

**THE TREASURE
OF THE ESPERANZA**

Original Screenplay

by Marc Serhan

Rough/First Draft

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FIRST

10 PAGES

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

LIGHTNING flashes illuminate the churning ocean in a chaotic scene of raging STORM. THUNDER drowns out frantic shouts in Portuguese. SCREAMS cut through the noise.

VOICE #1
Man overboard!

VOICE #2
It's the carpenter, Alonzo Pinzón!

The swelling ocean lifts into view the '*Esperanza*', a 16th-century Portuguese galleon. Her broken masts renders her helpless against the elements.

INT. ESPERANZA / HOLD - CONTINUOUS

The hold is engulfed in flames. Soldiers clad in armor and crew members fight desperately to contain the fire, dangerously close to igniting gunpowder cases.

In a corner, an object, wrapped in a sailcloth, leans against the hull. Flames lick the cloth, slowly revealing a life-sized crucifix of gold, adorned with trails of ruby gems symbolizing Christ's wounds.

Suddenly, a burning timber breaks free, crashing onto the gunpowder cases. The men, in unison, scramble out in terror.

OCEAN

CALLS to abandon ship echo through the night. Lightning splits the sky with a deafening CRACK. An EXPLOSION rips through the ship's center, tearing her in two. The bow begins a slow descent, as a series of EXPLOSIONS shatter the stern.

In the tumultuous waters, a hand desperately grasps a floating plank. A CASTAWAY, struggling against the waves, manages to climb atop this makeshift raft as the storm rages.

EXT. OCEAN / ARCHIPELAGO - DAY

Driftwood bobs gently on the now calm ocean. The crucifix, its wooden cross broken, floats away, one of Christ's golden arms breaking the water's surface.

UNDERWATER

The crucifix is almost fully submerged. The nail holding one hand to the cross's arm gives way. Gracefully, like a swan dive, the golden figure descends into the abyss.

EXT. OCEAN / COVE - DAY

The coastline is dominated by towering cliffs that stretch far and wide. Two prominent cliffs extend rocky ridges deep into the ocean, forming a secluded cove.

In the turbulent waters close to a reef bank, wreckage from the ship is tossed perilously. The debris, barely above water, is at the mercy of the rising tide.

Among the floating debris, the Castaway comes to on his makeshift raft, surrounded by three chests still attached to the ship's beams. He sits up, surveys the scene.

Scattered around him are the remnants of the ship and its crew, most charred, all lifeless, clinging to the flotsam that keeps them afloat; he is alone.

A massive wave lifts the makeshift raft. The man turns just in time to see a tall, hollow rock jutting high above the reefs looming dangerously close. In a desperate move, he springs to his feet and dives into the churning waters.

The raft, left to its fate, crashes against the jagged rocks. One of the chests shatters on impact, sending a shower of precious gems into the air like colorful fireworks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

A Magritte painting, 'The Seducer,' depicts a ship seamlessly blending with the ocean it sails upon.

MEG (O.S.)

René Magritte was born in Belgium in 1898. Initially influenced by Cubism, he soon shifted to Surrealism. This painting, 'The Seducer,' completed around 1953, seems to be made of the very element it was destined to conquer: water.

MEG ADAMS, art curator, 30, stands beside the painting, addressing a group of museum visitors.

MEG (Cont'd)

Magritte is known to be a painter of ideas. He challenges our perceptions of simple objects, making us question what we see. This next piece, from his Cubist period...

She guides the group to another painting.

INT. AUCTION ROOM - DAY

Meg stands in the room, keyed up toward the AUCTIONEER.

AUCTIONEER
Twenty-five hundred! Going once,
going twice... sold for twenty-five
hundred.

The GAVEL pounds. Meg turns to look for...

SHARON ROBBINS, 40, an elegant and poised art dealer, smiles at her in the crowd. They make their way toward each other.

SHARON
Well done, Meg. Not a steal, but it
has resale potential.

MEG
Thirty, tops. That's the best it'll
fetch.

SHARON
Less profit for both of us then.

MEG
It's not the money, Sharon. It's the
thrill of the hunt... finding that
one unique piece. Whatever the price.
It should be priceless anyway.

SHARON
What's the point if it's priceless.

Meg dismisses the comment, heading for the exit.

SHARON (Cont'd)
Lunch?

MEG
Can't. Back to the museum. I'll
grab a sandwich. See you later.

She exits swiftly.

