. Wait here for me.

Seth walks off in search of something. After a few moments, Marko speaks.
MARKO
How long have you known Seth?

MEGHAN
Just a couple of weeks. How do you know him?

MARKO
We work together sometimes.

MEGHAN
I’ve never seen him work.

MARKO
You get to a point where you have other people doing your work for you. That's what I'm for.

MEGHAN
What sort of work do you do for Seth?

MARKO
It’s kind of like security.

MEGHAN
Kind of?

MARKO
You don’t know what he does, do you?

MEGHAN
I’ve never asked.

MARKO
Don’t tell him I said this, but...well, you're a big girl. Do what you like, but remember to look out for yourself.

MEGHAN
What are you trying to get at?

MARKO
Seth, he...well, he uses people some times.

MEGHAN
Doesn’t everyone?

Marko pauses, surprised at the fatalism in her voice.
MARKO
Cold.
MEGHAN
What?
MARKO
You’re just...out there.
MEGHAN
Is that supposed to be a compliment?
MARKO
Yeah, mostly.

Seth walks back up to the two of them and puts his arm back around Meghan’s waist.

SETH
(to Meghan)
There’s someone I want you to meet.

MEGHAN
(to Marko)
Thanks for the advice.

MARKO
Look me up some time.

Seth and Meghan head off towards the back, away from Marko who meanders into another conversation near him.

SETH
What advice did he give you?

MEGHAN
Nothing much. He warned that you’re a cold-hearted bastard.

SETH
Really?

MEGHAN
No, but he thought it.

SETH
So you can read minds.

MEGHAN
His I can. He’s pretty transparent.
INT. PARTY HOUSE STUDY -- EVENING

Seth leads Meghan into a richly furnished study, with book cases and leather furniture. SAM WATERS, 58, stands with his back to the door looking out the picture window at the partiers congregating around the pool.

SETH
Sam, I wanted to introduce you to Meghan here.

Sam and takes both Meghan’s hands in his.

SAM
Seth has told me about you. Arriving in this town without a penny. My heart goes out to you.

MEGHAN
Thanks. Seth has been good to me.

SAM
So I understand. So I understand. And, you see, that’s what I’m here about.

MEGHAN
I don’t understand.

SAM
I’d like the opportunity to be good to you as well. To help you out.

There is a pause, as Meghan realizes the worst, and she looks to Seth.

SETH
Go on. You can’t rely on me for everything.

Sam walks to the window and draws the curtain.

MEGHAN
I...can’t.

Megan rushes out of the room, and Seth follows her.

INT. PARTY HOUSE HALLWAY -- EVENING

Outside the door to the study, Seth grabs Meghan’s arm and pulls her back to him.
SETH
You need to get back in there.

MEGANH
What were you thinking? I can’t do that.

SETH
Look at everything I gave you. I can’t afford to do that for someone who can’t pull her own weight.

MEGANH
I--

SETH
You don’t want to be back on the street do you?

MEGANH
Is that the choice?

SETH
I’m not being cold. Chances are, as a runaway, you’d have been doing this anyway within a few weeks. The difference is on the street, you’d be doing it for fifty bucks, or a hit of crack. This way, I take care of you, and we can be together. You get nice things. You’re safe.

MEGANH
I can’t do it.

SETH
You don’t have a choice. That dress? Five hundred dollars. It’s mine. If you’re not going to work, take it off.

When Meghan does nothing and doesn’t respond, Marko grabs the dress and pulls it off her, over her head. He brandishes the dress at Meghan, then throws it at her.

SETH (CONT’D)
Now get in there.

Meghan takes the dress and hesitantly enters the study.
INT. PARTY HOUSE STUDY -- EVENING

Sam waits expectantly as Meghan enters in her underwear, holding her dress. She stands at the door, scared to enter further.

    SAM
    I’m so glad you’re back.

Sam walks to Meghan, takes the dress from her hands, and leads her into the room.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE -- NIGHT

Meghan sits on the stairs by the front door, shaken, her neck bruised, her legs shaking. The muffled SOUND of the PARTY continues in the background. Marko exits the house and sits down beside Meghan.

    MARKO
    Sorry.

    MEGHAN
    You couldn’t have warned me?

    MARKO
    I tried.

    MEGHAN
    You could have come out and said it.

    MARKO
    Wouldn’t have made any difference. Seth likes to let us think we make decisions. Really, we’re only allowed to make the decision he wants.

    MEGHAN
    I don’t know what to do.

    MARKO
    Go along with it for now. There’s not much else to do. Look, if Seth finds us talking, it’s not going to look good. If you need anything, let me know. I’ll do what I can.

Marko gets up to leave. Meghan stands up to embrace him.

    MEGHAN
    Thank you.
Marko pulls back from Meghan’s embrace.

MARKO

Don’t tell Seth we talked.

Marko walks down the steps and leaves.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. LA MESA STREETS -- NIGHT

Meghan walks down unlit back streets. The plaza, the only part of town lit, is visible by its glow over several rooftops. The houses she passes are small old adobe homes with no sidewalks and pavement patched many times over the years.

As she approaches an intersection, Meghan pauses and checks in all directions before crossing. She walks aimlessly, circling around, keeping a few blocks from the plaza. As she walks, her expression is distracted, mouthing arguments to herself, occasionally shaking her head, or gesturing with her hands.

She turns down a deserted street, bordered on one side by an irrigation ditch. She shakes her head, and comes to a stop.

MEGHAN

No...No...I can't--

She sits down on the embankment by the ditch, and begins a stifled cry, holding back what she can. She gets herself back under control after a couple of minutes and rubs her eyes and hair to pull herself together.

Moments later she is blinded by the headlights of a truck that SCREECHES to a stop a dozen yards from where she sits. Meghan gets up and runs in the opposite direction. Someone gets out of the truck.

ALBERT

Meghan?

ALBERT, 42, steps in front of the truck illuminated by the headlights. Meghan stops.

ALBERT (CONT’D)

It's Albert. What the fuck is going on?

Albert, a densely muscular Italian with long dark hair in a pony tail, wears the remnants of a tux: no jacket, rolled-up shirt sleeves, untied bow tie hanging around his neck.
ALBERT (CONT’D)
You must be Meghan, so where's Marko?

MEGHAN
Marko got in some kind of fight with a local at the bar. Last I saw him he was getting the piss beat out of him.

ALBERT
That's nice. So you just left him?

MEGHAN
No, there were three of them.

ALBERT
So?

MEGHAN
I kicked one in the balls and hid at the bartender's for a bit.

ALBERT
Tuco?

MEGHAN
You know him?

ALBERT
I've been here before.

Albert opens the passenger door to his truck and offers the seat to Meghan. Meghan hesitates.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
Come on, I'm not lying. You want me to prove I know Marko? I was at his back when he got that scar on his chin.

Albert shows Meghan the underside of his left arm, revealing a six-inch scar that bisects the tattoo of an Italian flag.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
We were shaking down a Chinese asshole, and he decides to pull a fucking sword on us.

Meghan looks at Albert, who smirks, and shakes her head and sighs, then climbs into the truck.
ALBERT (CONT’D)
So describe the three guys I've got to deal with.

Albert puts the truck in gear and drives.

MEGHAN
One's older, looks like a biker. I guess he's the leader. One's a kid, real skinny. Third one's a skinhead.

ALBERT
Any weapons?

MEGHAN
A baseball bat is all I saw.

ALBERT
A Louisville Slugger?

MEGHAN
I don't know. Yeah, maybe.

ALBERT
Yeah, I know the guy. A real piece of work. I know where he lives. We've got surprise, but I need to hide you somewhere.

He looks at Meghan and puts his hand on her cheek in a kind gesture.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
Why aren't you still hiding at the Jew’s?

MEGHAN
He got scared and kicked me out.

ALBERT
Fuck. That mother fu**er will pay.

MEGHAN
Please, I just want to go home.

ALBERT
No one abandons my friends. And a woman--

MEGHAN
I'm sick of this, just find Marko.
ALBERT
We get the Jew first—he should be easy. Then we get Marko.

MEGHAN
I don't care about that. Can we just find Marko?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. DINER -- AFTERNOON

Meghan sits down in a booth in the back, far from the window. A WAITRESS, 42, hands a menu to Meghan, pulls a pencil out of her graying hair, and holds it ready by a pad.

WAITRESS
What can I get you to drink?

MEGHAN
Coffee please. With cream.

The waitress writes the order and walks away. Meghan looks over to another waitress, working behind the counter. The other waitress nods back at Meghan. She takes her apron off and sits down across from Meghan.

MEGHAN (CONT’D)
Cora.

CORA
What’s up, Meghan?

MEGHAN
It’s good to see you.

CORA
Come on. You act like you never get to see anyone.

MEGHAN
He doesn’t let me. I always have to sneak around.

CORA
Why would he want to do that?

MEGHAN
He doesn’t let me go anywhere, except when it’s with one of his friends.
The waitress returns with a cup of coffee and bowl of packaged creamers.

WAITRESS
Anything to eat?

MEGHAN
Maybe in a bit.

The waitress walks off.

CORA
Can’t you talk to him?

MEGHAN
It’s not like that, Cora.

CORA
Not like what?

MEGHAN
I don’t..have a say. I don’t know what he’d do if he just saw me talking to you.

CORA
How long has it been like this?

MEGHAN
Years.

CORA
You’ve got to do something.

MEGHAN
I tried telling him I wanted to leave.

CORA
What happened?

MEGHAN
I’d show you the bruises, but--

CORA
He beat you?

MEGHAN
A lot.

CORA
Why haven't you ever told me this?
MEGHAN
I don't--

CORA
Let me see.

Cora moves from the seat opposite Meghan and slides into the seat next to her.

CORA (CONT’D)
Where did he hit you?

Meghan leans forward, and pulls up the back of her shirt. Several long narrow black bruises criss-cross the small of her back.

CORA (CONT’D)
Meghan--

Meghan drops her shirt and takes a napkin from the table. She dips the napkin in a glass of water and runs it over her neck, wiping away the makeup covering what is clearly the outline of a hand--grasping her throat.

CORA (CONT’D)
Stay with me.

MEGHAN
I can't. He’s dangerous.

CORA
Can you leave town? Take a bus north?

MEGHAN
He has people all over. I just need to hide for a little bit, so he’s not looking for me. Then I can sneak out. I have a little money.

CORA
Can’t I help you at all?

MEGHAN
No.

Cora holds out her hand to Meghan, who holds her hand and squeezes.

WAITRESS
Cora, you’ve got customers.
CORA
I’ll be right there.

MEGHAN
Cora. If he comes in here looking for me, just pretend you don’t even know me.

CORA
Why didn’t you ever tell me?

MEGHAN
You don’t want to know. There was a lot worse, too.

Cora gets up and leaves Meghan to her coffee.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. TUCO'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Albert's truck SKIDS to a stop in Tuco's front yard. Tuco's lights are still on. Albert jumps out of the vehicle and bounds to the front door. Meghan reluctantly gets out of the car as Albert kicks in the door.

    ALBERT
    Where are--

INT. TUCO'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

As Albert rushes in, he is startled seeing Tuco sitting wide awake facing the door.

    ALBERT
    Well, hello.

    TUCO
    I didn't expect you.

Meghan appears at the door, and both Albert and Tuco pause to look at her.

    ALBERT
    I'm wondering if I should tell you why I'm going to beat you, or just beat you and let you wonder.

    TUCO
    Does it matter?
ALBERT

Not really.

Albert punches Tuco in the gut, then as he buckles over, throws him forward off the chair. Meghan rushes forward and puts her hands on Albert's arm.

MEGHAN

Albert, stop! I don't want this!

ALBERT

Back off!

MEGHAN

Please, I've had too much today!

ALBERT

And I care?

Albert throws her back off him. He then picks Tuco up by his shirt and his hair, and runs him head first into the wall.

Albert kicks Tuco in his stomach several times. Meghan runs into him to push him away, but his huge frame hardly budges. Unable force Albert away, Meghan throws herself in between Albert and Tuco.

MEGHAN

Get away! Stop it! I'm sick of men that think they own me and can do what they want.

ALBERT

Never get in the way of honor.

