

HAPPY HOUR

written by

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EXT. LAKE - DAY (1988)

Summer sun, dense forest, campgrounds.

SUPER:           San Luis Reservoir State Park  
                  Los Banos, California

EXT. CAMPGROUND - AFTERNOON

YOUNG MIGUEL DANKO, 8, clean-cut, green rugby shirt, sports a new pair of Nike Air Jordans, plays in the woods. A dozen third-grade BOYS, 7-9, run around like crazy, supervised by

THREE COUNSELORS, early 20s, scruffy townies from up north.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - SERIES OF SHOTS

JIM STRATFORD, 22, greasy slacker in a flannel shirt, loafs while other Counselors do the chores.

Boys paddle canoes in a cove.

Miguel and a FAT BOY, 7, watch a LONG-HAIRED COUNSELOR, 21, cut brush for kindling with a machete.

They all eat hot dogs around a fire at dusk. After dark, Boys in tents play with flashlights.

Counselors smoke and drink by the fire.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Boys throw rocks and sticks at each other. Counselors yell at screaming Boys, who ignore them. Boys throw hunting knives at a tree, target practice. A bit out of control.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

Exhausted Counselors drink and smoke by the fire.

JIM STRATFORD  
Fucking asshole punks.

LONG-HAIR  
Yeah man. Least the older kids are smart enough to be scared of us.

They laugh, pass a joint.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Boys eavesdrop, whisper.

FAT BOY  
Asshole punks.

Young Miguel laughs, makes faces, whispers funny voice.

MIGUEL  
Yeah. Fucking asshole punks.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Jim Stratford and other Counselors round up the Boys, lead them down to the water.

EXT. COVE - MORNING

Boys wrangle canoes down the muddy beach.

JIM STRATFORD  
Last boat around the island's a rotten egg!

Boys pair off, clamber and jump in, paddle canoes out towards a rock pile a hundred feet away in the shallow water.

Miguel and Fat Boy wobble the last canoe, Fat Boy flops into the water, Counselors laugh.

JIM STRATFORD (CONT'D)  
Come on punks, hustle!

Miguel helps Fat Boy, steadies the boat, drags him in. They flounder with their paddles for a late start, both dig in splashing and paddle strong.

Miguel and Fat Boy gain on the flotilla, make the turn, leading canoes race around the rock pile, final stretch.

Massive effort brings Miguel and Fat Boy in close to a tie for second place, they celebrate.

MIGUEL  
Woo-hoo!

FAT BOY  
Yeah!

Miguel gives Fat Boy a congratulatory smack on the shoulder, they go back out for another lap, Boys paddle canoes around the cove, Counselors wander away in the forest.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Boys amble past a giant mud-hole in a hollow, TALL BOY, 9, and SHORT BOY, 8, run ahead, hide in the bushes.

Miguel and Fat Boy dawdle thirty yards behind, Tall Boy cups his hands, steps out on the trail.

TALL BOY  
Check it out, I found a snake.

Fat Boy straggles, Miguel runs for a look, Short Boy sneaks around, kneels behind him for a prank.

FAT BOY  
Miguel!

Tall Boy pushes him backwards, way too hard, Miguel tumbles over Short Boy down the steep bank into deep mud, goes under, submerged, splutters, chokes, tries to climb out, prankster Boys run back to camp.

Miguel struggles, wallows closer to shore, reaches for a fallen tree branch, grabs it and pulls himself up from the mud, he clambers up the bank.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - EVENING

Counselors make dinner.

Miguel trudges into the clearing, covered with mud.

JIM STRATFORD  
What the fuck happened to you?

Counselors and Boys laugh.

Miguel charges Tall Boy, connects with an uppercut to the jaw, Tall Boy shakes it off, gives him a one-two that rocks Miguel back, he shuffles, reconnects.

Tall Boy fakes a left, pounds him a hard right in the jaw.

Miguel goes down. Shakes it off, bounces back up and moves in. He ducks a jab, punches Tall Boy hard in the stomach, Tall Boy doubles over. Miguel pops him in the nose, grabs his shirt, they scuffle, Boys gather around.

BOYS  
Fight! Fight!

Miguel throws Tall Boy down, jumps on him, they wrestle while the Counselors watch. Miguel stands up.

Tall Boy jumps up, comes at him, Miguel elbows Tall Boy in the nose, POW! His nose gushes blood. They both swing wild fists, Miguel defends himself, Tall Boy staggers, retreats.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - CONTINUOUS

Jim Stratford steps in, grabs Miguel in a fury, punches him hard in the stomach, he doubles over, crumples to the ground, Jim kicks him twice, he rolls away, arms covering his face.

Jim cuffs Tall Boy on the head, he scurries away into a tent.

JIM STRATFORD  
God damn it, no fighting. Fuck.

He stalks away. Miguel pukes in the dirt.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

Counselors sit and drink by the fire.

LONG-HAIR  
You're not s'posed to hit 'em, man.

JIM STRATFORD  
Hope he doesn't tell his folks.

COUNSELOR  
Prob'ly scared shitless, dude.  
Don't worry about it.

Jim puffs a joint, gulps from a bottle of whiskey.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Boys cower in their sleeping bags, whispering.

Miguel lies on his back, covered with dried mud, caked with fresh dirt and blood.

FAT BOY  
Miguel, you OK?

MIGUEL

No.

FAT BOY

You gonna tell your parents?

MIGUEL

I can take care of myself.

FAT BOY

He's way bigger'n you.

MIGUEL

I know what to do.

Miguel gets up, crawls out the back of the tent, into the dark woods, other Boys hide behind the tent flap to watch.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Miguel sneaks to the equipment stash, finds the machete hanging from a post, slides it out of its scabbard.

He hefts it with both hands, takes a couple of practice swings in the dark shadows.

MIGUEL

Get him.

He runs across the clearing, swings and strikes Jim in the head, THWACK! Jim ducks by reflex, screams as the huge blade takes a sizable chunk of scalp.

JIM STRATFORD

Ahhhhhh!

EXT. COVE - NIGHT

Miguel sprints past the canoes, hurls the machete into the water, cuts over to the trailhead and dashes up the road.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

Jim holds a bandanna to his bleeding head.

JIM STRATFORD

God damn it, that kid almost fucking killed me. Get 'im!

Boys scream in panic, Counselors scramble to their feet, they run after Miguel, but he is gone.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATE NIGHT

Miguel runs, looks around, finally slows to a walk.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SUNRISE

Miguel trudges past a farm, mist rises off the fields, he flips his hand along a fence.

A herd of goats stick their noses through the fence. He gently touches their noses.

A FAMILY in a station wagon pulls up and stops, WIFE, late 20s, lowers her window.

WIFE  
Honey, you OK?

MIGUEL  
Can you take me to a police station?

EXT. SUBURBAN BUNGALOW / STOCKTON - MORNING

TEENAGERS play frisbee in the front yard.

INT. BUNGALOW / KITCHEN - MORNING

Home, on a Sunday afternoon, Gipsy Kings on the radio, Miguel's MOM, late 30s, makes brunch, Miguel's DAD, early 40s, scans the Sunday 'Stockton Record'.

MOM  
I hope he's having a good time.

Miguel's BROTHER, 15, slams the front door.

BROTHER  
Daaaad!

EXT. BUNGALOW / FRONT YARD - MORNING

Mom, Dad and Brother rush out the door.

Modesto County Sheriff car, white/green stripe, in driveway,  
TWO COPS, 30s, deliver Miguel, filthy and exhausted.

MOM

Oh my god. What happened?

She kneels, takes Miguel in her arms, Dad heads over to talk  
to the Cops.

FLASH FORWARD:

EXT. MODERNIST PROFESSIONAL BUILDING - EVENING (2005)

Upscale mid-rise, two cars in the parking lot, old gray  
Nissan 300ZX and a new metallic-green BMW.

SUPER: Palo Alto, California

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - EVENING

Books and boxes clutter the floor, framed pictures and  
diplomas wait to be hung.

Minimal sleek contemporary furniture feels spare and lean.

ADULT MIGUEL DANKO, 25, fidgets in a chair. He's stocky  
enough, yet tall, athletic, built like a surfer.

With a clean-shaven baby-face.

Miguel wears jeans, inexpensive dress shirt.

Neck wrapped with barbed-wire tattoos, more artful ink  
patterns in a Ghost-In-The-Shell design continue down his  
neck into his shirt collar. Edgy yet handsome.

Miguel rolls up his sleeves.

Full-arm tattoos carry colorful image vignettes from  
Space Jam, Starship Troopers and Fifth Element,  
linked together with geometric techno-motifs.

Miguel appears fatigued, frowns anxiously at the unrepressed  
childhood memory, maintains eye contact with

ALICIA ZHENG, 26, super-chill, gorgeous, eyes wide.

She clutches her notebook, a lovely intellectual creature.

Perfect hair, beautifully-groomed Ivy-League prodigy, eight-hundred-dollar glasses, new shoes to match.