SHARON
Don't forget Diaz at five. I really
want you there.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Meg enters the lavishly stocked antique shop. SOPHIE, 50s, greets her warmly.

SOPHIE
Hello, Mrs. Adams!

Meg, clearly familiar with the store, heads toward the back.

MEG
Hi, Sophie. Is Sharon in?

Sophie nods and resumes dusting off bibelots.

REAR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Sharon examines an Indian mask at her desk.

Meg knocks briefly and enters, struggling with a door that won't close properly.

MEG (Cont'd)
That latch needs fixing.
(sees the mask)
Oh! Is that the famous artifact?

SHARON
(engrossed in the mask)
Diaz dropped it while we were at the auction. — You've got a package.

She points at a large parcel which Meg excitedly unwraps.

SHARON (Cont'd)
(absorbed in the mask)
I guess it's from your husband. He called. Diaz also called to say he'll be a little early.

MEG
I'm not particularly fond of this gentleman, but I must admit he is good mannered.

Sharon shifts her gaze up.

SHARON
Oh, I find him lots of charm. Wild! Animalistic. And very, very rich!

Meg doesn't react, and no longer exists but for the full dress and the note she gets out of the parcel.

MEG
Wow! This is so... Oh! That's so cute of him. I've been saving for weeks...

She pulls out her phone, speed-dials a number.

MEG (Cont'd)

Brian? — Yes, I did. Thank you.
It's simply gorgeous. What's the
occasion? — It must be a serious
promotion. — Tell me now. — All
right. Seven, 'The Marquis'.

(tentatively)

Brian! Do you think I could get
this pair of shoes that goes with
it? — O-ho! Then I guess it's a
huge promotion! Can't wait to hear
about it. — Love you.

She hangs up, repacks the dress best she can.

SHARON

So?

MEG

A big promotion. A six hundred
dollars dress, dinner at 'The
Marquis' and 'Jourdan' stilettos.

She examines the mask.

MEG (Cont'd)

What were you saying about Diaz?

Two discrete KNOCKS at the door.

SHARON

Speak of the devil. Come in!

PORFIRIO DIAZ, 40s, sophisticated yet imposing, enters.

PORFIRIO

Ladies! Sorry, I am early.

Meg moves to close the door that didn't catch, still studying
the artifact. Sharon goes to Diaz, holding out her hand.

SHARON

The mask is magnificent.

MEG

And authentic. The museum finds it
too pricey, but they're interested.

PORFIRIO

I have a buyer in Europe. Private
collector.

MEG

Good for you. — For my part, I find
it overvalued.

She hands him the mask, unsettled by his intense gaze.

SHARON

Uh - hmmm! Meg, you were leaving?

MEG

Yes, lots to do.

She picks up her parcel, walks to the door.

PORFIRIO

(to Meg)

I wonder if you would be free for dinner sometime? I need advice.

MEG

(quickly)

I only dine with my husband, Mr. Diaz. But I'm happy to answer your questions on your next visit. That's what you want, right? To ask questions?

Porfirio runs blank, taken aback. Meg keeps looking him straight in the eyes. She wheels out, proud of herself.

ANTIQUE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Meg is on her way out when she sees, through a mirror's reflection, the door to the office swing open: Sharon approaches Porfirio, up close, and looking him straight in the eyes, kicks the door shut.

MEG (Cont'd)

Whoops!

She exits quickly, passing Sophie, who also witnessed the scene and shakes her head.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's a chic French restaurant, crowded with a chic clientele. BRIAN ADAMS, late thirties, peruses the menu. He looks up as Meg approaches, standing to greet her.

BRIAN

Oh! Right on time.

MEG

I couldn't wait to show off my dress.

The Maître D' assists her with her chair.

MEG (Cont'd)

Thank you.

(stares expectantly at Brian)

So? Will you tell me now? - What about that promotion?

BRIAN

Haven't accepted it yet. Wanted to discuss it with you first.

MEG

Well, I've already got the dress...

The Sommelier presents a bottle of champagne to Brian, who nods approval without much attention. Meg leans back, eager.

MEG (Cont'd)

...and you've ordered champagne?
Come on, Brian, the suspense is killing me.

The Sommelier steps aside with the bottle.

BRIAN

They're offering me South America.

MEG

Doing what?

BRIAN

Acting Consular Officer. The Consul is not well and the Department needs somebody on the grounds. They're calling it a "high-need assignment."

MEG

Where in South America?

BRIAN

Barranquilla. - It's in Colombia. You'll join me in a couple of weeks.