MEGHAN

It's not about honor. You all get some perverse pleasure seeing whose dick is bigger.

ALBERT

You're really not worth it. Enjoy your boyfriend there. I'm getting Marko and I'll let him decide what he wants to do, but as far as I'm concerned, you are nothing, not even an innocent bystander.

Albert storms out and slams the door behind him. Meghan listens to the SOUND of his truck accelerating away.
Meghan crawls over to Tuco who lies moaning on the floor in a fetal position, his head and nose bleeding. Meghan pulls him up so he sits up against a cabinet. Tuco's breathing evens out, and he opens his eyes and grimaces at Meghan.

Meghan sees the peroxide and rag on the counter and pulls them down. She opens the peroxide, then un-crumpled the rag. She looks at Mr. Yuck obscured by her own blood.

MEGHAN
I hope you don't mind exchanging a few fluids.

TUCCO
I might get what you got?

MEGHAN
Nothing as far as I know.

TUCCO
I know one thing you have.

MEGHAN
What's that?

Meghan dabs peroxide on the rag and cleans the wound on Tuco's head.

TUCCO
Some nice friends.

MEGHAN
Is that what you call them?

Meghan laughs, but Tuco doesn't.

TUCCO
I'm sorry.

MEGHAN
You don't owe me anything, and I don't owe you anything.

TUCCO
So you did this to prove you were better than me?

MEGHAN
Does it matter if I did?
TUCO
I don't know. I really don't.

Tuco pauses for a few moments to allow Meghan to keep cleaning his wounds. A few times he starts to say something and then stops.

TUCO (CONT'D)
In that guest house around back, I had a tenant. This was a couple of years back. I was married back then, too. I put her and her husband up for free back there. She was a sweet girl. She treated me like a father, and I tried to help her whenever I could. Her husband was a good-for-nothing, never worked, never did anything. He also spend more time in other beds than in hers. But she was an innocent, and she completely loved him. I wanted to help Megan--her name was Megan too.

Tuco pauses in his story.

MEGHAN
What does this have to do with anything?

TUCO
Everything I did I thought was helping her, but after she was killed, and after my wife left me, I did a lot of thinking. Actually I've thought of little else for the last two years. I realized that while I thought I was helping, everything I did to help actually helped lead to her death. I really don't think I want to help anyone anymore.

MEGHAN
You can't get away from that. It's cause and effect.

TUCO
I'm cursed. Your friends are turning against you because of me.

MEGHAN
I wouldn't worry too much about Marko and his friends. They just like to play at being tough guys. At worst they might kick me around a bit and torch your bar.
TUCO
If only I was so lucky.

MEGHAN
That doesn't sound lucky.

TUCO
I've wanted to do that for the last two years. That bar's a dead weight. It's a rut I've been stuck in.

MEGHAN
Why don't you leave?

TUCO
Sometimes you need a high-voltage shock to get out of the rut.

Meghan stands up and holds her hand out to Tuco. He grabs it and she pulls him to his feet and helps him into a chair. She then hands him the bloody Mr. Yuck rag.

MEGHAN
It's got both of our blood on it.

Tuco takes the rag from Meghan and looks at the green and bloody red Mr. Yuck.

MEGHAN (CONT’D)
What you did...well, I can't really fault you. I probably wouldn't have done much different.

TUCO
That's beside the point. I really shouldn't have.

MEGHAN
Perhaps. I learned a long time ago not to expect anything from anyone. I left home when I was young. I've survived, and I've never expected anyone to take care of me.

TUCO
If everyone in your life abandoned you, I should have been the first not to.
Meghan looks at Tuco for a moment, and a smile warms over her face.

    TUCO (CONT’D)  
    You're welcome to hide here until this  
    blows over.

Meghan smiles and kisses Tuco lightly.

    MEGHAN  
    Thank you, but I need to get to the bus  
    stop to catch the first bus.

    TUCO  
    Which one?

    MEGHAN  
    I don't know.

    TUCO  
    At least let me walk you there.

Meghan helps Tuco stand up.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Meghan lies sleeping in the back row of an old movie theater. The theater is almost empty. In the final scene of the movie Vanishing Point, the protagonist, driving a Dodge Charger drives headlong into the front of a bulldozer exploding himself in his car.

The lights come up, and Megan stirs but remains in her seat. When the film has run out, the light are turned up all the way, and a theater employee, FREDDY, 19, enters to pick up trash. Meghan watches him as he begins at the front of the theater and works his way back, dragging a rolling trashcan behind him. He looks up every now and again at Meghan.

When he gets to the back of the theater, he calls out to Meghan.

    FREDDY  
    We’re closing up now. You’ll have to  
    leave.

    MEGHAN  
    I know, I’m just putting it off. Do you  
    have any later shows?
FREDDY
No, this was the last one.

MEGHAN
Too bad.

FREDDY
You sound like you don’t want to go home.

MEGHAN
It must be fun working at a movie theater.

FREDDY
Sometimes. Sometimes it sucks.

MEGHAN
Do you get to work with the film up there?

She motions at the projection booth.

FREDDY
Nah, they have a projectionist for that.

MEGHAN
Wouldn’t you rather work up there, where you get to be the one that runs it all?

FREDDY
Not really. All the girls are down here.

He leers at Meghan.

MEGHAN
Suit yourself.

Megan gets up and walks out.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

As she walks down the street, there are only a few people out. She passes three drunk college kids. She keeps going, next passing a couple holding hands. She sees a well-dressed middle-aged man. He is walking slowly, and stopping every few paces and looking around.

Megan walks up to him.
MEGHAN
You’re out late, alone. What’s your name?

NATE
Nate. You?

MEGHAN
Meghan. Are you looking for someone?

NATE
Oh, no one in particular?

MEGHAN
So just someone in general?

NATE
Something like that.

MEGHAN
You seem out of place around here.

NATE
No more than you.

MEGHAN
You want to maybe take me back to familiar surroundings?

NATE
You’ve got the wrong idea.

MEGHAN
It seemed like a good idea.

NATE
Yeah, but you’re not my type.

MEGHAN
What is your type?

NATE
Nice pecs, testicles. You know the sort.

MEGHAN
Sorry.

She walks on.
EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

Megan sits on the ground in a unlit alley. She has some cash out, counting it. She only has twenty-eight dollars, which she puts back into her purse. She looks at the sky and stares at the hairline crescent of the moon.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. LA MESA STREETS -- DAWN

In the early dawn light the town has a peaceful blueish cast. Tuco, now mostly recovered from his beating, walks Meghan to the bus stop.

In this light with her clothes worn from the night's altercations and her makeup long gone, she now looks older.

MEGHAN
Albert seemed to know you.

TUCO
It's been a while. Maybe ten years. He was trying to run away with this girl, but no one wanted him to. He came to the bar with her. His friend tried to stop him. They left the bar, so I didn't see what happened next, but it was out in the middle of the plaza. I heard a gun fired. I heard the shots. He was trying to protect her, but he accidentally shot her. Since then he's gone down hill. Before that I think he wasn't too bad, though he worked with some dealers. How'd you come to know him?

MEGHAN
He was Marko's friend. They used to work together.

TUCO
Is Marko in of some sort of organized crime?

MEGHAN
He was too lazy or too careless. I doubt Marko had the skill for anything else, except maybe a gigolo.
They continue walking to the bus stop. As they turn a corner, Meghan freezes. Max stands, leaning on his baseball bat, at the opposite end of the block they just turned onto. Max swings around, pivoting on his bat, and makes eye contact with Meghan but remains standing where he is. Meghan grabs Tuco's shoulder.

MEGHAN
Where?

Tuco doesn't take his eyes off Max.

MEGHAN
Come on.

TUCCO
Go back the way we came a half block. There's an alley. It's blocked at the other end, but the second to the last door on the left is to a derelict building. Go through there, then two blocks.

MEGHAN
Come on.

TUCCO
No. I'll keep him busy.

MEGHAN
Don't. Not for me.

TUCCO
Not for you. For me.

Meghan kisses Tuco again.

TUCCO (CONT'D)
He drinks at my bar every day. He can't kill me because he'd have nowhere to drink. Go on.

Meghan turns and runs back in the direction they came. She pauses for one last look at Tuco, then turns to look at Max, who still has not moved. Max, a little roughed over, limps toward Tuco.
BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. ALLEY -- MORNING

Meghan wakes up in the alley to the NOISE of the morning crowds on the street. She gets up, brushes herself off and walks toward the street. Before she gets there, CHET, 30, a large-muscled man in a tight black t-shirt, steps into the alley from the street. Recognizing him, Meghan stops and look behind her.

CHET
Don’t do it, Meghan.

Chet starts toward Meghan.

CHET (CONT’D)
At best, it might buy you five minutes.

Meghan backs up as Chet approaches, but she doesn’t run.

CHET (CONT’D)
There's someone at the other end of the alley. Just come on with me. Seth wants to see you.

Chet reaches Meghan and gently but firmly grabs her upper arm. He leads her to the street, where Seth’s Mercedes is parked. Chet opens the back door and guides Meghan into the seat next to Seth, who waits inside, closing the door behind her.

He then gets into the driver seat.

INT. SETH’S CAR -- MORNING

The car drives off, and for a few moments no one speaks.

MEGHAN
Seth, I’m--

Seth holds his finger to his lips.

SETH
Shhh.

He pats her on the knee and returns to silence.
INT. SETH’S WAREHOUSE -- MORNING

When the Mercedes pulls into the warehouse, Marko is there, waiting. When Seth gets out of the car, Marko walks up to him.

MARKO
Seth, I thought you said you have a job today. I’ve been here an hour.

Marko stops when he sees Meghan, shaking with fear and disheveled from her night, get out the other side.

SETH
Sorry. Something came up.

Chet again grabs Meghan’s arm and walks her around the car.

SETH (CONT’D)
Can you hang back for a minute until I take care of this?

MARKO
Sure.

Marko turns and walks back to where he’s been waiting. Seth turns back to Meghan, approaching him in Chet’s custody and hits her brutally across the cheek, knocking her to the ground.

Marko stops and looks back at what is happening, unsure what to do. Meghan, stumbling to her knees, looks at Marko for help, but he does nothing.

SETH
What the fuck were you thinking? No two weeks' notice? You’re going to get a bad reference.

He hits her again violently across the face, and she falls to the ground.

SETH (CONT’D)
Do you know how much money I’ve spent on you?

He sits down next to her as she struggles, unable to get off the ground.
SETH (CONT’D)
I keep track of it. Really. You can’t leave until the ledger’s balanced. You haven’t even tried to pay me off.

Seth stands up and motions to Chet, who approaches him and hands him a buck knife. Seth gently puts his hand on Meghan’s head and strokes her hair, then grabs her long blonde hair in his fist and drags her to her feet.

He drags her, barely able to stand, and throws her against the hood of his car, gripping her hair.

Seth holds her fast against the hood, and with the buck knife, he cuts off her hair, and throws it on the hood of the car. In front of her.

SETH (CONT’D)
Samson gets back at Delilah?

He releases her, and she slides off the hood onto the ground, crying. Seth looks around at the spectators. Chet stands unmoved. Marko looks on, stunned, but hasn’t moved.

Seth laughs to himself for a moment. He squats down next to Meghan and brushes what’s left of Meghan’s hair from her eyes.

SETH (CONT’D)
Do you think that’s enough to remind your of you debts?

He slides the side of her shirt up a little to reveal Meghan’s naked waist. He flashes the knife at Meghan.

SETH (CONT’D)
Maybe a little brand might remind you. Just a small scar. Nothing to turn the guys off.

Seth stops when Marko, returned to his senses, puts his hand on his shoulder.

SETH (CONT’D)
I said to wait until I was done.

MARKO
It’s about this. One minute.

Seth stands up, and Marko leads him out of earshot of Meghan. Meghan watches them talk quietly for several minute.
They are deep in conversation, but talking calmly. As she watches them, Meghan manages to sit up and pull her shirt down over her waist.

After they seem to have come to an agreement, Seth stays put, and Marko walks back to Meghan. He holds his hand out to Meghan.

    MARKO (CONT’D)
    I’ve interceded.