She possesses a slender yet unmistakably-feminine shape that's achieved only with an obsessive workout schedule.

She's almost in shock.

ALICIA  
Miguel, it must have been  
incredibly traumatic.

MIGUEL  
You know, at that point I was just  
happy to get home.

ALICIA  
So then?

MIGUEL  
Well the police arrested Jim  
Stratford for assaulting me. I  
really thought he was gonna kill  
me, he was nuts. Then my folks got  
a phone call from the trip  
coordinator, right after lunch.

He sits back, catches his breath.

ALICIA  
Would you like some water?

MIGUEL  
Well doctor, it actually looks like  
my hour's up.

Momentarily Alicia seems a bit scattered.

ALICIA  
Oh, I have time. You're my, um,  
last appointment this evening.  
And this is incredibly important  
material for a first visit.

She rises from her chair, fetches water, Miguel can't help but admire her alluring figure.

Alicia glances at Miguel, hands him sparkling water.  
She sits. Miguel stands.

MIGUEL  
Um. Could I --

ALICIA  
Oh, it's right across the hall.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Miguel drinks from a pocket flask, stares at the mirror.

MIGUEL  
Fuck, man. Stay with it.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - EVENING

Miguel drinks water. Alicia writes notes.

ALICIA  
So he was arrested.

MIGUEL  
My lawyer said, the counselors were still looking for me, when the cops got there.

ALICIA  
You had a lawyer? Oh, of course, you had a lawyer.

MIGUEL  
The police booked him for assault, they also caught him with a big bag of weed, and all the counselors had been drinking.

ALICIA  
Ah.

MIGUEL  
So we went to trial.

FLASH BACK TO:

INT. MODESTO COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY (1988)

TWO LAWYERS, 40s, GRAY suit and BLACK suit, hustle up stairs.

They stroll down a corridor, catch up on gossip, Black shakes their head in disbelief.

BLACK  
Twenty-two years old. Already he was on probation.

GRAY  
Supervising these little kids?

Black counts points on their fingers.

BLACK  
Assaulted an eight-year-old. Caught  
with alcohol. And marijuana.

Gray suit nods.

GRAY  
Three strikes and you're out, man.

Black laughs.

BLACK  
Great deal for everyone.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Young Miguel at the plaintiff's table, anxious Mom and Dad next to him, with ROBERT HODGES, 45, who faces the bench.

Across the aisle, Jim Stratford, handcuffed, head bandaged, seething and defiant, squeezed between FAT COP, late 20s, and

BART OTTERBINE, mid-30s, scrawny lawyer in a cheap suit.

JUDGE, late 50s, bangs his gavel, reviews documents.

JUDGE  
Order.

Noisy crowd settles down, FRIENDS of the Danko family on one side, a handful of CAMP STAFF on the other.

Tough-looking BAILIFF, mid-30s, stands next to the bench.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUANITA STRATFORD, late 30s, frets in the front row, wears faded black linen shirt, a piece of turquoise on a string, small silver-cuff earrings.

Looks on as her slacker son stands trial, again.

Juanita's arms around YOUNG BENJY STRATFORD, 8, and YOUNG LAURA STRATFORD, 6, scared but curious in thrift-shop rags.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hodges shuffles papers.

JUDGE  
Thank you for the clarification,  
Mr. Hodges, that's all.

HODGES  
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE  
Stand for the verdict!

Jim and Otterbine jump up, startled.

Fat Cop lumbers to his feet, glares at Jim.

JUDGE (CONT'D)  
This court finds James Stratford  
guilty as charged on all counts.

JIM STRATFORD  
Fuck!

Benjy and Laura's mouths drop open.

JUDGE  
Quiet! One more outburst like that  
and your sentence is going to get  
significantly longer, young man.

JUANITA  
Oh! Jimmy. Oh.

Tears stream down Juanita's face.

She hugs the kids closer.

OTTERBINE  
Your honor, I feel that --

JUDGE  
Quiet, Mr. Otterbine. You simply  
didn't have much to work with here,  
counselor.

Otterbine looks at Jim.

Tries not to shrug.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

For assaulting a minor, criminal negligence, violation of parole, and for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, you are sentenced to three years in the state penitentiary.

Juanita sobs, Jim shifts his fury to Miguel.

JIM STRATFORD

You little fucker! I'm gonna kill you, punk!

Crowd erupts, Judge bangs the gavel, BAM! BAM! BAM!

JUDGE

Contempt! I'm giving you another ninety days. Court's adjourned.

BAM! with the gavel. Judge nods to Bailiff.

Miguel's Mom scowls at Jim, trembling with equal fury.

MOM

You got what you deserve.

JIM STRATFORD

You bitch!

Jim shoves Otterbine aside, lunges across the aisle, Fat Cop reacts too late, Jim collides with Hodges, smacks him in the face, People gasp.

JUANITA

No!

Jim raises his manacled hands, knocks Miguel's Mom to the floor, kicks her.

JUDGE

Stop!

Jim freaks out, on a rampage, Bailiff leaps forward, Jim dives at Miguel, Bailiff tackles Jim.

Miguel scrambles out of reach.

Bailiff restrains Jim against the railing. Miguel's Dad and Fat Cop kneel to check on Mom.

Pistol grip protrudes from Fat Cop's holster.

Miguel reaches for it, snaps it loose.

He pulls the service revolver with both hands. Fat Cop turns, too late. Oblivious Bailiff struggles to hoist tussling Jim up onto the railing, turns him around, gets him to his feet.

Miguel cocks the hammer, clicks off safety, steps forward.

Jim spins and breaks away, elbows the Bailiff in the face, snarls at Miguel, ready for more in the frozen moment.

BOOM! Miguel shoots him in the chest, dead center.

FLASH FORWARD:

INT. DR. ALICIA ZHENG'S OFFICE - EVENING (2005)

Adult Miguel looks at Alicia, her mouth hangs open.

ALICIA

Oh my god.

They almost laugh, tension collapses.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Wow. Miguel, I really, I thank you for bringing this out, like this. It's just really astounding.

MIGUEL

They called it justifiable.

He nods.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

I did go to counseling, for two years. After fifth grade we all just kind of moved on. I always thought psychotherapy must be total bullshit. Now, I'm just feeling desperate. I might be crazy, but I'm strong, I gotta find a way to get right with this.

Alicia shifts in her chair, sits up straight, still stunned.

ALICIA

All right. Well, I'm very eager to talk to you further. About this. To help you, with, whatever issues you feel you would like to talk about.

She manages a warm smile.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
If you think you want to move  
forward with it.

MIGUEL  
I do. Please. I'm ready. Just tell  
me what's next, doctor.

ALICIA  
I'd like to hear more about how  
you're feeling. Self-confidence is  
going to be your most powerful tool  
for working through this. Can you  
come back tomorrow?

EXT. TRAILER PARK / SACRAMENTO - DAY

A beat-up yellow camper truck scrunches to a stop in the  
gravel next to an ancient trailer.

ADULT BENJY STRATFORD, 25, frustrated grease monkey, jumps  
out of the truck, slams the door, runs up the flimsy steps.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Juanita Stratford, now late 50s, in black t-shirt with  
turquoise pendant, silver hoop earrings, gets up from  
the kitchen table, Benjy shambles in.

JUANITA  
Aw, Jesus.

She grabs her bag, and a pale blue smock on a hanger.

JUANITA (CONT'D)  
Laura! Come on.

BENJY  
Sorry, Ma.

She kisses him on the cheek.

JUANITA  
I'm used to it.

ADULT LAURA STRATFORD, 23, emerges from bedroom, schoolbooks  
in hand, smoking-hot renegade cowgirl in skimpy tank top.

Silver booty shorts, cloud of smoke, she fluffs her hair,  
Juanita sniffs the air.

JUANITA (CONT'D)  
Jesus, girl, where the fuck you  
gettin' money for weed?

Laura scrambles out the door. Juanita follows, screen door  
slams. Benjy sits down at the table.

Glances at the window, hears truck wheels spit gravel.

He winces at his grease-stained clothes. Elbows on the table,  
stares at a stinky stack of crusty dishes overflowing the  
kitchen sink.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Camper truck tires squeal, Laura weaves across two lanes,  
speeding, barely brings it under control, music blasting.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Laura drives, Juanita turns down radio.

JUANITA  
Can't hear myself think! Why you  
wanna get high before school, girl?

Laura turns the volume back up.

She floors the gas past a sign for 'I-5 - Sacramento'  
swerves and takes it up to sixty.

They hit the highway, Laura glances left, merges in fast  
traffic, a flurry of honking horn blasts.

Juanita turns the radio down again.

JUANITA (CONT'D)  
Aw come on Laura, just get me to  
work in one piece, darlin', I'd  
rather be late than dead.

Laura swerves, stays in the right lane, floors it.

She looks for a slot in the fast lane, looks down,  
reaches for the radio.

LAURA  
I want some god-damn music, mama.

A slow car pulls off the shoulder, Laura looking at radio, gas pedal on the floor, Juanita screams.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Their truck impales the car, SMASH! Rolls counter-clockwise.