MEG

Oh! You mean we'll be living there?... - Of course! What was I thinking? When would you leave?

BRIAN

Meg, I haven't agreed yet.

MEG

But you're going to. You already ordered champagne.

(pause)

For how long?

BRIAN

It's a politically unstable area,
with guerrilla threats and the like.

The bottle of champagne pops open.

MEG

Oh, great! — Do they take American
hostages?

BRIAN

Meg! Please!

MEG

That's what usually happens. Soon
as there is a problem somewhere,
they take American hostages and
blow out our embassies.

The Sommelier presents her with a glass.

SOMMELIER

Madame!

Meg raises her glass in a toast.

MEG

Let's drink to that. Viva la
promoçion! What language do they
speak, by the way?

BRIAN

Spanish, Portuguese, English.

MEG

There goes my German. Five years in
the waste basket. Story of my life,
never could make the right choices.

She opens the menu, hides behind it.

BRIAN

Meg! I haven't accepted yet.

He lowers her menu. Meg resists, then flaps the menu shut.

MEG

And what would I be doing there?
(as he remains silent)
Great!

BRIAN

Meg, it's a wonderful opportunity.

A pause, she smiles then affectionately takes his hand.

MEG

What I said about right choices... – I didn't mean that for you! I'm proud of you. – I feel like kissing you.

She rises. He imitates her. They hug and kiss much to the Maître D's chagrin, but the other patrons cheer and applaud.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Meg and Brian, under the sheets, embrace passionately.

Meg reaches for the light switch. Flicks it off.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP / REAR SHOP - DAY

Meg, in Sharon's chair, cries her soul out. Sharon stands behind her, comforting her.

MEG

What will I do there if I'm not working?

SHARON

Rest. – It's not hard to do nothing.

MEG

I can't just do nothing.

SHARON

Take care of the locals, then. Spread the secrets of the white female.

Meg cries with renewed energy.

MEG

I don't even know where I'm going.

Sharon offers a handkerchief. Meg takes it, wiping her tears.

SHARON

You can still come back to your jobs. By the way what do I do with your commissions?

Meg doesn't answer, too busy crying on her lot. Sharon leans and kisses her hair, smelling them. Meg doesn't see that, pulls herself together and blows her nose.

MEG

How's Michael?

SHARON

Michael who? Just kidding. That
Michael is history.

Meg, calmed down, looks at her with disapproval.

MEG

Why don't you stop that?

SHARON

Stop what?

A pause, Meg stands up.

MEG

(tentatively)

Are you and Mr. Diaz...?

SHARON

Porfirio is just business.

MEG

Porfirio!?

SHARON

Mr. Diaz, if you will.

*(arranges a strand of hair on
Meg's face)*

You're very beautiful.

MEG

I love you too. - All right, I have
to run now. Lots to do.

They smile at each other and hug.

EXT. ABOVE THE CLOUDS - DAY

A commercial aircraft glides gracefully against a serene sea
of fluffy clouds through the vast sky.

EXT. BOGOTÁ AIRPORT / TARMAC - DAY

A small, diverse group of travelers make their way across the
tarmac toward a mid-sized commercial jet, parked a short
distance away. Among them, suitcases in tow, Meg pauses
briefly, struggling with her apprehension to board the plane.

EXT. BARRANQUILLA AIRPORT - DAY

Meg stands fazed outside the terminal amongst a throng of
travelers.

A black limousine approaches, bearing both local and American shields. The car stops; the chauffeur, DIEGO, steps out.

DIEGO
Señora Adams?

MEG
Uh-huh!

DIEGO
El Señor Adams sends his apologies:
he's been held up in a meeting.

Meg looks at him, bewildered.

EXT. HILL ROAD - DAY

The limousine ascends a winding road through a dense forest. As it rounds a bend, a clearing reveals Barranquilla below: a mix of skyscrapers, smoky factories, and shantytowns.

IN THE CAR

Meg sits up in her seat, suddenly concerned.

MEG
Is that... Barranquilla?

DIEGO
Yes, Madam.

Meg swallows her disappointment. The car borrows a strap that meanders into the hill.

MEG
Aren't we going there?

DIEGO
Mr. Adams thought Madam would like
to rest first. But if Madam wishes...

MEG
No. It's fine. Do as you've been
instructed. Rest me. - How come
your English is so good?

DIEGO
Pardon me?

MEG
Never mind!

In the distance beyond the coast, the archipelago where the
'*Esperanza*' met its fate.