Realizing that she has no alternative, Meghan takes his hand.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. BUS STOP -- DAWN

The bus stop is just an overhead roof with the town name "La Mesa" on it, a bench, a poster board with bus times, and no attendant.

The road in front continues straight in opposite directions with a pull-off for the bus to wait.

The station is empty when Meghan arrives. First, she checks the bus schedule, and looks at her watch. She looks at the main road that she arrived on. Looking to the south she sees mountains in the far distance. She looks northward along the road and sees flat empty road that stretches to the horizon.

Meghan returns to the overhang, sits on the bench, pulls her knees to her chest, and waits for the bus. She is tired from being up all night and closes her eyes for a few moments.

She opens her eyes in time to see Albert drive up in his truck with Marko in the passenger seat, badly beaten, but with a triumphant smile.

Marko gets out of the truck, carrying Max's Louisville Slugger. He holds the door open for Meghan.

    MARKO
    Get in.

Meghan tightens into ball.

    MEGHAN
    No.

    MARKO
    There isn't time for that. We'll talk, but get in.
MEGHAN
No. I'm done. I'm tired.

MARKO
What the fuck? This all happened because of you. I took this beating for nothing?

MEGHAN
You didn't do it for me.

MARKO
Like hell I didn't. Ungrateful bitch. I'm on the run for you.

Albert, who has silently exited the truck, sneaks behind Meghan and grabs her. He forces her over to Marko, holding both her arms behind her with one arm, and grabbing her hair from behind, holding her head with the other.

Marko, brandishing Max's bat, gets in very close to Meghan. He caresses Meghan's face with the bat. He runs the end of the bat down her neck, between her breasts and down to her belly.

ALBERT
What do you want to do, man?

Marko thrusts the end of the bat between Meghan's legs. Meghan gasps, but Marko stops and laughs.

MARKO
Fuck her. She's just a street whore.

Marko walks back to the passenger side of the truck.

MARKO (CONT’D)
Let's go.

He throws the baseball bat on the ground, steps into the truck and closes the door. Albert throws Meghan down on the ground.

ALBERT
(to Meghan)
Really? What do you charge?

He laughs and walks back to his truck.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
Where to?

MARKO
Your place. I need to clean up.
The truck drives off to the south towards the mountains.

Meghan gets up and brushes herself off and looks at her watch. She steps towards the street and looks towards the mountains. As the truck speeds away, she sees it pass the morning bus coming the other way.

Meghan steps back as the bus pulls in and comes to a stop. The door opens and the bus driver steps out.

    BUS DRIVER
    Good morning.

Meghan nods.

    MEGHAN
    You early?

    BUS DRIVER
    A bit.

    MEGHAN
    When do you leave?

The bus driver looks at his watch.

    BUS DRIVER
    Fifteen minutes.

The bus driver steps away from the bus and lights up a cigarette. Meghan looks at him, then at the baseball bat a few yards away.

    MEGHAN
    I got to run do something before you leave. Can I pay you for the ticket now?

    BUS DRIVER
    Sure, but don't be late.

    MEGHAN
    How much is a ticket?

    BUS DRIVER
    Where you going?

    MEGHAN
    How far do you go?

    BUS DRIVER
    This line runs as far as Boise.
MEGHAN
That sounds good.

BUS DRIVER
Sixty five.

Meghan pulls out some cash and pays the driver. He marks a ticket book and gives her a ticket.

BUS DRIVER (CONT’D)
Fifteen minutes.

MEGHAN
Yeah, no problem. Hey, can I bum a cigarette?

The bus driver pulls out a cigarette and hands it to Meghan. She takes it and lets the bus driver light it for her.

MEGHAN (CONT’D)
Thanks.

Meghan grabs the baseball bat and runs off.

EXT. PLAZA -- MORNING

Meghan arrives at the plaza in the full morning light. The plaza is still quiet with no one stirring. Meghan looks at the bar. In the light of day it is more clearly run down. Meghan runs around the side of the building.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. MARKO’S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Meghan, her hair carefully trimmed, but still short, wakes up to the sound of Marko’s electric razor. He's dressing and counting through the items in his pocket.

MEGHAN
Where are you going?

MARKO
I’ve got work to do. I’ll probably be back this afternoon.

MEGHAN
It’s Sunday morning.
MARKO
Yeah, well.

MEGHAN
Can you at least tell me where you’re going?

MARKO
Don’t ask, don’t tell, baby.

He kisses her on the forehead.

MEGHAN
Are you still working for that asshole?

MARKO
It’s not really your business.

MEGHAN
He was going to fucking kill me. I want you to stop working for him.

MARKO
Believe me. If I could, I would.

MEGHAN
You can. I can find some work to help out. You can find some other work.

MARKO
That wouldn’t be enough for him.

MEGHAN
You’re such a baby around him. Just tell him you’re getting out.

MARKO
But I owe him. Just drop it.

MEGHAN
I don’t believe this. I won’t drop it. I don’t ask for much, but I’m asking for this. Don’t you see how fucked up this is? If you really cared, you'd quit.

MARKO
Look. I’m doing this for you. I’m in-fucking-debted to this guy because of you. I’ll be paying off that stupid idea for a while.
Marko grabs a jacket, and stands by the door.

MARKO (CONT’D)
You think he just let you go? Nothing for nothing?

Marko SLAMS the door on his way out.

Meghan remains still for a few moments letting that sink in, then she open the bottom drawer of Marko’s dresser, and from among his pants, she pulls out a small handgun. She EJECTS the magazine, and looks to see that there are bullets inside, then puts the magazine back inside the gun.

EXT. SETH’S WAREHOUSE -- MORNING

Meghan, dressed in Dickies approaches the gaping open bay doors. She peers inside, trying to remain concealed. Inside, she sees Seth pacing and smoking a cigarette. He is alone.

Meghan CHAMBERS a round in the pistol as quietly as she can. Nervous and surprised at the spring tension, she doesn’t pull the slide back far enough the first time. She tries a second time, and this time the hammer stays back. Carefully, she slides the safety off.

Meghan gets up and walks into the warehouse.

INT. SETH’S WAREHOUSE -- MORNING

Inside the warehouse, Seth’s back is towards Meghan. Meghan covers half the distance to him, when he turns around and sees her coming towards him with the gun out.

When he sees her, Meghan freezes and aims the gun. Nothing happens for a moment as she tries to bring herself to pull the trigger. In her tense moment, a scream boils up as she tenses, closes her eyes and pulls the trigger.

MEGHAN
Aieeee!

The SHOT and kick startle her eyes back open in time to see Seth crumple to the floor as the bullet hits his right thigh. His cigarette flies out of his mouth and lands near a rack of tools and a pile of red shop rags.

SETH
Fuck!
With his good leg, Seth tries to push himself towards his car. Meghan walks closer to Seth, until she is about five feet away. She holds the gun out again and tries to aim for his chest.

She stands there unable to pull the trigger. At that moment, Marko runs into the warehouse carrying a bag of fast-food breakfast in one hand and a disposable tray with two coffees in the other. He freezes when he sees Meghan standing over Seth with the gun out.

Marko drops the food and rushes to Meghan.

MARKO
What--?

MEGHAN
I can’t do it.

SETH
Of course you can’t. Marko, give me that fucking gun.

Marko takes the gun out of Meghan’s hands.

MARKO
Sorry, Seth, we’re out of here.

SETH
Now you’re fucked too.

MARKO
I was screwed when I decided to play good guy for once.

Marko leads Meghan, shaking as she walks, over to the pile of rags. He grabs a rag, ejects the magazine, and wipes it down and throws it so it skids under some shelving. Then he ejects the bullet in the chamber, and wipes down the gun, and throws it in the opposite direction.

MARKO (CONT’D)
Come on. Let’s go.

He walks out, but Meghan stays where she is.

SETH
Fuck, don’t you leave.

MARKO
Calm down. You’ll live. I call 911.
Marko begins to walk away again. Meghan pauses, then picks up the cigarette lying near the rags, and throws it on the pile of rags and walks out after Marko. As she leaves, the rags catch fire.

EXT. SETH’S WAREHOUSE -- MORNING

Marko walks fast and Meghan struggles to keep up with him.

MARKO

MEGHAN
You didn’t have the balls to do anything.

MARKO
Neither did you.

MEGHAN
What are we going to do?

MARKO
Go home.  Grab some cash, then get the hell out of Dodge.

MEGHAN
Where?

MARKO
I got a friend that might be able to help.

MEGHAN
Where?

MARKO
Middle of nowhere.  We’ll have to take a bus.

Behind them the smoke of the fire billows over the roof tops.

END FLASHBACK:

EXT. EL CHINGON BAR REAR -- MORNING

The back of the bar is filled with files of junk and refuse. Meghan looks around poking at what is there. She overturns several items until she finds a can of kerosene.
She picks up the kerosene, shakes it, and hears the SPLASHING inside. She looks around a little more and notices a barrel of waste oil.

Meghan uses the baseball bat to SMASH several windows and BEAT in the rear pantry door. She KICKS over the oil barrel into the open door spilling oil into the building.

She then takes the kerosene and SPLASHES it over the back wall of the building. She throws the baseball bat into the pantry and takes the cigarette out of her mouth, lights the kerosene and stands back.

She watches at the kerosene burns and spreads to the oil. In a few moments the fire covers the entire back wall. She hears the SOUND of the church bell TOLLING for morning mass, and looks at her watch. She runs off toward the bus stop.

EXT. BUS STOP -- MORNING

As Meghan approaches the bus station, running, she sees the bus driver standing on lowest step of the bus looking around and looking at his watch.

    BUS DRIVER
    Fifteen minutes.

    MEGHAN
    Sorry.

    BUS DRIVER
    Get in.

Meghan boards the empty bus and walks toward the back. The bus driver closes the bus doors. The bus pulls onto the road and drives north into the flat empty landscape as Meghan curls up on the back seat to get some sleep. Behind her the smoke rises over the buildings.

    FADE OUT.
Running Away
by
Geof Abruzzi
FADE IN:

INT. JUAREZ DRUG DEALER APARTMENT -- DAY

ALBERT FRANCO, 38, an unusually large and muscular man in worn jeans and T-shirt, his straight hair in a ponytail, stands with his back to the wall of a dimly lit living room. Movie and football posters, all in Spanish, adorn the walls like a college dorm room. Albert watches over his friend, FRANCISCO GALVAN, 62.

Francisco argues with LUIS, 27, a young Mexican man wearing a soccer shirt and flipped up sunglasses. Another young man, ANDREAS, 22, oblivious to the discussion, sits on a ratty hand-me-down sofa, intently watching football on TV.

    LUIS
    I don’t usually sell that much at a time.

    FRANCISCO
    Well, we do have a little habit.

    LUIS
    That’s not what I meant.

    FRANCISCO
    Then what? This is perfect for you. You don’t even have to get it across the border.

    LUIS
    You’re not planning on selling any of this are you?

    FRANCISCO
    I might sell a baggie to my cousin, but no way am I going to get mixed up in that.

Andreas fast forwards through some boring bits of the game.

    LUIS
    That’s a lot of weed you’re asking for.

    FRANCISCO
    Hey, we like to smoke.

    LUIS
    You and him?
FRANCISCO
Me and Albert and our roommates--Mac and Freddy.

LUIS
OK, but if I find out you’re selling, we will find you. Even if you’re on the other side.

ANDREAS
(Jumping to his feet)
Gooaaaal!

Albert starts, and takes a step forward, but relaxes when Andreas falls back onto the couch.

FRANCISCO
No problemo, dude.

Luis unlocks a filing cabinet and pulls out two shrink-wrapped bricks of marijuana, and puts them on the table. Francisco puts some money on top of the bricks, which Luis counts and puts into a cashbox in the cabinet.

Albert takes the two blocks of pot and puts one on each side of a pair of small saddle bags.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
Gracias.

LUIS
Si, gracias, pendejo.

EXT. JUAREZ STREET -- EL CENTRO -- DAY

SHEP, 10, a scraggy scrawny dog of indeterminate breed waits tied up to a pole on the sidewalk. The neighborhood is empty and run down. In the distance the Plaza de Toros is visible.