Airborne they bounce off an eighteen-wheeler in the fast lane, brakes squeal.

The camper truck spins sideways into a high-speed roll, shredded sheet metal and sparks fly.

EXT. CORPORATE CAMPUS / PALO ALTO - AFTERNOON

Slick tech center parking lot full of pricey new sports cars, outdated gray Nissan 300ZX at the far end of a row.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICES - AFTERNOON

Miguel carries a precarious stack of computer parts through cube farm of WORKERS, 20s, bumps into THREE PROGRAMMERS, 30s.

One of them taps Miguel's shoulder, Another yanks his tie, the Third trips him, his burden crashes to the floor.

MIGUEL

Thanks guys, really. Great to see you're stayin' sharp.

THIRD

You long way from Starbucks homie.

They scamper back to work, Miguel picks up his gear.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Dozens of high-tech server stacks hum to the cha-ching sound of spreadsheets, bandwidth and low sperm counts.

Miguel scrutinizes a large flat-screen.

He's in cheap geek striped shirt and sparkly tie.

Worn gray pants too short at the ankles, cheap shoes from Aldo, looks like he's here to fix the copier.

MIGUEL  
What the hell just happened? Tell  
me I'm not crazy here.

NICK DENNIS, 30s, stubbly mustache yet still less geeky  
by a very slim margin, points at an adjacent workstation.

NICK  
It crashed.

MIGUEL  
What the fuck?

NICK  
Dude, the main server crashed.

Miguel bangs on the keyboard.

MIGUEL  
How?

NICK  
Hey this wasn't my fault. Did you  
just run that upgrade? Oops. Haha.

Miguel leans over, stares at the other screen, pushes Nick  
out of the way, types in code.

He hammers the keyboard, frantic.

MIGUEL  
I'm screwed.

INT. LARGE LAVISH PRO SHRINK'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Cavernous space furnished with relics of the previous  
millennium, Alicia fidgets in a luxurious armchair.

She moves to rest herself gently on the edge of a massive  
antique wooden desk, her flawless posture erect.

She tilts her slender neck, wears a snug designer blouse,  
fitted skirt, new glasses.

DR. VICTOR SPENCER, late 40s, surrounded in his plush sanctum  
by trophies of academic power, gazes at his protégé.

ALICIA  
It sounds as though he's adjusted  
to what happened. But obviously not  
entirely.

(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Subconsciously it's a ton of stress. Have you ever heard of anything like --

VICTOR

An eight-year-old vigilante who got away with murder?

ALICIA

Don't say that, Victor.

VICTOR

Why not?

ALICIA

Because it's not true. The law was fully on his side. I need to find a way to help him work through this.

VICTOR

All right, well, what do you think?

ALICIA

I'm trying to focus on helping him, I mean I'm just getting started, he's my only client so far.

VICTOR

Alicia, it takes time, to build a practice, I know.

She stands, paces.

ALICIA

The new office is much more than I budgeted for.

VICTOR

It's a great location. Down the road you'll find that's important, it'll help you.

ALICIA

I'm sure he wondered why I was able to see him right away.

Victor shrugs.

VICTOR

Sounds like he's receptive though. Could be a very lucrative long-term case for you. That's important.

Alicia shrugs. Looks pensive.

ALICIA

Well, he thinks part of his problem is his drinking.

VICTOR

Hmm. The other part of his problem is probably thinking that's only part of his problem.

ALICIA

So you're saying that you think that him thinking that the drinking is only part of his problem might be the other part of his problem?

VICTOR

Yes, that's right, that's what I'm thinking.

ALICIA

Victor, how can you say that?

VICTOR

Believe me it's not easy.

Alicia frowns.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Psychiatry is difficult, for everyone involved. Alicia, I know you know this. You know this whole thing is going to take time. With respect, I appreciate your diligence; you're entirely qualified, you're ready.

Alicia looks up, tears in her eyes.

ALICIA

The drinking is just a symptom. Miguel's got severe PTSD. I've never even treated a case, I'm so out of my depth.

VICTOR

This is the work.

ALICIA

How do I deal with this?

She tries to hold back, sobs, wipes her face, angry.

VICTOR  
You don't have to deal with it. You just have to try and help him deal with it. Right?

ALICIA  
Right.

VICTOR  
It's always traumatic, when we experience a transference, especially guilt, anger, fear, that's completely off the chart. What do you have in your actual experience that you could possibly compare it to?

ALICIA  
Mmm.

She plops back into the cushy chair, looks at the ceiling.

VICTOR  
You've got to trust the process.

ALICIA  
I feel so vulnerable. Like he can see right through me.

VICTOR  
HE feels vulnerable. He put something huge on the table. You're getting it from him.

ALICIA  
Oh. Ah.

VICTOR  
You have to help him feel strong enough to keep carrying this, while you both evaluate it, but you can't take it on, yourself. It's a balancing act.

ALICIA  
Ugh. I know.

Victor struts across the room, Alicia pushes herself up out of her chair.

VICTOR  
You can do this work, Doctor Zheng.

She rolls her eyes but gives him a smile.

ALICIA  
Thank you, Victor.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

VICTOR  
NOW, you're a professional. You might need help getting your practice off the ground. You've done what you can, so far. Just keep moving forward.

ALICIA  
Thanks. I think this case'll work out fine, I think I'm just even more worried about the whole starting the office, the business, the budget.

Wheels turning, Victor smiles with a super bright idea, shrugs, no problem.

VICTOR  
Let me loan you some money.

Alicia steps away, surprised.

ALICIA  
Oh come on.

VICTOR  
An investment, in your business. How about twenty thousand?

ALICIA  
What?

VICTOR  
Get your office rent fully covered, for the first six months or so. That might take some of the pressure off.

ALICIA  
Victor, that's very generous. It really would help me out. But --

VICTOR  
Believe me, I can afford it. Think of it as a five-year loan. Don't even worry about it.

He gently puts his arm around her.

ALICIA  
Oh my god.

She steps away.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
I am such an idiot.

Hands on hips.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
You want to fuck me. You want to  
loan me money, so you can fuck me.

She huffs, heads for the door, Victor chuckles.

VICTOR  
Alicia, no, that's not true, I  
mean, listen --

She makes her escape, BAM! slams the door in his face.

INT. HIGH-TECH EXECUTIVE OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Huge windows overlook sprawling corporate campus.

VALERIE BRENYOK, 19, hyper-intense African tech genius  
with meticulously crafted hair, scowls at a sleek new  
notebook mega-machine from behind her queen-sized glass desk.

She hacks the central mainframe server.

System code cascades down a monitor, Nick and Miguel lean  
forward in their chairs.

NICK  
We tested it last week.

BRENYOK  
Miguel, why is the latest back-up  
three days old?

MIGUEL  
I couldn't, I didn't get to it.

BRENYOK  
For two days you didn't get to it.  
You know why it's called a 'daily'  
back-up, right? Fucking networking  
essentials, page one.

Miguel shrinks from Brenyok's withering glare.

BRENYOK (CONT'D)  
 You just cost us twenty K. I'd take  
 it out of your paycheck if I could.  
 Fuck. All right, where were we?

NICK  
 Hack the stack and bring it back,  
 right? Livin' the dream.

BRENYOK  
 Yeah yeah, always an adventure,  
 right. Nick, just go and get the  
 replacement installed. Accommodate  
 me, please, run system checks,  
 three times a day, all right?

Nick scampers out the door, Miguel keeps sweating.

BRENYOK (CONT'D)  
 You. Run the damn back-up, every  
 day. Daily, all right? That means  
 every fucking day.

Brenyok winces with disgust, shakes her head.

BRENYOK (CONT'D)  
 You long way from Starbucks homie.

MIGUEL  
 You too?

Brenyok tilts her head, swats the air.

BRENYOK  
 What? You're still here.

EXT. HOSPITAL / SACRAMENTO - EVENING

Benjy trudges from the road to the main entrance,  
 anxious, sweaty and tired.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM / ICU - EVENING

Juanita lies bandaged, unconscious. Laura sits, uninjured,  
 wears hospital robe, frustrated DOCTOR, 50s, enters.

DOCTOR  
 Miss Stratford, you should rest.  
 There's nothing you can do.

Laura stumbles over to the bed, takes Juanita's hand.

LAURA  
Oh, Mama. Oh, god. I don't believe  
this. Damn it.

Tears stream down her face.

Doctor puts a hand on her shoulder, steps away, looks at  
Juanita, checks the EKG.

DOCTOR  
Her pulse is very weak.

Doctor pushes the call button.

LAURA  
Is she --

DOCTOR  
Please, stand back. Just sit down.

LAURA  
Make up your mind asshole.

Doctor adjusts a machine, checks Juanita's breathing.

A NURSE, mid-20s, hustles in, gives Juanita an injection.

Laura falls back in the chair. EKG beeps slower.

DOCTOR  
She'll make it. Hang on.

INT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

Benjy lumbers, exhausted, along a corridor, shows I.D. at the  
information desk, gets a visitor badge.

INT. ELEVATOR - EVENING

Benjy watches numbered lights, grim face frozen, catatonic.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Laura tries to get close to Juanita, Nurse gently pushes her  
back in the chair, EKG flat-lines, BEEEEEEEP.

Doctor scrambles to get defibrillator paddles on Juanita's  
chest, TWO NURSES, 20s, assist on the I.V. and the machine.

DOCTOR

Clear!

They deliver the jolt, PACHUNKA!

Juanita's body convulses. Nothing. They check vital signs, Doctor shakes head, Laura shrieks, breaks down sobbing.

Door opens, Benjy shuffles in.

EXT. CORPORATE CAMPUS / PALO ALTO - AFTERNOON

Workers flow out to parking lot, evening road rally, Jaguars, Hummers, Aston Martins race for the exits.

Miguel loosens his tie, hops in his vintage Nissan 300ZX.

EXT. UPSCALE LIQUOR STORE - AFTERNOON

Miguel strolls around the corner with a spring in his step.

INT. UPSCALE LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Miguel enters, his eyes light up.

He nods to CASHIER, 20s, hot disdainful Tank-Girl clone who ignores him, he wanders to a cold case.

Reaches for two-liter ginger ale, puts it back.

Gets a sixteen-ounce, grabs a pint flask of bourbon, then selects a fifth instead.

INT. LIQUOR STORE / CASH REGISTER - MOMENTS LATER

CLUNK! Huge half-gallon handle of whiskey on the counter.

Next to it Miguel puts a tiny 10-ounce can of soda, DOINK.

Cashier rings it up, gives him a look.

CASHIER

Havin' a little party there, BRO?

MIGUEL

MAYBE.

EXT. DRAB APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Miguel carries a brown paper bag from car to stairway.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

Miguel trudges in, shuts door, flips on glaring overhead light, kicks off shoes.

Empties pockets onto a large cardboard box.

Takes off his cheap-ass funky tie, swings it around strip-tease style, drops it on the floor.

Cradles the bag and moves to the kitchen.

INT. TINY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Miguel hoists the bottle out of the bag.

Delivers it to the counter, fetches a pint glass, rattles the fridge ice machine until it coughs up three or four chunks.

He pops the can of soda, PSSSST.

Pours a splash of ginger ale over ice, listens to bubbles, cracks open the whiskey, CLICK.

Fills the huge glass with bourbon, BLOONKA BLOONKA BLOONKA.

Finally smiles. Holds his trophy. Sighs.

MIGUEL

Ah, happy hour.

He tilts the glass to his face, URKLE URKLE URKLE URKLE.

INT. WINDOWLESS BEDROOM - EVENING

Miguel takes off his shirt, chugs a fresh drink, sets his empty glass on the floor.

CLICK, flips a switch on a power strip.

Small futon littered with clothes occupies one corner, piled next to it, dozens of video game controllers.

Power cord hangs from overhead light fixture to notebook and video projector on a step-ladder, secured with duct tape.

'CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS' menu screen lights up the entire wall, speakers BOOM. He shuts the bedroom door.

INT. BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

POW-POW-POW!! BOOM! KAPOW! Video-game slaughter.

Sounds of gunfire, soldiers shouting.

The game soundtrack carries Miguel forward on his mission, he crouches in the darkness, shoots to kill, POW-POW-POW-POW, POW-POW-POW-POW, holding

a 'Guitar Hero' plastic guitar.

Hacked by a total geek genius.

Wires sticking out, components duct-taped, wired and bolted on, trigger mechanisms, infrared wireless port.

His customized multi-function controller for the entire lethal BLACK OPS arsenal.

Beam of video projector splashes the dynamic display on a wall eight by fifteen feet, "keystone"-adjusted to perfect alignment with the corners, untouched by the hero's shadow.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Miguel pours a fresh drink, phone rings.

MIGUEL  
Mmm, hey Nick.

NICK (FILTERED)  
Dead or alive, man? Party over on Lake Avenue.

MIGUEL  
Oof, I don't think so.

NICK (FILTERED)  
Come on, pussy.

Miguel drains his drink.

MIGUEL  
Lemme take a shower.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Miguel's Nissan creeps through a wealthy neighborhood.

He parks near a driveway full of cars, stumbles out, waves his arms at Nick, rambles across the lawn.

EXT. PATIO / PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

REVELERS, 20s and 30s, dance and drink, MUSIC RAGES.

Nick leads Miguel through the crowd to a group of HOT YOUNG GIRLS, 20s, Girls shred skateboard tricks.

EXT. PATIO - SERIES OF SHOTS

Miguel, Nick, Revelers and Girls mix blender drinks and do shots, suck down shooters, the party KICKS UP A NOTCH.

A handful of Girls and Revelers strip down and light up their props, juggle flaming fire, spin flaming hoops.

They swing loops of flames and LED-light rigs in a cavorting super-sideshow at the back of the lawn.

Girls laugh, Nick pushes Miguel into the pool.

Girls push other Girls in.

Splish-splash they rip each other's bikini tops off and

SCREAM!

Miguel extricates himself, scoots away.

Pukes in the bushes.

He washes his face with a garden hose, away from the crowd.

A Reveler sits on a glass-top side table, CRASH!

A Girl throws the broken table's metal base through a sliding glass door, SMASH! Full-on millennial mayhem.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - LATE NIGHT

Nick waves, stumbles to his car, disappears into the night.

Miguel wobbles across the lawn, lights a cigarette, struggles to open the car door.

INT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

Miguel drives with one eye closed, zig-zags through empty residential streets.

EXT. STREET - LATE NIGHT

Miguel has the road to himself, 300ZX gains speed up to fifty, takes a curve too close.

Hops across the median to the wrong side, sparks fly.

Swerves back over the median on two wheels, clips a road sign, parts fall off, he swerves and straightens out, disappears in the distance.

INT. DR. ALICIA ZHENG'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Alicia takes notes, she and Miguel relax in opposite chairs.

Closer together than before.

Her elegant space appears slightly more organized, designed with clarity and focus.

ALICIA

So Miguel, let me ask you something. Why come to me for help now, after all this time?

MIGUEL

Yeah, I guess I just thought it would've, gone away by now. But, I mean, I still wonder about it all the time. So I'm confused.

ALICIA

About what?

MIGUEL

How I should feel.

ALICIA

How DO you feel?

MIGUEL

Guilty? But kind of like I should, be over it by now? Just let it be in the past, you know?

ALICIA

Well, obviously, no. I DON'T know.  
Not really.

They gaze into each other's eyes.

MIGUEL

Well, I was just a kid. Now ...

ALICIA

What?

MIGUEL

I drink a lot. I guess I'm worried.

ALICIA

Do you think, you're drinking,  
because you're feeling guilty? You  
did kill a man. But the law said it  
was justified. And you know it was  
justified.

MIGUEL

Yes. And it was just a reflex. It's  
weird. The gun was just right there  
in front of me. It seemed like a  
natural thing to do.

He closes his eyes.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

I already got a piece of him, you  
know, at the campground, with the  
machete. That was the same way.  
Reflex. I was angry. Because he  
attacked me. So I defended myself.

ALICIA

Wow.

Pity and admiration, Alicia's deeply intrigued. She studies  
him, stretches her shoulders, adjusts her glasses.

MIGUEL

I mean, you think you can help me  
figure this out? Or am I just like  
some kind of case study for you?

ALICIA

Miguel, it's not like that at all,  
I'm just ...

MIGUEL

Shocked?

ALICIA

A lot. And also, around this intense experience of yours, I'm trying to be gentle, and get to know you, so we can dig deeper.

Miguel lets out a deep breath.

MIGUEL

I appreciate that.

ALICIA

You've been carrying this around for a while. It might take some time for me to understand your feelings.

She takes off her glasses.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

This work process is really all for you. You'll be the one to solve your own problems. With radical acceptance of whatever helps you cope, while you're doing the work.

MIGUEL

Oh.

ALICIA

Yes. If you choose to drink during our session, that's really none of my business. As your therapist, I'm primarily concerned with talking about topics that you choose to focus on.

MIGUEL

I didn't think you knew.

ALICIA

Even if I did, all I'm suggesting is that part of coping is to embrace your own choices. I respect you, and I know that you respect yourself. Self-medicating can be a stepping stone to personal freedom.

(MORE)

ALICIA (CONT'D)

As long as you get full awareness of where you are on your journey, and why. Seek that freedom.

MIGUEL

Wow, I guess I'm the one who should be taking notes here.

ALICIA

I'm taking notes, which I'll share with you at our next session. And any personal workarounds you choose for your journey, for reconnecting with your joy in life, those things are totally legit.

MIGUEL

Sure. Wow. I appreciate that. I actually feel kind of like we're making some progress.

ALICIA

Good. So let's focus some more on your experiences since then. You've tried to repress this memory, but it's a memory that can't be repressed. If you CONFRONT the past, eventually you'll feel better able to come to terms with it. And with your future.