Francisco and Albert exit a doorway nearby and approach Shep. She barks once and wags her tail when she sees them. Albert pets Shep, then straps the small saddlebags around her abdomen. He then pulls a handful of fake fur from his a satchel, and lays it over Shep’s back.

He ties off the fur, which now conceals the bag, pulls a comb from his pocket, and brushes the fake fur together with the real fur to make it more convincing.
Finally he takes a harness sitting against the pole, and attaches it to Shep, over the top of the hidden bags.

He disconnects Shep from the pole and hands the harness to Francisco. Francisco takes it, throws a lanyard around his neck with some IDs on it, and puts on some dark glasses. He looks himself and Shep over for any tells.

FRANCISCO
Ready, pendejo?

Albert nods, and they walk towards the border bridge.

INT. US BORDER CHECKPOINT -- DAY

Francisco, with Shep at his side, and Albert wait, next in line, at the checkpoint. Off to the side is a Border Patrol agent with a K9 dog. The dog WHINES and BARKS at the three. Shep BARKS back.

Both Francisco and the K9 handling agent try to get their dogs back in line. A CROSSING AGENT, 56, looking like ex-military with a graying flat top haircut and a growing gut, calls to them.

CROSSING AGENT
Next!

Albert and Francisco approach the agent with Shep guiding Francisco, who stares straight ahead trying not look in any direction.

CROSSING AGENT (CONT’D)
US Citizens?

ALBERT
Yeah.

CROSSING AGENT
What was your business in Mexico?

ALBERT
He’s got a fiancée in Mexico we were visiting.

CROSSING AGENT
Not another one.

(beat)

ID’s.
Albert hands his ID to the guard, then takes the lanyard from Francisco’s neck and shows it to the guard.

Shep BARKS, and the K9 dog, still WHIMPERING, BARKS back.

    CROSSING AGENT (CONT’D)
    Can you quiet that thing?

    FRANCISCO
    Sorry, she’s in heat--I think she likes your dog.

The agent eyes Francisco suspiciously. He looks down at Shep, now sitting patiently.

    CROSSING AGENT
    Fine.

He hands the IDs back to Albert and waves them through.

    FRANCISCO
    Thank you, sir.

At a light twist of the harness, Shep stands back up and moves forward. She gives one last BARK as the three walk out of the building to the American side.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- EVENING

Later that evening, Albert and Francisco are in the El Chingon bar. Still playing muscle, Albert surveys the room from the bar, watching as Francisco talks with a couple of guys.

CINDY, 39, sits at the bar, a few stools from Albert. She is overdressed for a seedy bar, with a black gown and gold belt. As Albert surveys the room, his eyes meet Cindy’s. He pauses a moment, then looks away uncomfortably.

A bit drunk, Cindy, hops over to the stool next to Albert.

    CINDY
    You’re not a talker?

    ALBERT
    Hmmmm?

    CINDY
    You’ve been sitting there for ten minutes and haven’t said one word to one person.
ALBERT
I don’t like talking to people.

CINDY
Come on, what’s it going to hurt?

ALBERT
What do you want me to say?

CINDY
Whatever you want.

ALBERT
What if I don’t want to say anything?

CINDY
Start with your name. Then ask me a question.

ALBERT
Albert.

CINDY
Albert, ask me a question.

ALBERT
I can’t think of anything.

Cindy notices Albert is still focused on Francisco, who sits at a different table now.

CINDY
That your friend?

ALBERT
Yeah.

CINDY
He looks a lot older than you.

ALBERT
Yeah. Kind of my foster dad.

CINDY
Your parents are gone?

ALBERT
Yeah.

Francisco returns to the bar.
FRANCISCO
We’re done here.

Francisco notices Cindy talking to Albert.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
(to Albert)
Who is this?

ALBERT
No one. She’s just talking.

CINDY
My name’s Cindy. We were just having a conversation, if it’s OK with you.

FRANCISCO
No, I don’t think it’s OK. Why are you talking to him?

CINDY
What’s the problem? It’s a free country.

FRANCISCO
Not here it ain’t. What are you after?

ALBERT
She’s not after anything. She was just making small talk.

FRANCISCO
You don’t know that.

CINDY
Fine. I’m out of here.
(to Albert)
You might want to find a new friend. You’ll never get laid with him around.

She takes her drink and walks off to another table.

Francisco flags down the bartender, DAVID “TUCO” PERETZ, 45, a Jewish emigre to the southwest. His one-week stubble partially obscures a scar on his chin. A forearm tattoo indicates he was once in the Navy.

FRANCISCO
(in a bad gringo accent)
Dos cervecas por favor.
TUCO
Funny. What kind?

FRANCISCO
Coronas. With Lime.

Gone for a moment, Tuco comes back with two Coronas and sets them down in front of Francisco, who puts down a Ten.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
Keep the change.

Francisco takes the beers and gives one to Albert.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
You have to watch out for women like that.

ALBERT
Why? She wasn’t doing anything.

FRANCISCO
Women like that can be a very costly mistake. Probably the most expensive mistake a man can make.

ALBERT
Like what?

FRANCISCO
She’s a predator.

ALBERT
I don’t believe you.

FRANCISCO
You should. The first night’s a freebie. After that, it’s all barter. Drugs, booze, money--always some angle. You have to watch out for that.

ALBERT
(to himself)
Right.

FRANCISCO
What’s that?
ALBERT
I haven’t seen you with a woman in a long time.

FRANCISCO
You trust too easily, Albert. That’s what women sense. You need to learn to withhold your trust.

ALBERT
What makes you an expert?

FRANCISCO
Your mother did.

Albert doesn’t know how to process Francisco’s response.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
Look, I’m sorry, but it’s true.

They finish their beers in silence. Francisco gets up to leave.

ALBERT
I’m going to stay a while.

FRANCISCO
You want to put aside your portion of what’s left?

ALBERT
Yeah.

FRANCISCO
Remember what I said.

ALBERT
Yeah.

FRANCISCO
Promise?

ALBERT
Promise.

Francisco hugs Albert, then leaves the bar. Albert turns around, back to the bar, and surveys the room. There are a little over a dozen other people in the bar, scattered between four or five tables. Cindy seems to be gone.

Albert turns back to the bar and waves down Tuco.
Albert puts a five on the bar, and then chugs what remains of his beer. A few moments later Tuco returns with the beer and exchanges it for the money. He takes up the second beer which he begins to drink more slowly.

Turning back he again surveys the people in the bar. His eye stops on a woman sitting at a table with three men dressed in tight wranglers and stetsons.

The woman, KARI, 32, talks to one of the men, and keeps putting her hand on his shoulder and back as she laughs. The men seem less interested in her, and they sit facing each other, not Kari.

Briefly, as Albert watches her, Kari looks up and meets his gaze. Albert looks away and turns back towards the bar.

Albert flags Tuco again and gestures at his now-empty bottle. Tuco returns with another beer and takes the money Albert left at the table.

Albert drinks half of his beer, when one of the Cowboys walks up to the bar and stands there waiting for Tuco. Albert steals a glance at the man as he waits. As Tuco approaches, he hands the man a bill.

The man looks the bill over, then puts the bill down, and points to something on it.

COWBOY
These three aren’t our’s. They’re that lady’s.

TUCO
She’s not with you?

COWBOY
No, she just sat down with us. We tried to ignore her, but she didn’t take the hint.

TUCO
Shit. She walked in with you guys.
COWBOY
Coincidence.

Tuco recalculates the bill, which he sets back on the bar. The man looks it over, throws some money on the bar, and walks away.

Albert returns to his beer for a few moments, until he sees Kari walk up next to him and puts her purse on the counter. She looks at Albert and smiles. Tuco puts a bill down in front of Kari, and Kari pulls out a wallet. She rustles through pockets of her wallet.

KARI
It’s not here. I had a twenty in here, but it’s missing.

She turns to Albert.

KARI (CONT’D)
You didn’t see anyone going through my purse when I stepped out, did you?

ALBERT
I didn’t see anything.

TUCO
You tried that one last week. If you’ve got money in there, cough it up.

KARI
(to Albert)
The bartender here doesn’t like me. He doesn’t believe that my money disappeared.

TUCO
That’s because you’re holding out, or you never had it. I let you slide last week, but not a second time. Let me see that.

Tuco reaches to grab Kari’s purse, but Albert grabs his wrist without looking at him. Instead he smiles at Kari.

ALBERT
She said she lost the money.

TUCO
You don’t want to get in the middle of this, man. She’s just a scammer looking for a mark.
ALBERT
She lost the money. Leave it.

Without releasing Tuco’s wrist, Albert uses his free hand to remove his wallet, pull out a twenty, and throw it on the bar.

Tuco takes the money. Returning his wallet to his pocket, Albert releases Tuco’s wrist.

TUCO
(to Kari)
Don’t come back here.

EXT. LA MESA PLAZA -- EVENING

Albert exits the bar into the central plaza of the town of La Mesa. Cobblestone bricks line the streets, and at the far end, opposite the bar is an old Catholic church. Lit with floodlights from the outside, the church dominates the plaza.

Albert walks to his truck on a nearby side street. Kari rushes out of the bar after Albert, putting on a jacket, as she tries to keep up with Albert.

KARI
Thanks in there.

ALBERT
It was nothing.

KARI
Not to me.

Kari grabs Albert’s arm, stopping him, and turns him toward her.

KARI (CONT’D)
It’s not the money. It’s that you stood up for me.

ALBERT
You’re welcome.

Uncomfortable, he turns back to the direction he was walking and starts off again. Kari holds on to his arm and follows him.

KARI
What’s your name?

ALBERT
Albert.
KARI
You the strong silent type, huh?

ALBERT
I guess so.

KARI
My name’s Kari.

ALBERT
Carrie?

KARI
No CAR-EE. It’s Swedish. My dad was a Swede.

ALBERT
You’re not blonde.

KARI
Not all Swedes are blond.

ALBERT
How’d you get here?

KARI
I was born here. He’d already emigrated before I was born. Are you from here?

ALBERT
Sort of.

KARI
What’s that mean?

ALBERT
Not this town, but lots of others around here.

They arrive at Albert’s truck. He opens the door, and is about to get in.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
It was nice to meet you.

KARI
Yeah. Maybe I’ll see you around.

ALBERT
Maybe.
After an uncomfortable pause, as Kari continues to hold Albert’s arm, she reaches up and kisses him.

KARI
Maybe I can come home with you?

Before Albert can respond she kisses him again.

INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Albert’s sparse bedroom has only a bed and a dresser, and no decoration or ornaments. Kari and Albert lie in the bed, sweaty from making love. Kari is curled up, semi-fetal with a pillow and seems to be asleep. Albert is wide awake.

ALBERT
I’m sorry I keep talking. I haven’t had many girlfriends. Just one really. You don’t seem to be much like her.

He rolls over to Kari, who stirs.

KARI
Let’s sleep. You wore me out.

ALBERT
I’m just not tired. I’m sorry. I’m a light sleeper anyway. Anything wakes me. When you asked before, I grew up on the streets. I wandered from town to town in this area. Francisco took me in. Like a father.

KARI
Shhh. You’re not on the streets any more. You’re safe with me.

She strokes Albert’s hair and kisses him lightly.

INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Albert and Kari both sleep soundly, when a loud BANGING on the door wakes them. From the other side of the door FREDDY, 32, a skinny beanpole, yells in to Albert.

FREDDY
Come on, Albert. We have a nine o’clock. Up and at ‘em.
Albert stirs, sits up and gently shakes Kari’s shoulder to wake her. Freddy BANGS on the door again. This time he opens it a crack and sticks his head in.

    FREDDY (CONT’D)
    Nine o’clock. Oh, you’re up.

    ALBERT
    Yeah.

Freddy sees Kari.

    FREDDY
    Oh. Sorry man.

He closes the door.

Albert gets out of bed and starts dressing. Kari sits up in the bed and for a few moments watches Albert dressing.

    KARI
    Where are you going?

    ALBERT
    I’ve got to work.

Before Albert can say anymore, the door opens and Francisco stands in the doorway.

He looks solemnly at Kari, then to Albert.

    FRANCISCO
    (to Albert)
    Hurry up. We need to get moving.
    (to Kari)
    You need to leave.

    KARI
    Can I shower?

    FRANCISCO
    No. Albert needs to go, and we can’t leave you here.

    KARI
    (to Albert)
    Can I come with you?

Albert looks up to Francisco.
FRANCISCO  
No. You know that, Albert.

ALBERT  
(to Kari)  
We’ll meet up later.

Francisco holds up five fingers.

FRANCISCO  
Five minutes, Albert. We got to go in five minutes.

Francisco walks off briskly, leaving the bedroom door open. Albert walks over and closes the door.

KARI  
I don’t have anywhere to stay at the moment.

Kari gets out of bed and puts her dress back on.

ALBERT  
Don’t worry. We can meet up later--at the bar.

KARI  
When?

ALBERT  
When do you want?

KARI  
Whenever’s good, how about six?

ALBERT  
OK. I’ll be there by six. And don’t worry about Francisco. He’s like that.

Albert hesitates, then kisses Kari while she collects her things.

EXT. FREDDY’S CAR -- MORNING

Freddy drives his Chevy Impala slowly. In the passenger seat sits MAC, 48, a heavyset Hispanic man with a full goatee and salt and pepper hair, in jeans, black T-shirt, and an unbuttoned flannel shirt.

In the back seats are Albert and Francisco. Between them are several handguns.
As they ride, Albert, one by one, unloads each gun, checks the mechanics of the gun—the trigger, the slide, the safety, then reloads the gun and chambers the first round.

When completed, he puts the finished gun in a separate pile with the safety on. He is consistent, methodical, and safety conscious, always keeping the barrel pointing in a safe direction.

Francisco watches streets go by out the car window as Albert preps the guns.

**FRANCISCO**
I’m not saying you should stay away from women, but she is exactly the kind I was talking about. I’ve seen her around the bars, with lots of guys.

**ALBERT**
I’m not the smartest person, but I can look after myself. Just stop trying to run my personal life.

**FRANCISCO**
Look, we’ll find you a nice girl, one that’s not out to use you. She’s a manipulator, as sure as I’m sitting here. She’s out for herself only.

**ALBERT**
Where are you going to find a nice girl for someone like me?

The car comes to a stop in front of a suburban house.

**FRANCISCO**
You need to focus on what we’re doing right now.

**ALBERT**
I’m OK. Are you?

**FRANCISCO**
Albert.

**ALBERT**
I’m O-K.

**FRANCISCO**
OK. Let’s go.
EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE -- MORNING

All four men get out of the car. Albert leaves his door open, with the prepped guns sitting on the car seat. Each man grabs a gun from the pile. Albert takes the last one and then closes the car door.

Albert walks up to the front door of the house. The other three flank the door with their guns ready. Albert, the biggest among them, walks straight up to the door and KICKS it in, then steps back to let the other three rush in in front of him.

Albert takes his time, then follows the others in.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE -- MORNING

Inside the living room is sparsely furnished by Ikea. A clean cut man in his thirties is being zip-tied to a Danish formed plywood chair by Mac and Freddie. Francisco stands over the man with his gun drawn.

As Albert walks in, Francisco looks back at him.

FRANCISCO
Can you talk to him? He’s not listening to me.

Albert takes his jacket off and hangs it on an aluminum coat rack by the door. Proceeding slowly and deliberately, he removes his gun holster and gun, and hangs it on the rack. He stretches his arms and slides a set of brass knuckles out of his back pocket, on to his left hand.

Ready, Albert walks up to the immobilized man and looks him in the eyes.

ALBERT
(to Francisco)
I can talk to him. What do you want me to tell him?

Albert PUNCHES the man hard in the stomach.

INT. COMMON GROUNDS COFFEE SHOP -- AFTERNOON

Albert enters the coffee shop and sits alone at a table in the corner. Most of the clientele are young college kids sitting in groups of twos and threes, studying or chatting.
A waitress, ESTHER, 30, dressed in a pastiche of Goth and bubblegum pop, approaches the table.

ESTHER
Albert. Long time no see.

ALBERT
Hello, Esther.

ESTHER
What can I get you?

ALBERT
Beer and peanuts?

ESTHER
Ha ha.

ALBERT
Whatever you think is good.

ESTHER
How’ve you been, Albert?

ALBERT
I get by.

The door bell rings, distracting Esther for a moment. She turns and sees a couple of customers enter and take their seat.

ESTHER
Give me a few minutes, and I’ll get someone to cover for me.

Esther gets up to help the new customers. Albert watches her. She ducks into the kitchen and a few minutes later returns to Albert with a latte and a scone.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Here you go. Five minutes and I’ll be back.

Like a whirlwind, Esther runs off. Albert takes a sip of the latte and grimaces. He empties four packs of sugar into the latte and takes another sip. Frowning, he dumps two more packs in. Satisfied, he nibbles on the scone waiting for Esther.

He looks around at the other diners, trying to size them up. He jumps when Esther drops herself into the seat opposite him.
ESTHER (CONT’D)
Ten minutes.

She takes off her apron and places it over the back of the chair. She looks at the six opened packets of sugar, then at Albert.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Sweet enough for you?

ALBERT
What’s up with you?

ESTHER
Just finishing school this semester. I’m having my show in a couple of months. You should come.

ALBERT
I’ll try.

ESTHER
I have a painting I did for you.

ALBERT
Of what?

ESTHER
You’ll have to wait and see.

ALBERT
I don’t know that your arty friends would like me.

ESTHER
Then fuck’em. Who cares what they think. They’re mostly pricks anyway. Never think you are less than them.

ALBERT
That’s why I always liked you. You could probably make it in my business.

Albert pauses in an uncomfortable silence and Albert searches for a way to say something. Before he can, Esther interrupts.

ESTHER
How’s your mother?
ALBERT
She still calls me. She asks about you.
I don’t think she realizes we broke up, what, eight years ago?

ESTHER
Something like that. Yeah. I noticed.
She calls me sometimes, asking for you.
She keeps coming by looking for you.

ALBERT
Sorry about that.

ESTHER
What does she call you about?

ALBERT
Sometimes it’s friendly chit chat, and
she even seems awake—in her right mind.
Other times, it’s just yelling, like when
I was a kid. “Why did you do this?” “Why
didn’t you do this?” And I haven’t even
seen her in several years.

ESTHER
I’m sorry.

ALBERT
I’ve been letting the other guys answer
the phone. So I don’t have to talk to
her.

There is another silence, Albert staring at his latte as he
searches for words. Again Esther interrupts the silence.

ESTHER
You know--

ALBERT
I’ve met someone. Sorry, I didn’t mean
to interrupt.

ESTHER
That’s OK. Tell me.

ALBERT
Her name’s Kari. I met her at a bar.
Francisco says that she’s bad for me.
ESTHER
Don’t listen to him. Don’t take advice
from anyone.

ALBERT
But I need advice from you.

ESTHER
What can I do?

ALBERT
I want to make this work. I don’t want
it to end like us.

Esther pauses. When she answers, her voice is colder than before.

ESTHER
Don’t force anything. That’s the only
advice I could give. I doubt that the
same could happen. That was you and me--
completely different.

Another long silence, as Albert sips his latte. This time,
conspicuously, Esther doesn’t break the silence.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
I need to get back to work.

ALBERT
I guess I should go.

They both get up and exchange a pleasant hug.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
What do I owe?

He pulls out his wallet and fingers the cash.

ESTHER
It’s on the house.

ALBERT
Sure?

ESTHER
Yeah.

Esther turns her back to Albert and walks off as Albert stands up,
throws a couple of dollars on the table and exits.
Alberts waits in the sun. He fidgets and can’t keep still. He sits for a few moments on a bench in the plaza, but then gets up and walks under a Mexican Elder tree and leans against it in the shade.

Another few moments and he walks over to the side of the plaza near the church and peers in. He looks at his watch and then back at the relative darkness inside the church.

Albert then pulls a small black velvet jewelry box out of a pocket. He opens it and looks at the simple, inexpensive silver chain with a small engraving. He returns the chain to the box and pockets it.

Albert walks back across the plaza to the side with the bar.

He half enters the bar and looks around and sees no one he recognizes. He looks up at a clock above the bar which reads seven-forty. Tuco looks up from the bar at Albert.

Still not here. I doubt she’s coming.

That’s none of your business.

It is when you keep opening my door and letting flies in.

Without responding, Albert huffs out of the bar.

Albert walks to a bench in the plaza and sits down. The light darkens. He waits until dusk is upon him and takes the jewelry case out of his pocket, opens it, and removes the necklace. He tosses the empty case into a trash can next to the bench.

He looks closely at the necklace, studying it. Then, abruptly, he clutches the necklace into a wad in his hand and then tosses it away. The necklace hits the bricks near the center of the plaza, and skids to a stop disappearing in the cracks between the worn bricks.
He stands up and walks out of the plaza.

INT. ALBERT’S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Mac and Freddy sit in their living room on the couch playing Super Mario Brothers on the Nintendo. It is Mac’s turn, so as he plays, Freddy works on the coffee table. A big turkey-sized basting tray is filled with marijuana in large chunks. Next to it is a small scale, a pile of empty ziplocks, and a pile of ziplocks with measured amounts of marijuana in it.

Freddy takes a drag on a joint, holds it for a few seconds, exhales, then turns his attention to the job.

Freddy measures a certain weight on the scale, then brushes the drugs with the palm of his hand into an empty ziplock.

MAC

Shit!

He throws the joystick to the floor as a green monster kills his character.

MAC (CONT’D)

Your turn.

He gestures to Freddy, who slides the pot tray over to Mac, then takes up his joystick and begins to play. Mac takes a drag on Freddy’s joint and starts measuring out the marijuana.

Albert enters the room through the front door. He shuts the door a little too hard behind him. Mac looks up.

MAC (CONT’D)

He’s in a bad mood.

ALBERT

I’m not in a bad mood.

Albert walks into the open attached kitchen, opens the refrigerator, looks in for a few moments before giving up.

He moves over to the cabinets and starts rifling through them.

FREDDY

Dude, you’re always pissed.

Freddy doesn’t take his eyes from the screen as he speaks. His little Mario runs through a dungeon level grabbing coins.
MAC
That’s not true. Albert’s got a nice side too. He just has to look pissed for his job.

Mac looks back at Albert with a disingenuous grin, but Albert isn’t paying any attention. Albert finds a opened box of Pop-Tarts, inside a single opened foil pouch with a single Pop-Tart in it.

Albert takes it out, drops it into the toaster, and presses the lever. He wanders into the living room and stares at the TV screen. Freddy is going after a red and white mushroom that tries to bound away.

FREDDY
Do you want to play?

Albert looks at the screen and at the two seated, both at the moment, staring intently at what they are doing--Freddy at the video game and Mac at the pot he is divvying up.

ALBERT
No. I’m going to sleep.

MAC
It’s only nine.

ALBERT
So?

In the kitchen, the toaster ejects the Pop-Tart. Albert takes the hot Pop-Tart, and almost burning his hand, drops it on the counter. He grabs a knife, and a jar of peanut butter and spreads a dollop on the Pop-Tart. He takes a bite out of the Pop-Tart, returning the lid to the peanut butter.

Walking past Mac and Freddy, Albert enters his bedroom and closes the door behind him.

INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Albert lies on his bed, not sleeping. The bed is made, and he’s still fully dressed. The clock on his bed stand reads almost midnight. He lies there nearly motionless, but eyes wide open and awake.

At the sound of RAPPING on the window he sits up and looks out the window. Outside he sees Kari pointing at the window latch.
Albert shakes his head, trying to look angry. Kari starts to flirt through the window. She kisses the glass pane. Albert looks down, avoiding eye contact.

Seeing the effect on Albert, Kari starts to unbutton the top couple of buttons on her shirt. She then pushes her still-covered breasts against the window, moving seductively like a stripper giving a lap dance.

Albert finally opens the window

    ALBERT
    Please, don’t do that.

    KARI
    I thought you’d like it.

    ALBERT
    You stood me up.

Kari climbs through the window, and pulling her leg in behind her, she catches her foot on the window sill, and falls to the floor, despite Albert’s attempt to catch her.