MIGUEL

Wow. Damn. You're good. I haven't thought about any of that stuff since Sunday-school class.

ALICIA

Are you Catholic?

MIGUEL

Not any more.

EXT. CORPORATE CAMPUS - AFTERNOON

The Nissan's tailpipe drags against the asphalt, the wreck limps into the parking lot, rattling, battered and smoking, leaking fluids.

Miguel parks, gets out, reluctantly drifts away from his car.

INT. OFFICE / KITCHENETTE - AFTERNOON

Miguel ducks into a secluded upscale oasis.

He pours Nicaraguan marching powder into the coffee maker.

Listens to the joyful snorkling sound, brewing fresh java,  
URKLE URKLE URKLE.

Pyrex carafe fills and steams.

Miguel empties a sugar canister into a paper cup, keeps  
pouring, sugar spills on the counter.

He takes off his tie.

Drops it on the floor.

Pulls out a credit card, chops lines of sugar, grabs a straw,  
snorts a line, a tiny sparkling disco ball floats by.

#### DAYDREAM SEQUENCE

DJ-club magic, more disco balls drift around,  
playa dust on the floor, ambient EDM music  
bubbles up from the underground.

Miguel looks at himself in a giant mirror.

He's shirtless, extra chest hair, soul patch, piercings,  
samurai hairdo, bulging muscles.

Shitkicker boots, assless chaps flaunting a huge package,  
he flounces.

Turns to admire his own ass.

The wall of cabinets flips open,

FIVE TOPLESS COWGIRLS, 20s, dance on a giant booze bar  
adorned with multi-colored lights,

Burning Man in the coffee kitchen.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Floundering crowd, three dozen BRC PARTY KIDS, 20s,  
sparkling RIPPED LASER-BABES and FUNKY HUNKY WOOKS.

Twerking like mad, Black Rock City, dueling DJs on five  
different stages.

Is it ALISON WONDERLAND and MARKUS SCHULTZ? ARMIN VAN BUREN!  
MAGDA, CASSY, OAKENFOLD?! ANJA SCHNEIDER?

200-foot dust-devils swoop down from mountain foothills.

Alicia appears, wearing all pink, pussy hat, bolero jacket,  
pleated mini-skirt, furry cave-woman boots swaddle slim  
gorgeous calves.

She spins fast, twirling in a blur.

Glitter and henna adorn her face, bubbles glimmer in space.

Centrifugal force spins her jacket open, her skirt aloft,  
skimpy gold lingerie, kissy face.

She whispers in his ear.

ALICIA  
Miguel. It's happy hour.  
Welcome home.

BLORNK. TURNTABLE NEEDLE SCRATCH

INT. CORPORATE KITCHENETTE - AFTERNOON

Miguel holds coffee cup, nose splorched with white powder,  
tie knotted around his head.

Face-to-face with Brenyok.

BRENYOK  
Hello? Miguel? Hello?

Miguel snaps back to present moment.

BRENYOK (CONT'D)  
What the fuck are you doing?

MIGUEL  
Ah. Yeah. Coffee.

BRENYOK  
My office.

INT. BRENYOK'S COOL OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Miguel's mangled tie hangs crumpled around his collar.  
Face almost clean, except for sprinkles of sugary glitter.  
Brenyok cherishes the moment, pushes paper across desk.

BRENYOK  
Sign it. You're fired.

MIGUEL  
I'm so sorry, I'm never late. I had  
a doctor's appointment.

BRENYOK  
Miguel, you're always late. You  
must think I'm fucking stupid.

Miguel looks at the paper.

BRENYOK (CONT'D)  
Standard non-disclosure, we're  
going to waive the non-compete, so  
you can look for another job, if  
you think you can find one. Don't  
count on me for a reference.

Miguel takes a deep breath.

MIGUEL  
Can't I --

BRENYOK  
It's done. I cleared it with HR  
three weeks ago. You've been on the  
ropes for a month. You come in hung-  
over every fucking day. It's over.  
Don't come back.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MORNING

Laura and Benjy slump in the front row of a musty chapel.  
Tuneless organ music drones.

Dark burgundy carpet smells of mothballs, a handful of  
MOURNERS, 40s, gather in whispers.

MORTICIAN, 60s, presides over the open casket containing  
Juanita's embalmed corpse.

Laura gets herself up, looks around, tearful.

She sidles over to view her mom's body.

Puts flowers by the coffin.

A WOMAN, 50s, steps up to hold her hand.

Bart Otterbine, now mid-50s, sits down next to Benjy.

OTTERBINE

Benjamin. I'm sorry for your loss.

BENJY

What're you, some kinda ambulance chaser?

Otterbine reaches out to shake hands.

OTTERBINE

You don't remember. I'm Bartholomew Otterbine. I was --

BENJY

Oh, Jimmy's lawyer. I do remember. Lotta good ya did. Shit.

Benjy turns away, Otterbine withdraws his hand. Mourners begin to leave the chapel.

OTTERBINE

I can't tell you how sorry I am, how sorry, I was. And now --

BENJY

All right. Thanks.

OTTERBINE

Benjamin, I'd like you to come to my office, this week, if you would.

Benjy gives him a quizzical look.

OTTERBINE (CONT'D)

I have your mother's will. I need you to finalize her estate.

BENJY

Huh. Bills, you mean. Shit.

Laura wanders over, Benjy waves her away.

OTTERBINE

No, no, it's all just about paid up, you'll get the deed to your .. home. And a small savings account. It's worth your while, I just need you to sign some things. Settle a few accounts.

Hands him a card, Benjy nods, puts it in his pocket.

INT. DR. ALICIA ZHENG'S OFFICE - MORNING

Alicia opens the door for Miguel.

ALICIA

Hey, Miguel, welcome back.

MIGUEL

Thanks. Wow, you're tall.

ALICIA

Oh, haha, I'm wearing heels today.

MIGUEL

What if I told you, tall people know they're tall.

ALICIA

Haha, I know, right?! Do you really think that's air you're breathing?

They laugh and gently fist-bump.

Alicia wears new glasses that elevate her beauty, a sleek silk suit brings forward her strong feminine power.

Miguel appears a bit strung-out. Yet confident somehow, freshly-showered, better dressed.

MIGUEL

How are you, doctor?

He edges past her, looks around, scans her nice new decor.

She can smell his cologne. It smells good to her.

ALICIA

I'm fine, Miguel. You?

She puts the last of her empty boxes by the door. Gives him the once-over, unbuttons a button on her blouse.

MIGUEL  
I'm all right.

They sit.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)  
So, you just moved in here?

ALICIA  
I moved down from SF.

Unconsciously she unbuttons another button, crosses her legs.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
I've been thinking a lot, about  
what you told me last week.

MIGUEL  
Me too. I really need help.

ALICIA  
That's why we're here.

MIGUEL  
I got fired.

ALICIA  
What? Oh. When did this happen?

MIGUEL  
Friday. I was out drinking, the  
night before. A lot. I was late for  
work. Again. I guess it's been  
building up for a while.

ALICIA  
I'm so sorry to hear about that.

Miguel gets up, cruises around the room.

He scans her newly-hung pictures and certifications, sticks  
his nose closer to a framed top-level shrink-school diploma.

MIGUEL  
How long have you been a shrink?

ALICIA  
Well, I just, um, it's .. my first  
year of practice, actually.

MIGUEL  
What? Wait, is this your first  
office? You just started?

ALICIA  
Well, yes. To be honest.

He sits back down.

MIGUEL  
Holy shit. Am I your first patient?

ALICIA  
Yes. I'm being totally honest.

MIGUEL  
Oh my god, I don't fucking believe  
this. Am I, your ONLY patient?

ALICIA  
I have all my credentials, I'm just  
starting, to build a practice, it  
takes time.

Miguel stands up, wanders in a circle.

MIGUEL  
Doctor. Alicia. Can I just call you  
Alicia?

ALICIA  
Of course.

She stands also, eager to reassure him.

MIGUEL  
I mean, I appreciate, I'm sure  
you're, qualified. I just thought --

ALICIA  
Miguel, let's talk about this. I  
really want to help you.

INT. OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Miguel and Alicia kiss with pent-up enthusiasm, hands all  
over each other in passionate embrace of new-found lust.

Alicia pushes Miguel against the wall. She drags him onto the  
couch, pulls him on top of her, he kisses her neck, slides  
his hand under her skirt.

MIGUEL  
Alicia.

ALICIA

I need it.

They tumble onto the new carpet. She straddles him, wriggles out of her shirt. His face reveals complete surprise, she peels off her bra, rolls over and unzips his pants.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - MORNING

Benjy emerges from the trailer, clomps down the wobbly plywood steps.

Wipes his hands on his pants. Scowling with fatigue, he trudges up the road.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Benjy scuffles along the shoulder, miles to go. Resolute, pissed-off, confused, empty. Doesn't bother to hitchhike.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Benjy stalks in, sweaty and grim.