On impact, she breaks into a giddy laugh, shakily gets to her feet, and sits on the side of the bed.

    KARI
    Shhhh! Sorry. My bad. Wow, I’m a little buzzed.

She removes her shoes and throws them on the floor.

    ALBERT
    You stood me up.

    KARI
    No, dear. I just couldn’t find a ride.

She kisses Albert gently. She then unbuttons the rest of her shirt and removes it.

    KARI (CONT’D)
    You didn’t think I’d blow you off on purpose. Really, I was stuck.

She leans Albert back onto the bed and kisses him again. She removes her skirt and lies down beside Albert facing him.
KARI (CONT’D)
I need to tell you something, but not tonight. I’ll tell you in the morning. We’ll talk, and then maybe go out for a great big breakfast.

INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Albert wakes up the following morning to find that Kari is already half dressed. When she sees that he is awake, she goes to him and sits on the side of the bed. She puts a hand on Albert’s chest, and he lies on his back.

   KARI
   I’m married. Wait. Don’t interrupt me. I need to get all this out. I’m married. We were high school sweethearts. He was a good guy them, but now I’m leaving him. He hits me when he gets mad. He gave me this.

Kari shows Albert a scar on her upper thigh. Albert frowns as he touches the scar.

   KARI (CONT’D)
   I’ve tried leaving him before. But he finds me and forces me to go back to him. That’s why I’m leaving town this time.

   ALBERT
   Leaving town?

   KARI
   I’m leaving him, leaving town. I want to go north.

   ALBERT
   North?

   KARI
   Somewhere cooler. Near the ocean. Seattle.

   ALBERT
   You’re leaving after I barely met you. I could settle things with your husband. Let him know it’s over.
KARI
I want you to come with me. I feel safe with you.

ALBERT
Leave my friends?

KARI
They use you. Your friends use you.

ALBERT
I think you should let me take care of your husband.

KARI
I just want to put it all behind me. Will you come with me?

Albert is silent.

KARI (CONT’D)
Please?

ALBERT
I need some time to wrap things up here. We need to find a place for you to stay for the next couple of days.

KARI
Can’t I stay here?

ALBERT
Not once Francisco finds out.

EXT. ESTHER’S APARTMENT -- DAY

Kari and Albert walk up to the front door of an apartment. The neighborhood is more urban than Albert’s place, with run down, graffitied buildings covered with billboards and the HUM of the interstate less than a block away.

The front door has a series of buzzers. The bottom buzzer is brightly decorated in 60’s floral artwork, with the name “Esther” barely legible. Albert presses the BUZZER and waits.

ESTHER
(over the intercom)
Hello?
ALBERT
Esther, it’s Albert.

ESTHER
Albert? What’s going on?

ALBERT
I need a favor.

ESTHER
Give me a minute. I need to throw something on.

As they wait for Esther, Albert turns to Kari.

ALBERT
Esther’s an old girlfriend. Hopefully she can put you up.

KARI
You don’t have any family in town?

ALBERT
No.

Esther opens the door, wearing a paint stained T-shirt and sweats, her hair carelessly pinned behind her head.

ESTHER
What’s up?

Esther notices Kari and looks at her suspiciously.

ALBERT
Esther, this is Kari. I told you about her.

ESTHER
Hello.

Saying nothing, Kari smiles disingenuously back at Esther.

ALBERT
I need a huge favor. I need a place for Kari to stay for a day or two.

ESTHER
I don’t know, Albert. Now’s not a good time. I have my show to work on. The place is a mess with canvasses and paints.
ALBERT
I don’t ask for favors often. I just need a place for her to stay until we leave.

ESTHER
Where are you going?

ALBERT
North somewhere.

ESTHER
Can we talk? Privately?

They enter the front door.

INT. ESTHER’S APARTMENT STAIRWELL -- DAY

Inside the shared hallway of the apartments Esther stops and leans against the bannister.

ESTHER
Are you sure what you’re doing? You’ve only known her for, how long? A couple of days? And you’re running off?

ALBERT
You said not to listen to the people that didn’t trust me, that didn’t think I could make my own decisions.

ESTHER
I know, but this is a huge step. And I don’t want to help you throw away your life.

ALBERT
You would be helping her. Kari. You’d be helping her get away from a husband that beats her. That’s all. Don’t think about me. Think about her.

Esther looks away from Albert, at the floor.

ESTHER
I’m sorry.

ALBERT
Can you help?
ESTHER
She can stay here for a couple of days.

ALBERT
Thank you.

ESTHER
I’m doing this for her. I still think you need to think through what you’re doing. You trust people. You need to be a little suspicious at times. People, unscrupulous people, can take advantage of you.

ALBERT
I’ll be back tonight. After I take care of a few things.

Albert opens the front door, and beckons Kari to enter. She stands in the doorway and looks at Esther, then at Albert.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
You can say here until we’re ready. I’ll be back tonight.

INT. ALBERT’S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Albert enters the living room as Mac and Freddy play Super Mario Brothers. Mac concentrates on playing the game, as Freddy takes a long drag on the joint. The pot lies on the coffee table untouched, and neither make any effort to continue the sorting that they started previously.

FREDDY
Albert! Where’s your girlfriend?

ALBERT
Gone.

FREDDY
Already? That didn’t last.

Freddy erupts into a fit of COUGHING. At about the same moment, Mac’s game character dies. Freddy grabs his joystick, still COUGHING.

ALBERT
Whatever. Where’s Francisco?
MAC
Don’t know. I haven’t seen him since the morning. Freddy might know.

He takes a drag on the joint.

ALBERT
Freddy?

Freddy, immersed in his game, doesn’t respond.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
Freddy.

MAC
Freddy!

Albert grabs Freddy’s shoulder, startling him, causing him to miss a jump, land in front of, instead of on top of, what looks like an evil mushroom, and die.

FREDDY
Damn!

MAC
Freddy, do you know where Francisco is?

FREDDY
Francisco? Francisco. Yeah, he was going down to Tuco’s this afternoon.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- AFTERNOON

Albert enters the almost empty bar and sees Francisco at the bar, talking with Tuco and drinking a beer. In the daytime, the bar is still dark, but with needles of bright daylight penetrating past the blinds.

Francisco looks back at the door when Albert enters.

FRANCISCO
Albert! What’s up?

Albert walks across the empty floor to the bar.

ALBERT
I need help. I need a favor.
FRANCISCO
Is this about that girlfriend? Trouble. I told you.

ALBERT
Francisco. I need help. Her husband--

FRANCISCO
(interrupting)
Husband?

ALBERT
Her husband. He’s trying to hurt her. I need to find out who he is and where he lives.

FRANCISCO
Can’t she tell you?

ALBERT
She doesn’t want me to take care of things.

FRANCISCO
I told you this would happen. Why do you want to see the husband? What can you do?

ALBERT
I can talk to him and tell him to stop.

FRANCISCO
Oh, yeah. You tell him to stop. You know where that will lead. She’s using you, Albert. You’re a trusting soul, and she just wants you to do her dirty work.

ALBERT
She didn’t ask me to do this.

FRANCISCO
She didn’t have to.

ALBERT
She told me not to.

FRANCISCO
That’s how people manipulate. They make you think it’s what you want.
ALBERT
It’s you that’s been manipulating me.
Trying to control my life, make me need you. You, you talk about Kari like you
know her, but you’ve hardly met her. You
just don’t like her, because she gets in
your way.

There is a cold pause, as Francisco is taken aback by the force of
Albert’s defection. After a moment he starts again, this time
quietly.

FRANCISCO
I’ve seen her here in the bar before.
Before you met her. Really, she’s a lot
like your mother when she was younger,
back when we were together. I don’t know
if you were old enough to remember, but
after we broke up, she would bring guys
home, guys that were paying her, and she
would kick you out of the house. I found
you in the street once. You had been out
overnight. She must have gotten high and
forgot to let you back in. She only did
things for herself.

There is silence as Francisco orders his thoughts.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
I didn’t discover that until it was too
late. She seemed almost normal when we
started going out. But by the time I saw
that part of your mother, I was already
in...I cared for her too much. I
couldn’t live with her, but I wouldn’t
abandon her.

ALBERT
She deserved to be.

FRANCISCO
Maybe. But you didn’t. That’s why I
took you in. I still go every week to
take care of her.

ALBERT
You still go there? What does she say?
FRANCISCO
She doesn’t say anything. I go Sunday morning, because she’s sure to be asleep or stoned. I clean the house, do the dishes, throw out the old food. I’m just trying to warn you of what can happen. I’m not trying to manipulate you.

Albert is silent for a moment.

ALBERT
I’m leaving town. With Kari. Please, I’d rather this end with us as friends. I don’t want to leave you mad. Can do this one last favor for me, as a friend?

Albert holds out his hand to Francisco, who looks at Albert and shakes his hand.

FRANCISCO
Be careful.

EXT. ESTHER’S APARTMENT -- DUSK

Driving, Albert parks on the street in front of Esther’s apartment. The light wanes, and everything is covered in a disappearing gold hue. He gets out of his car but before he can get to the door of the apartment building, Esther rushes out.

ESTHER
She’s gone.

ALBERT
Kari?

ESTHER
Yeah, I told her not to.

ALBERT
What happened?

ESTHER
Your mother came by again. Kari left with her.

Albert stops dead when he hears this, stunned.

ALBERT
My mother?
ESTHER
Yeah. I told you she’d been calling me, that she didn’t realize we had broken up years ago.

ALBERT
How could you let this happen?

ESTHER
I didn’t let anything happen. She was here when I got back from buying supplies. Really, if you had told her about us, she probably would have stopped calling me. Anyway, she now knows we’re no longer together.

ALBERT
If she remembers.

ESTHER
She’ll remember. She and Kari hit it off. Kari made a strong impression. Now she’ll fixate on her for a few decades.

ALBERT
Where’d they go?

ESTHER
They said they were going out to get to know each other.

ALBERT
You didn’t--

ESTHER
I tried to tell Kari not to go, but she didn’t listen.

Albert rushes back to his car.

ALBERT
If she comes back, tell her to wait for me.

Albert jumps into his car and speeds off.
EXT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE -- EVENING

Albert arrives at his mother’s house and jumps out of the car. In the darkness, light shines from several windows on the second floor, and a blue glow from the lower windows. The darkness almost hides the weathered exterior of the house.

In a rush, Albert bounds up the steps to the front door and starts BANGING, but there is no answer.

ALBERT
Are you in there?  Open up.

Impatient, he tries the front door, and it is unlocked, so he goes in.

INT. ANGELINE’S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Blankets and clothes litter the floor. The TV is on, illuminating the room in a blue glow. Frayed furniture and shag carpet seem to be left over from another decade. Dirty dishes are scattered around the living room. The room is otherwise empty of people.

Albert looks through the first floor, but finds no one, so ascends to the second floor.

INT. ANGELINE’S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Upstairs, Albert sees light coming from his mother’s room, but in the doorway, he looks back at the dark closed door of the second bedroom for a moment, noticing the four empty nail holes on the center of the door, before turning back to his mother’s room.

The light in this room is blinding compared to the darkness of the rest of the house. The light comes from a bare bulb on the ceiling, the rest of the fixture having long since disappeared.

Albert surveys the room. Clothes are scattered radially from the dresser, like someone has frantically thrown everything from the dresser, searching for something. Albert opens the top dresser drawer, but it is empty. He tries the next down, but it is empty too. The third he checks briefly but again nothing is in there. He skips the last one, and walks back down the stairs.

In the living room, he searches for a few moments, turning things over, until he finds a phone. He lifts the receiver to his ear, but hears nothing, so hangs back up.
Out the window he sees the lights of a small convenience store across the street.

EXT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE -- EVENING

Albert runs down the steps off the porch and across the street. He slows to a walk as he approaches the front door of the store. He pauses at the door, then goes in.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- EVENING

A bell RINGS as the door opens. The store is an old independent store with dingy floors, and aisles of stuff no one ever buys. The back half of the store is all liquor. A young CLERK, 22, behind the counter looks through the pages of a Hustler magazine.