He stares down the CLERK, 18, who averts his gaze. Benjy gets a soda from the cold-case, drops some change on the counter and walks out.

INT. OTTERBINE'S SMALL-TOWN LAW OFFICE - DAY

Benjy drags himself through the door, dusty and irritable, startles LUCY, 30s, busy at her desk.

LUCY

Oh! Uh. Can I help you?

BENJY

Benjy Stratford. Lookin' for Mr. Otterbine. He asked me to come by.

Flustered, she pushes a button on her desk console.

LUCY

Just a minute, please.

Benjy clenches his jaw, stares at her, she gets up, scrambles for the back-office door, Otterbine opens it.

OTTERBINE

Oh. Thank you. Yes. Benjamin.  
Please, come in.

Lucy scampers out of the way, backs up against the wall.

Benjy swaggers through the door, Otterbine follows.

INT. OTTERBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Benjy's face, a barely-contained mask of anger.

He doesn't like being indoors.

Reluctantly, he sits.

Otterbine settles in behind his desk, opens a file folder.

OTTERBINE

Benjamin. Mister Stratford. I'm  
very sorry for your loss.

Otterbine pulls out papers, sets the file aside.

BENJY

What's that?

He jumps up, stomps around the desk.

Otterbine reaches for the file.

Benjy slams his hand on the desk, pushes Otterbine away.

His chair rolls ten feet, crashes against the wall.

OTTERBINE

I just wanted to settle your  
mother's small estate. It requires  
your signature.

BENJY

Estate you mean bills, I wanna know  
just how this is gonna work. Trust  
a lawyer 'bout as far as I can  
throw ya. Not even that much. 'Cuz  
I could throw ya pretty far.

Benjy flips through the file.

Sifts back through a paltry seventeen years of legal  
paperwork, the Stratford file.

All the way to the buried back page.

He scans, reads, remembers.

Otterbine cowers, motionless.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
Holy shit.

Benjy can't believe his eyes. Memory floods back.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
Miguel Danko. Plaintiff for  
assault, Stockton. He killed Jimmy.  
Fuck.

He rips the page from the file, heads for the door.

OTTERBINE  
You can't take that, Benjamin,  
don't do that.

Benjy stalks over and GLURP! grabs Otterbine's throat.

BENJY  
I REMEMBER. Oh I remember now, you  
just stay the fuck outta this, keep  
quiet all right? Far as your  
concerned this case is closed.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Benjy shuffles across a dusty parking lot next to a quiet country road, a desolate junkyard full of old muscle cars, he drifts toward a crumbling cinder-block bunker.

Kicks an empty beer can into the garage.

KEVIN GRANT, 19, looks out from under the hood of a car.

BENJY  
Hey.

Kevin sets down his wrench, wipes grease on his shirt, tranquil as the day is long.

KEVIN  
Hey, you. Coming back to work?  
Things're pilin' up, man.

BENJY

Not for a while. Bet you can handle the big rush, huh? Got a waitin' list now?

KEVIN

Shit I might need to hire some real help, 'stead of a slacker like you.

BENJY

You're bustin' my balls, Hans, you're bustin' my balls.

Benjy nods in the direction of the junkyard.

BENJY (CONT'D)

Think your old man won't care if I borrow that sixty-four Chevy for a week or two?

KEVIN

Yeah, that's all right. Runs good. Where ya goin'?

Kevin gets keys from a cabinet, chucks them over.

BENJY

Mmm, need to get away for a minute.

KEVIN

I guess. Sorry 'bout your ma.

Benjy puts the keys in his pocket.

BENJY

Life's a bitch. Huh. So's my sister. But hell, we're free now, ain't we. Thanks for the car, man.

Kevin nods, carefully ducks back under the hood.

Benjy walks a few steps, then turns and comes back.

KEVIN

Whassup?

BENJY

You got a shotgun I could borrow?

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Miguel clears off cluttered kitchen counter.

He lays out tools and spare parts, tinkers with his Guitar Hero video-controller.

Goes to bedroom to test new gadget settings.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX / PALO ALTO - AFTERNOON

Miguel carries bins to his battered Nissan 300ZX in the parking lot, untwists a wire hanger.

Gets down on the asphalt, wires up his dangling muffler.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SERIES OF SHOTS

Miguel pops the hood, hammers out dents. Dumps out a box, finds tape, sandpaper and spray paint.

He sands away a few rough spots.

Tapes up lights and trim. Sprays on five cans of gray primer.

SUV pulls up, Nick gets out, walks over with a case of beer.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Nick unloads lunch and spray paint.

Miguel and Nick eat, drink and paint, bomb the car, graffiti-style; layers of color accumulate in a wild, edgy design.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Miguel and Nick drain their final beer bottles, drop them in a pile of garbage.

Under the streetlights, the Nissan glows, freshly-tagged, a crazy, spectacular new art car.

They peel off tape.

Wipe the windows with scrunched-up newspaper, fist-bump, step back and shoot photos with a cheap digital camera.

INT. TRAILER - MORNING

Laura folds clothes at the kitchen table, music plays.

Tears stream down her face.

She wipes them away with a dish towel, lights up a joint, drifts back and forth like a zombie amid cardboard boxes.

She piles knick-knacks on the counter.

Puffs the joint, fondles a small ceramic sombrero. She shakes her head, sobs, smashes the tchotchke against the wall.

EXT. TRAILER - MORNING

'Sacramento Police Department' car parks in driveway.

INT. TRAILER - MORNING

Laura opens the screen door, WALTER YOUNG, late 20s, local cop, comes in, takes his hat off.

WALTER

Hey, Laura, I was sorry to hear about your ma.

LAURA

Hey, Walter. Thanks, you know, that makes me feel a whole lot better, since I'm the one who killed her.

WALTER

Was an accident.

She notices the joint in the ashtray, stubs it out.

LAURA

Medical purposes.

Walter smiles.

WALTER

I'm looking for Benjy.

LAURA

He ain't here. Since ma's funeral.

She fidgets with her shirt.

WALTER

You still goin' to classes?

LAURA

I dunno. Community college? Where's it gonna get me?

She slumps into a chair.

WALTER

Listen, Laura, I got a problem.  
This lawyer from town, called in  
a complaint. Said Benjy threatened  
him. Sounds like he's kinda ..  
flyin' off the handle.

LAURA

Lawyer? That's a new one on me.  
Anyway, I dunno where he is, and  
you know, if I did, I prolly  
wouldn't tell ya.

EXT. HIGHWAY / MODESTO COUNTY - MORNING

Benjy drives south in a blue beat-up Chevy Malibu.

INT. CHEVY - MORNING

Eight-cylinder big-block rumbles.

Benjy maintains the speed limit, gazes out at the landscape,  
traffic opens up.

He nudges the gas, the engine roars, he gains speed.

BENJY

I'm gonna kill 'im, damn it, I'm  
gonna fuckin' kill 'im.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

The Chevy exits I-5 at a sign for 'Stockton'.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFÉ / PALO ALTO - MORNING

Superb architecture, lush foliage, upscale scenic  
entertainment district, flocks of LOCALS.

Miguel and Alicia get up from a table at an elegant  
Italian-style patio, red-and-white-striped awning.

Alicia wears beautiful casual fabrics, sporty Miguel with  
fashionable weekend stubble carries shopping bags.

They stroll away holding hands, cross the street, traffic  
light changes.

They laugh, quickly dash past honking horns for the curb.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Alicia puts her arm around Miguel.

MIGUEL  
So you think you won't mind, losing  
your only client?

ALICIA  
And gaining an awesome boyfriend.

They cross to a parking lot.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
Since I really can't see you as a  
client now anyway. Oops. But I can  
still help you work things out.

They stroll, she kisses him on the cheek.

MIGUEL  
Know what I'm gonna do next week?

ALICIA  
You're going to --

MIGUEL  
Make you a terrific web site, help  
you start up a spectacular new  
marketing plan and get clients for  
your new practice.

ALICIA  
Aw, that's a great idea.

MIGUEL  
Then, I'll find a new job. But  
first, I think you and I should  
head over to Yosemite for a week  
and go camping.

ALICIA  
Oh, yeah.

MIGUEL  
I need to get outdoors.

ALICIA  
Wow. That would do me good.

MIGUEL  
We could stop by my folks' house  
and get my tent and stuff.

ALICIA  
Right on. One question.

They stop between her green BMW and Miguel's wackadoodle  
300ZX graffiti project.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
Could we take my car?

INT. GAS STATION / GARAGE / SACRAMENTO - MORNING

Kevin walks around the car under repair, closes the hood,  
gets in, starts it up, smiles, engine roars, puts it in gear.

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

Kevin pulls out of the garage.

SCRRRNCH, hits the brakes, Walter's cop car stops right in  
front of him, they both turn off their engines and get out.

KEVIN  
Hey, Walter, what's up?

WALTER  
Hey, Kevin, how you doin'?

KEVIN  
Pretty good. What about you?

WALTER  
Nothin' much. Hey, listen, is  
Benjy around?