When he hears Albert enter, he quickly puts the Hustler back on the rack behind the counter where the girly magazines are kept. Only the titles are visible behind the black metal plates that block the cover images. There is no one else in the store.

Albert looks around, then walks to the counter.

ALBERT
Do you have a phone?

CLERK
Just the store phone, and that’s not for customers.

ALBERT
Let me make a call.

CLERK
I told you. It’s not for customers.

Albert grabs the neck of the clerk’s shirt and pulls the kid toward him.

ALBERT
I wasn’t asking.

The clerk pushes a phone from behind the counter towards Albert, who grabs the receiver, and cradling it on his shoulder, dials with one hand while holding the clerk with the other. He waits for someone to answer.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
Francisco! Pick up. Francisco?
Albert SLAMS down the phone, and releases the clerk, who pulls the phone back behind the counter. Albert walks back out of the store.

INT. ANGELINE’S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Albert slumps back into his mother’s living room. He looks at the TV—a telenovela is on, but with the volume off. He sits on the couch to wait but dozes off.

INT. ANGELINE’S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Moments later, Andrew awakes to a start at the sound of his mother’s voice calling to him from a distance.

    ANGELINE (O.S.)
    Albert! Albert!

Albert gets up and follows the voice. He walks to the stairs and looks up.

INT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE STAIRWAY -- EVENING (FLASHBACK)

ALBERT, 8, a timid young boy dressed in brown corduroys and a brightly striped shirt pockmarked with old set-in stains, climbs the steps.

INT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE HALLWAY -- EVENING (PRESENT)

Albert reaches the top of the steps and sees his mother’s door ajar with light coming from the opening. The door behind him has his name “Albert” on a tile nailed to the door.

    ANGELINE (O.S.)
    Albert! Al--

Her voice stops, followed by her whispering and giggling. Still following the voice, Albert moves toward his mother’s door. He takes the door handle and opens it a little.

INT. ANGELINE’S BEDROOM -- EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Peeking his head through the door, young Albert peers in at his mother, ANGELINE. In her 30’s, and pretty, she sits at a mirror, putting on some jewelry. A MAN #2 in his 40’s dresses by the unmade bed.
He wears dress slacks with suspenders attached but hanging down and a sleeveless T-shirt. His hair is dark and slicked back.

ANGELINE

Albert.

Young Albert’s attention snaps back to his mother.

ANGELINE (CONT’D)

Albert, I’m going out tonight. Don’t--

The man walks up behind her and massages her breasts, kissing her on her neck. They talk in whispers, as if Albert can’t hear.

ANGELINE (CONT’D)

(to the man)

Just give me a sec--

MAN #2

This your kid?

ANGELINE

Yeah, but don’t worry about it.

MAN #2

Look, I don’t want to be a babysitter. He puts me off.

ANGELINE

Don’t worry about it. We can have fun.

She turns her attention back to Albert.

ANGELINE (CONT’D)

Albert, don’t go outside when I’m gone. You can stay up and watch cartoons.

YOUNG ALBERT

What about dinner? I’m hungry.

ANGELINE

Just go down the street to Chelo’s. Ask her to make you something. You can go out for that, but don’t go out for anything else.

YOUNG ALBERT

But--

ANGELINE

No “buts.”
Angeline closes the door on Albert as the man returns to fondling and kissing her.

INT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE HALLWAY -- EVENING (PRESENT)

Albert stands in the darkened hallway staring at the door. He turns toward the stairs and looks down towards the living room.

ANGELINE (O.S.)
Albert! Where are you?

This time the voice is harsh, and a little older. It is coming from down stairs, so he decends quickly.

INT. ANGELINE’S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING (FLASHBACK)

TEENAGE ALBERT, 13, runs across the living room, but stops just before the door to the kitchen. He pauses there, waiting.

ANGELINE
Albert! God damn it, where are you!

Albert reaches for the kitchen door and pushes it open.

INT. ANGELINE’S KITCHEN -- EVENING (PRESENT/FLASHBACK)

Albert, an adult, stares in at his mother sitting at the kitchen table smoking. No longer dolled up, she looks drunk, her hair in disarray and her floral print dress wrinkled.

An empty bottle of cheap tequila sits on its side on the table.

ANGELINE
Where the hell have you been?

ALBERT
I was outside. With Francisco. I didn’t hear you at first.

ANGELINE
What’s he doing here?

ALBERT
We were just talking.

ANGELINE
Is that bastard still here?
ALBERT
No, he left. When I came in.

Angeline pauses, forgetting for a moment why she called Albert in. She mutters to herself.

ANGELINE
Did he give you any money?

Albert looks down at the ground, not answering.

ANGELINE (CONT’D)
Answer me!

ALBERT
He gave me five dollars. For lunch money at school.

ANGELINE
Damn it! You take that money, go across the street and buy me a bottle of tequila.

ALBERT
But--

ANGELINE
Tell them it’s for your mother.

Albert begins to pull back from the doorway.

ANGELINE (CONT’D)
Bring me the change. And the receipt.

INT. ANGELINE’S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Teenage Albert quietly pushes the door mostly closed, enough to cut off his mother’s view of the living room. At the front door, he pulls the money from his pocket and separates the two five dollar bills. One he rolls up and shoves into one of his socks, the other he puts back into his pocket.

ANGELINE
(from the kitchen)
You going? Or do I have to come in there and show you who’s boss?

TEENAGE ALBERT
I’m going, Mom. I’ll be right back.
He steps out the door.

EXT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE -- EVENING (PRESENT)

Outside, Albert stands on his mother’s porch looking across the street at the convenience store. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a five dollar bill, and walks across the street to the store.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- EVENING

The clerk, at the sound of the BELL, shoves the Hustler into rack of girly magazines. When he looks up and see Albert come in through the door, he steps back from the counter, but Albert pays no attention to him and walks back to the liquor section.

Albert walks to the tequila aisle, grabs a bottle reflexively, and walks up to the counter.

The clerk keys in the price for the bottle and puts it into a long thin paper bag.

    CLERK
    Four eighty two.

Albert slaps the five on the counter.

    ALBERT
    Keep the change. For the phone call.

He grabs the bottle and walks out.

EXT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE -- EVENING

Outside the store, Albert looks across at his mother’s house as he opens the bottle, still in its bag. He takes a big swig of the tequila and puts the top back on the bottle.

He then walks to his car, parked between the house and the store, gets in and drives off.

INT. ALBERT’S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Albert sits slightly drunk on the couch in his living room. The bottle of tequila is a third empty and open on the coffee table. Tom and Jerry cartoons play noiselessly on the TV. Albert grabs the bottle and takes another swig, then replaces it.
Francisco enters, expecting Albert to be there, and sits next to him. He has a folded-up piece of paper which he puts under the bottle of tequila. Albert watches this and, confused, looks up at Francisco.

FRANCISCO
Her husband and the address.

Albert nods, not making eye contact with Francisco, instead staring at the note under the bottle.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
They’ve been there for about ten years. They keep to themselves. They’re constantly fighting.

ALBERT
How’d you find this out?

FRANCISCO
I talked to a neighbor.

ALBERT
Anything else?

FRANCISCO
Yeah.

ALBERT
Well, what?

FRANCISCO
Kari’s run away more than once. Three or four times, he said.

ALBERT
That’s what I told you. She tries to run away, but he finds her and brings her back.

FRANCISCO
The neighbor had the idea that she was the unstable one, starting the fights. He said the husband was walking a minefield.

After a pause, Albert takes the bottle of tequila, leaving the note on the counter, and takes a big swig. He waits a couple of seconds, takes another, then offers the bottle to Francisco, who declines.
Albert puts the bottle down, then grabs the note. He unfolds it, reads it, then tucks it in a shirt pocket.

    ALBERT
    I don’t know where she is.

    FRANCISCO
    You think she went back home?

    ALBERT
    No. She was at Esther’s. I left her there so she could hide until we left.

    FRANCISCO
    You think something happened to her?

    ALBERT
    My mother was looking for me. I don’t know why. I don’t know why today. She went to Esther’s looking for me. Kari left with her. I looked at the house--I haven’t been there is years--but they weren’t there.

Albert stares at the bottle for a few more seconds, then looks up at Francisco, about to speak, but Francisco speaks first.

    FRANCISCO
    Come on.

He gets up. Seeing Albert’s hesitation, he explains.

    FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
    I think I know where your mother is. Maybe Kari’s there too.

Albert gets up to follow Francisco.

EXT. DESERT DUMP SITE -- NIGHT

In an arroyo outside of town, discarded trash has accumulated over years. An old beater Chevy Monza is parked nearby, and a dim fire burns in the distance. Albert’s car pulls up near the Monza and parks. Albert and Francis get out of the car.

    ALBERT
    Where--
FRANCISCO
(whispering)
Shhh. She’s probably out by that fire.

He motions for Albert to follow him, and walks towards the fire, picking his way around the debris.

As they approach the fire, they see a bench seat ripped from an old car. The upholstery has rotted off, exposing the rusty springs, covered by an old tattered blanket. The seat faces the fire, with its back to the two men.

As they approach the seat, they see Angeline and Kari sleeping, draped in a blanket to protect from the desert evening chill. The fire is dying, mostly embers.

Albert approaches Kari and shakes her gently. She wakes up and sees Albert.

KARI
Hey! Albert, I was waiting for you.

She smiles naively and puts her arms around Albert’s neck. She remains barely conscious and sways either from sleep or drugs.

ALBERT
Come, on, we have to go.

KARI
OK. Let’s go.

She staggers up, supported by Albert. She continues to weave.

KARI (CONT’D)
I had such a good time with your mother.

Albert maneuvers Kari back to the car. Behind him, Francisco picks up Angeline and carries her behind Albert.

When he gets Kari to his car, he maneuvers her to into the back seat on the passenger side and closes the door. As Francisco approaches, Albert moves to the other side of the car and opens the other rear door so Francisco can lay Angeline inside.

The two men get in the front seats, with Albert driving. They are silent at first, and Albert doesn’t start the car immediately. After a moment, Francisco breaks the silence.

FRANCISCO
Let’s take your mother home.
ALBERT

Her car?

FRANCISCO
I’ll worry about it later.

Albert nods, then starts the car, puts it in gear, and drives off.

EXT. ANGELINE’S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The car pulls up to Angeline’s house and stops. Francisco gets out, walks to the opposite side, and before getting Angeline out, looks at Albert for a moment.

FRANCISCO
She is your mother.

Albert says nothing. He doesn’t even look at Francisco. Francisco opens the back door and lifts out Angeline, who doesn’t stir. He then closes the door and carries her into the house, leaving Albert alone with Kari drifting in and out of consciousness.

Albert looks at Kari for a long time with an expressionless face, though she is barely aware of him. For a moment she seems to return to consciousness and looks at him. Albert smiles a superficial smile, and seeing this, Kari closes her eyes, and leans back with a broad childlike smile.

KARI
Mmmm. Albert.

ALBERT
We’re ready, Kari.

KARI
Ready?

ALBERT
Tomorrow. We can leave. I have one more thing to do. I can do it in the morning before we go.

KARI
Go.

Francisco returns to the car and gets in next to Albert. The movement of his getting in brings Kari a little closer to awake for a moment. She sees Francisco and smiles.
Albert starts the car and drives home.

INT. ALBERT’S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Albert enters the room from outside, supporting the barely awake Kari, followed by Francisco, who closes the door behind them. Albert walks Kari to his bedroom.

INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Albert lays Kari on the bed and carefully removes her shoes but leaves the rest of her clothes on. He pulls some covers over her and then grabs a phone book from the end table.

He flips to the local map section, pulls the note from Francisco from his pocket, and looks for the street name from the list of street. Finding the section, he looks at the map for a moment to find the street.

Satisfied, he replaces the note in his pocket and the phone book on the end table. He kicks off his shoes, turns off the bedroom light, and, fully clothed, lies down next to Kari.

INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Next morning, Albert awakes in exactly the same position he fell asleep. Kari hasn’t moved either, still fast asleep. Albert gets up, careful not to wake Kari. As she sleeps, Albert showers, dresses, and leaves.