Kevin shakes his head.

KEVIN  
He came by, but he's takin' some  
time off. His mom and all.

WALTER  
Huh. Any idea where he went?

KEVIN  
Nope. I let 'im take that old blue  
Malibu. Sixty-four. Runs good.

Walter nods.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Oh. An' a gun.

INT. NISSAN 300ZX ART CAR - MORNING

Miguel looks in the rearview, holds phone to his ear.

Alicia in the BMW follows him on the highway.

MIGUEL  
Just another hour or so. My folks  
can't wait to meet you.

INT. BMW - MORNING

Lovers' convoy phone chat.

ALICIA  
You didn't tell them how we met,  
did you?

INT. NISSAN ART CAR - MORNING

Miguel laughs.

MIGUEL  
I'll let you tell 'em.

EXT. STREET / STOCKTON SUBURB - DAY

The Chevy crawls past mailboxes.

Benjy scans house numbers.

EXT. CRAFTSMAN-STYLE HOME - DAY

Benjy rings a doorbell, looks around, shotgun concealed  
beside the door frame, no one on the street.

Door opens, HOUSEWIFE, 40s.

BENJY  
Hello. Is this the Danko residence?  
I'm a friend of Miguel's.

HOUSEWIFE

Oh no, we've been here more than five years now. Used to get some of their mail, though. They moved closer to Modesto.

BENJY

Oh, that's right, I forgot. It's been a long time. Say, do you have their address, ma'am?

She frowns, tries to shut the door, he holds it open.

HOUSEWIFE

I'm sorry, I just don't --

BENJY

Is your husband home?

He swings the gun forward, steps in, pushes her.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benjy closes door, Housewife shrinks back, ready to scream.

BENJY

Just keep quiet. Gimme the address, all right? I'm not gonna cause you any trouble.

She stumbles to a writing desk, pulls out piles of envelopes.

EXT. CRAFTSMAN-STYLE HOME - DAY

Engine roars, tires squeal, the Chevy barrels away.

Housewife comes out the front door.

HOUSEWIFE

You come back here again you'll find out what's gonna happen to ya.

INT. STOCKTON POLICE STATION - DAY

Six COPS, 30s, take care of business.

'LOW-CAL', 40s, fridge-sized town cop, donut-snarfing monster, snakeskin cowboy boots, hangs up phone, rolls across the lobby.

LOW-CAL  
That Sacto APB? Benjy Stratford.  
Gotta be him.

COP  
How's that?

LOW-CAL  
Big blue car, she said, asked  
about the Dankos. She had to give  
Stratford their new address.

COP  
What the hell, why?

LOW-CAL  
Just about fell over when he  
walked in her living room with  
a damn shotgun.

COP  
Damn that's fucked-up.

LOW-CAL  
Checks out with the Otterbine  
report. He's goin' after the kid.  
Woman sound terrified. He didn't  
do nothin' to 'er, but --

COP  
Got the address?

LOW-CAL  
Yup. I'll call 'em, you take Bobby  
and git on over there, shouldn't  
take you more'n an hour. I'm gonna  
call Sacto, tell 'em we got a lead  
on this wacko.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Tastefully-landscaped contemporary home with brown  
Spanish-tile roof sports three-car garage, punctuated  
by stacked-stone columns in tan and gray.

Miguel and Alicia park their cars out front.

Mom, now mid-50s, and Dad, now mid-60s, joyfully come on  
out to greet them, gather around the Nissan, check out  
the new paint job.

The house phone rings. They don't hear it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mom arranges sandwiches on a platter.

Alicia pours lemonade.

MOM  
Great week ahead.

ALICIA  
Should be really nice, to get  
outdoors.

MOM  
I'm really happy for you two.

ALICIA  
Thanks! It's a big adventure.

They pick up the trays, almost collide in the doorway.

MOM  
He told you what happened.

ALICIA  
Of course.

MOM  
Please, go ahead dear.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Mom and Alicia bring trays out to a patio by the garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Miguel's Dad helps him push aside garden tools.

Reveals a dusty pile of camping equipment.

Dad sneezes from the dust, Miguel yanks out the gear,  
avalanche of antiquated crap crashes down.

They both sneeze and laugh.

Dad picks up a bundle of gear, chucks it out the open garage  
door. Miguel picks up a boxed tent and sleeping bag.

DAD  
Oh, hey.

Dad pulls out his wallet, hands Miguel some cash.

MIGUEL  
No no no. Dad, I'm doing great.

DAD  
Ah, just take it. Enjoy.

Miguel pockets the money.

MIGUEL  
Thanks.

DAD  
So work's going well? Market looks great.

MIGUEL  
Oh, yeah. You know, I'm actually looking around for something even better. Yeah.

DAD  
Hey, good for you, man.

Dad hugs Miguel, smacks him on the back, Miguel squirms.

DAD (CONT'D)  
You gotta get over here more often, just come back over any time, your Mom wants to see a lot more of you, you know? So do I.

MIGUEL  
Sure, yeah I will. I'll do that. Job search'll probably be keeping me pretty busy.

DAD  
Well just enjoy your camping and keep in touch once you get home.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Miguel, Alicia, Mom and Dad eat lunch around a table, camping gear spread out on the grass.

The house phone rings, they ignore it.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - LATER

Miguel and Alicia carry the camping gear to her car, they stow it in the back, exchange hugs with Mom and Dad.

They saddle up. The BMW drives away.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Mom washes dishes, Dad frowns, hangs up the phone.

DAD  
Honey, we just got a voicemail from  
a police officer, you're not gonna  
believe this.

The doorbell rings.

Miguel's Mom laughs, dries her hands.

MOM  
Oh, they must have forgotten  
something!

DAD  
Don't answer it.

She frowns, he steps in front of her, looks down the hall.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Benjy stands at the front door, shotgun in hand.

He looks around, tries the knob.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dad heads for the front door, Benjy pushes it open.

Dad stops, pushes Mom back in the kitchen.

DAD  
Call the police.

Benjy shuts the door.

Dad takes two steps to confront him, Benjy raises the gun.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Get the hell out of my house.

Benjy stalks forward.

BENJY  
That's some fucked-up car out  
front. Where is he?

Dad backs up, Mom dials the phone.

Benjy steps into the kitchen, smacks the phone from her hand,  
pushes her across the room.

Dad makes a move, pulls a large chef's knife from a knife  
block, hurls it at Benjy's face.

CLANG! He barely deflects it with the gun barrel.

BOOM! Benjy shoots Dad in the chest, Mom screams.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Benjy drags Mom, mouth gagged, hands tied, kicking and  
struggling, out to the car, dumps her on the asphalt.

He kicks her, pulls out his keys, opens the trunk.

INT. CHEVY - MINUTES LATER

Benjy cuts through a construction road, shotgun next to him.

Looks at a computer print-out map, sticks it on the dash.

BENJY  
Yosemite, huh? Well I'm right on  
your tail motherfucker.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MINUTES LATER

The Chevy cruises in the center lane heading east, blends in  
with traffic, passes an exit for a shopping mall.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Alicia and Miguel stroll across the parking lot.

EXT. OUTDOOR STORE - DAY

Windows full of camping equipment, they duck inside.

INT. OUTDOOR STORE - SERIES OF SHOTS

Alicia picks out clothes, Miguel gets a camp stove and fuel, bandannas, a hat. She holds up a gray sweater, flirts with him, smiles.

Miguel walks past a display of tools, does a double-take, sees a machete hanging there. He puts down his basket, takes the machete off the wall, feels the weight of it.

INT. OUTDOOR STORE - MINUTES LATER

Miguel hands the machete and other gear to the check-out CLERK, 18. Alicia adds her items and pulls out her wallet.

Miguel waves her off, hands over his debit card.

INT. BMW - AFTERNOON

Miguel drives, the terrain turns to foothills, they approach a fork, follow a sign for 'Yosemite'.

Alicia opens the sunroof, pulls out her phone.

ALICIA  
Woo-hoo!! All right! Phones off for  
the weekend.

Miguel laughs, picks up his phone, squeezes a button.

MIGUEL  
Off the grid, baby. Not much of a  
signal out here anyway.

Alicia laughs.

ALICIA  
Well if we get separated just leave  
a trail of popcorn.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Town Of Stockton police patrol car. Ambulance. Coroner's wagon. State Police cruiser.

Modesto County Sheriff's car. Highway Patrol. All parked at the scene of the crime.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sacramento Police car arrives. Walter gets out.

CHIEF, 50s, gets out, scans the scene, he's seen it all, has the scars to prove it. He paces along the row of vehicles, the intersection of so many multiple jurisdictions causes his pulse to spike a bit.

CHIEF

Well this looks like a clusterfuck  
waitin' to happen.

He heads toward the house, Walter follows.

INT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

COPS process the murder scene, search the house.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Dad lies dead, sprawled in a pool of blood.

MEDICAL EXAMINER, 30s, pulls a sheet over the body.

MEDTECH, 20s, unfolds and spreads out a body bag on the floor, PHOTOGRAPHER, 20s, documents the crime scene.