EXT. COMMON GROUNDS COFFEE SHOP -- MORNING

Albert approaches the coffee shop door and peers in. There are few customers, and Esther is working. Albert lightly RAPS on the glass until Esther looks up and sees him.

Esther gestures to Albert to wait and finishes serving a couple at a table. Albert turns away and sits on an outdoor bench. After a few moments, Esther comes out.

ESTHER
Did you find them?
ALBERT
Late last night.

ESTHER
Did she say anything?

ALBERT
Not really.

Andrew pauses for a moment, looking for the right words.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
I just wanted to come by to say goodbye.

ESTHER
You’re still going through with this?

Albert thinks about the question.

ALBERT
I think I have to.

ESTHER
You don’t have to do anything.

ALBERT
No.  I have to do this.

ESTHER
Sacrifice yourself?

ALBERT
It’s not that.  I just feel like I have to do this.

ESTHER
Because of your mother?

Albert looks away and shrugs.  Esther puts her arms around Albert and holds him tenderly.  She kisses him on the cheek and then releases him.

ESTHER (CONT’D)
Good bye.

ALBERT
Good bye.

They hug again.  Esther returns to the store and Albert walks back to his car.
INT. ALBERT’S BEDROOM -- NOON

Albert returns to his bedroom, where Kari is still sleeping. He wakes her, then retreats to the opposite side of the bed and waits for her to wake up.

    ALBERT
    You need to get up. We’re leaving today.

    KARI
    Mmmmm, good morning.

Kari leans in and hugs Albert. After a moment, he stands up, so Kari can get ready. He pulls a ratty leather duffle bag from the closet, puts the bag on the bed, and starts filling it with stuff as Kari enters the bathroom and closes the door.

INT. DINER -- AFTERNOON

Kari eats a large plate of scrambled eggs, hashbrowns, with a glass of orange juice. Albert drinks a water but eats nothing.

    KARI
    Where are we going?

    ALBERT
    You said you wanted to go to Seattle.

    KARI
    Well, that was just an idea. As long as it’s cooler, and less sand.

    ALBERT
    We’re getting a late start today. Maybe we can get as far as Denver, or at least Colorado Springs.

    KARI
    I’ve never been to Colorado. Is it nice there?

    ALBERT
    I don’t know. It’ll be late when we get there, so we won’t have a lot of time to see anything.

    KARI
    It’s got to be better than here.
EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY -- AFTERNOON

Albert’s car drives along the interstate. It is a cloudy but not overcast day. The car passes a sign for the “La Mesa” exit.

INT. ALBERT’S CAR -- AFTERNOON

At the “La Mesa” exit, Albert exits the freeway.

    KARI
    Why are we getting off here?

    ALBERT
    A quick errand before we leave. Don’t worry.

Kari nods and smiles artificially. She nervously bites her nails and studies the streets and turns Albert makes.

When Albert pulls down a particular street, driving at very slow pace, Kari can no longer contain her anxiety.

    KARI
    Why are you taking me here? I don’t want to go back.

Albert pulls over and stops the car. He kills the engine but leaves the keys in the ignition.

    ALBERT
    I’m not taking you back. I just want to make sure this is final. I don’t want him looking for you. I don’t want him anywhere near you. I want him gone from your life. I need to make sure he knows it’s over.

Silenced, but still acutely nervous, Kari sits on the passenger seat in an almost fetal position and nods at Albert.

    ALBERT (CONT’D)
    Wait here. Lock the doors if you like.

Albert gets out of the car. Kari waits a few moments until Albert is 20 feet from the car, then locks the doors.
EXT. KARI’S HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

Albert walks up to a small adobe house with the number 114 on the door. Stucco peels off the walls, revealing the old adobe bricks underneath. The wooden door was once blue, but the paint has faded and peeled.

Albert KNOCKS loudly and waits, but there is no answer. Again, he KNOCKS as loudly as he can, but there is no answer. Impatient, Albert walks around to the back yard. As he walks around he peers into each window looking for signs of life.

The backyard is empty and unkempt. Albert briefly BANGS on the back door, but doesn’t wait for a response, as he heads back to the car.

EXT. ALBERT’S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Albert walks up to the car and sees Kari huddled inside. He grabs the door handle to the driver door to open it, but to his surprise the door is locked. Kari doesn’t see him but instead stares at the house.

Albert RAPS on the window, waking Kari from her daze. She sees Albert, then leans over and unlocks the door.

INT. ALBERT’S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Albert gets in, and closes the door.

    ALBERT
    No answer.

    KARI
    Let’s just go then.

    ALBERT
    I need to do this. Is he usually out on Saturday?

    KARI
    Sometimes, sometimes not. He doesn’t work weekends.

    ALBERT
    We’ll wait.
Albert starts the car and pulls it to a point where he can see the front of the house from a distance. He KILLS the ENGINE and waits.

INT. ALBERT’S CAR -- EVENING

Albert sits in the car, bored but trying to fix his concentration on the front of the house. Outside it is getting darker as dusk approaches. Kari sleeps on passenger side with her seat fully reclined.

INT. ALBERT’S CAR -- LATER

Now dark, the street has no streetlights, the front door barely visible. Albert’s boredom has transformed into frustration as he keeps shifting in his seat.

ALBERT
Fuck!

His outburst wakes Kari, who sits up and looks around. Albert starts the car, as Kari returns her seat to an upright position. Albert puts the car into gear and drives.

EXT. ALLEY -- EVENING

Albert parks his car in a small unlit alley near the plaza. Both Kari and Albert get out and walk towards the plaza. Albert pauses.

ALBERT
I forgot something.

Albert returns to the car, while Kari continues toward the plaza. Albert opens the door of the car, pulls a handgun from the glove box and hides it under his shirt in his pant waist.

EXT. LA MESA PLAZA -- EVENING

Kari enters the plaza alone. The street lights on, the plaza as bright as daytime, Kari sees a glint of something on the ground near where she stands waiting. She sees a bit of a cheap silver chain leading into a gap between some broken paving bricks.
Taking the chain, she pulls the rest of the necklace into view. She sees the small engraving with her name on one side and Albert’s on the other. She tears up looking at it. She looks back towards Albert, but the alley is too dark to see him.

She puts the necklace on but hides it under her shirt. She rubs the tears from her eyes. At that moment, Albert steps out of the alley, walks up to her, and sees her.

ALBERT
Are you OK?

KARI
Yeah. Let’s go.

They walk to the bar, and enter.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- EVENING

The beginning of a busy Saturday night at the bar, the crowd isn’t large yet, but a band sets up. Albert and Kari enter and a bouncer stamps their hands.

They walk to a table far from the makeshift stage. Kari sits down, after which Albert walks to the bar.

ALBERT
Two Coronas.

Tuco pulls two bottles from a refrigerator under the bar, removes their caps and places a lime wedge in the neck of each.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
She’s with me, so don’t give her any of your shit.

TUCO
Hey, it’s not personal. I just want to get paid. If she’s with you, I’m good.

Albert walks back to the table and gives one of the beers to Kari, sits down, and starts to drink the other one.

They both sit, drinking their beers in silence. When Albert finishes, he stands up.

ALBERT
I have to make a phone call. I’ll be right back.
Albert walks to the pay phone obscured from the room by a dividing wall. He takes a quick look back at Kari, before disappearing behind the wall. He picks up the phone, fishes a quarter out of his pocket, drops it in the coin slot, then dials a number.

After a few moments, he hangs up, and fishes his quarter out of the return slot. He goes into the men’s room.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR BATHROOM -- EVENING

Albert stands in front of a urinal peeing. Another man washes his hands. When he is done, he washes up in front of the mirror. The other man finishes and leaves the bathroom.

 Alone in the bathroom, Albert pulls out the gun, and checks the magazine and ensures that a bullet is chambered, with the safety on. He replaces the gun under he shirt and walks out.

INT. EL CHINGON BAR -- EVENING

As Albert rounds the corner by the pay phone, he sees Kari sitting at the table. Across from her is Francisco. Francisco talks, but Albert can’t hear him. Francisco seems serious and animated, but Kari is not giving him her full attention.

Francisco, finished with what he is saying, sits back, looks around the bar, and sees Albert. He stands and walks to Albert.

FRANCISCO
Let’s get a drink at the bar.

Albert doesn’t respond.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
She’s not going anywhere. Come on.

They walk over to the bar and sit on a pair of stools.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
One Dos Equis and one Corona.
(to Albert)
Corona, right?

Albert nods while Tuco serves them. After a couple of swigs of his beer Francisco speaks.

FRANCISCO (CONT’D)
After yesterday, you’re still going through with this?
ALBERT
Now even more so.

FRANCISCO
I can’t stop you, and I’m not going to try to, but I love you like you were my son. I don’t think this will end well. I think she will chew through you, and then move on to the next guy. I’m afraid for you. That’s all.

ALBERT
I don’t really care if that happens.

FRANCISCO
Promise me you’ll let me help you if you need it?

ALBERT
I can’t.

FRANCISCO
Please.

Albert gets up, shakes his head, and walks back to Kari. He takes her by the arm and leads her out of the bar.

EXT. LA MESA PLAZA -- EVENING

Albert and Kari walk across the plaza, Albert’s arm around Kari’s shoulders. Albert stops for a moment.

ALBERT
I love you.

He looks at Kari, but Kari looks away, not wanting to meet his gaze. Albert continues to stare at Kari.

ALBERT (CONT’D)
I’m doing this for you.

Kari sees a man step from the darkness of the side streets into the light of the plaza. Frightened, she turns her back to the man and grabs and holds Albert tight. Choking back her fear, she whispers in Albert's ear.

KARI
I love you.
They stand there for a moment in their embrace. Albert’s eyes are closed and he’s crying as he strokes her hair. When Albert opens his eyes, he see the man standing about ten feet in front of him, staring at them.

ALBERT
What are you looking at?

KARI’S HUSBAND
Nothing.

ALBERT
Then get out of here.

KARI’S HUSBAND
Have you seen my wife? I’m looking for her.

The husband’s eyes move from Albert to Kari and back to Albert. Oblivious, Albert doesn’t make the connection.

ALBERT
I don’t know your wife, so just leave.

KARI’S HUSBAND
She ran away last week. She’s unstable. She needs my help. I need to take her home.

Albert registers who this man is and meets his eyes directly. He slips himself from Kari’s grip, as she remains standing with her back to her husband. Freed from her grip, Albert takes several steps towards the man and reaches for his gun.

Kari, standing behind Albert, sees him pull the gun.

KARI
No, Albert. Don’t.

Albert pulls the gun out and lets his hand dangle where the husband can see the gun. The husband stands petrified.

KARI’S HUSBAND
I’ve got no argument with you, friend.

Albert raises the gun to the man, who falls to his knees. Albert pulls the trigger, Kari screams, and the man spins to the ground, SHOT in the chest. Albert takes a couple steps toward the body, aiming for his head. Kari rushes toward the body of her husband.
Albert takes a second SHOT, to the head, but Kari falls on her husband at the same instant, and the bullet hits her in the head.

Albert stands there without moving, staring at the couple, dead, but embracing each other.

At the sound of the gun shots, several people emerge from the bar into the plaza, Tuco, Francisco, and Mac among them. Tuco stands near the entrance to the bar. Francisco and Mac, seeing what has happened, rush to the scene. Mac runs to the bodies, while Francisco takes the gun from Albert.

Francisco turns to look at Mac, who shakes his head. Mac moves to Albert side as well. They both flank Albert and walk him away. Albert stops by the bodies, and seeing the necklace on Kari, yanks it from her neck. He wipes some of the blood from the necklace and pockets it.

Francisco and Mac walk Albert out of the plaza, keeping their backs to the on-lookers.

Kari’s blood seeps into the spaces between the bricks, soaking into the ground underneath.

FADE OUT.
CURRICULUM VITA

Geof Abruzzi is a writer, filmmaker and musician working in Mesilla, New Mexico. He received his undergraduate degree in Philosophy in 2003 from New Mexico State University. He has had screenplay excerpts published in the Rio Grand Review. His music has been performed at New Mexico State University, Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania, and Muhlenberg College.

Permanent Address: P.O. Box 305
Mesilla, NM 88046