Walter and the Chief walk through, scrutinize the scene, careful not to step on any toes, head back outside.

EXT. HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

More Cops search the yard, talk to NEIGHBORS. A Cop inspects Miguel's art car, still parked at the curb.

Walter, Chief, TROOPER, 20s, and SHERIFF, 40s, converge in the front yard.

WALTER

Stratford. APB's confirmed.

CHIEF

Trail's pretty hot.

SHERIFF

Chopper's headin' for the freeway.

TROOPER

You call the kid at work?

WALTER  
They fired 'im, three days ago.

TROOPER  
So, what? He was here? Visiting?

CHIEF  
You thinkin' Benjy took 'im --

TROOPER  
And the Mom.

SHERIFF  
Hostages.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - EVENING

Sparse traffic dwindles to nothing, the Chevy drives on.

INT. CHEVY - CONTINUOUS

Benjy stares at the road, rouses himself awake, rumbles around a corner, slows at a seedy yet rustic ten-room motel, the land that time forgot, he pulls in, parks at the far end.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

Benjy empties Mom's handbag, finds her wallet, extracts a wad of cash, stuffs the bag under the seat.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

He gets out, stretches, closes the car door, circles the car. Hesitates, listens, hears nothing, heads for the office.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - NIGHT

Benjy trudges in, stretching.

ARNIE MCCORKENDALE, 70s, watches Benjy approach across the low-ceilinged lobby. McCorkendale's wrinkled face as worn-down as the crusty vintage carpet, and a lot less colorful.

MCCORKENDALE  
Evenin' young man.

BENJY  
Hey. Pretty quiet around here.

MCCORKENDALE

We like it that way jus' fine. You goin' campin'?

BENJY

Yeah, just gettin' kinda tired.

MCCORKENDALE

All right, number ten's right there where yer parked. Seventy-five dollars.

Benjy gets sticker shock, but remembers he's got Mom's bankroll handy.

BENJY

Mmm. All right.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

The Cops gather around a TECHNICIAN, 30s, at a computer, she's bright-eyed, starting off the night shift with coffee and a giant sandwich.

TECHNICIAN

What's his number?

Walter hands Technician a computer printout.

CHIEF

This'll give us his location?

WALTER

Tried callin'. Nothin'.

Technician taps keys, blank screen.

TECHNICIAN

Outta signal range, or his phone's turned off. He's off the grid.

CHIEF

Tried the Mom's phone? Where's that number?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Cops review crime scene photos.

WALTER

The garage.

CHIEF

Yeah?

WALTER

Just what was left there, you know?  
Dead flashlight, moldy sleepin'  
bag, all the stuff --

CHIEF

He might've left behind. Hmm. Goin'  
campin'. Or we think maybe Benjy  
took the stuff?

Technician enters, Trooper spreads map on desk.

TECHNICIAN

No signal on the Mom either.

WALTER

Maybe the kid left earlier.

TROOPER

What's our radius?

CHIEF

Drivin' what car?

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

The BMW follows the twists and turns.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Alicia drives.

MIGUEL

Ninety-nine bottles of beer on the  
wall, ninety-nine bottles of beer --

ALICIA

No, no. Don't even think about it.

They laugh.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

How much longer, baby?

Miguel looks at a stack of map print-outs.

MIGUEL  
Just a little while, sweetie.  
Probably more'n an hour to the  
camp site. Gettin' kinda late,  
you know, pitch a tent.

ALICIA  
That's what I was thinking.

She takes his hand.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
How are you feeling?

He shakes his head.

MIGUEL  
I've spent so many years, going  
back and forth. Between guilt,  
and fucking oblivion.

He laughs.

ALICIA  
Aww. Ready for a new adventure?

MIGUEL  
Thanks to you.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The BMW slows, pulls in and parks at the motel.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - NIGHT

Alicia and Miguel step to the counter, McCorkendale smiles.

MCCORKENDALE  
Evenin' young folks.

ALICIA  
Hello. We'd like to, get a room?

MCCORKENDALE  
Sure thing. Take number three,  
right there where yer car's parked.

MIGUEL  
Pretty quiet around here.

MCCORKENDALE  
 We like it that way jus' fine.  
 Y'all goin' campin'?

MIGUEL  
 Yeah, we'll get there tomorrow.

MCCORKENDALE  
 Sure thing.

Alicia hands him her credit card.

MCCORKENDALE (CONT'D)  
 Room's, uh, ninety-five dollars.  
 Thank you, miss.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #3 - NIGHT

Alicia and Miguel settle in, he slides a bottle of wine from his backpack.

ALICIA  
 What?

MIGUEL  
 You want some?

ALICIA  
 Miguel.

MIGUEL  
 What?

ALICIA  
 You don't need that.

MIGUEL  
 It's been a tough week.

ALICIA  
 Your choice. But I've got a much  
 better idea.

She holds the bottle, puts it in the bag, kisses him.

Alicia steps back, pulls off her sweater, unzips her pants, slides them down, tugs at her panties, reveals her own tattoo in an intimate place.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #10 - NIGHT

Benjy snores, zonked out.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Cops work the phones, sift through papers, Trooper looks up from his computer.

TROOPER

Hey Chief I got something for ya.

Chief hustles over, Walter follows with coffee.

TROOPER (CONT'D)

Tracked the kid's bank card.  
Used just after six-thirty,  
camping supply store in Oakdale.

CHIEF

So. Kid's going campin'.

WALTER

Unless Benjy used it. Has Miguel  
tied up in his trunk or something.

CHIEF

Huh. Well, somebody's goin'  
campin'. Gotta find out where.  
What're we gettin' from the  
crime scene?

INT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Cops review evidence, DEPUTY, 20s, checks the home computer.

Opens files on-screen, clicks, opens the Print Queue, Recent  
Web Sites, clicks a page, pulls a page from the printer.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Sheriff hangs up a phone.

SHERIFF

They got something at the house.  
Printed a couple pages from the  
Yosemite web site. Campgrounds  
info. Three-thirty-five this  
afternoon. Gotta be the kid.

CHIEF

Yeah, it don't figure Stratford's doin' much web surfin' while the dad's bleedin' all over the floor.

WALTER

So, what now? Benjy comes by .. lookin' for Miguel ..

CHIEF

Yeah, the kid's already picked up his gear, he's on his way out there, he don't know nothin' ..

WALTER

Benjy kills the dad.

TROOPER

Found a kitchen knife on the floor.

SHERIFF

Damn. Kitchen knife against a twelve-gauge. So we think this Benjy took the mom?

WALTER

You saw the case file.

SHERIFF

Yeah. Guess it's all fittin' together. Straight-up revenge.

TROOPER

Holdin' the mom, 'til he can get the kid.

CHIEF

What it looks like.

EXT. MOTEL - SUNRISE

Benjy exits Room 10, shuffles towards the office.

Alicia exits the office with coffee, heads for Room 3.

Benjy passes her as she inserts her key.

He leers at her.

BENJY

Morning.

She nods, gives him an obligatory fake smile.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #3 - CONTINUOUS

Alicia comes in, finds Miguel packed and ready to go.

INT. OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Benjy gets coffee and donut from the counter.

He watches Miguel and Alicia get in her car thirty feet away.

MCCORKENDALE  
Mornin'. Checkin' out?

BENJY  
Yup. Who's the piece uh ass?

MCCORKENDALE  
None uh yer damn bidniss, I guess.

Benjy grabs McCorkendale by the shirt.

BENJY  
What's 'er name?

McCorkendale glares, reaches for the book.

MCCORKENDALE  
If I was twenty years younger,  
punk, I'd settle ya right now.

He pulls out the registration card.

BENJY  
Forty years younger, maybe.

MCCORKENDALE  
Says Zee-heng. Z-H-E-N-G. Alicia.  
Didn't get the fella's name. Now  
fuck off.

BENJY  
When'd they check in?

MCCORKENDALE  
Late last night, if you gotta know.  
What's your problem anyway?

BENJY  
Just curious. Sorry to bother ya.

The BMW drives away.

EXT. MOTEL - EARLY MORNING

Benjy dawdles across the parking lot to his car, swigs his coffee, belches, farts, drops the cup on the pavement.

Hears a thumping noise, looks around.

Gets in, starts the car and peels out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

The Chevy barrels away up the road.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT / CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Coffee and donuts.

Cops put their heads together.

CHIEF

We try the mom's phone again?

WALTER

Yup. Nothin'.

Sheriff scans papers.

SHERIFF

Here ya go.

CHIEF

What's that?

SHERIFF

Cashier from the campin' store, said they thought there was a girl with 'im. If it was the same guy. They kinda wasn't sure. Anyway, looking at the kid's phone records, here's a number he called a bunch of times last week, every couple days.

CHIEF

What now? He got his damn girlfriend with 'im?

WALTER  
Try the number.

The Chief glares at Walter, the Sheriff dials, waits.

SHERIFF  
Nothin'. See if you can locate it.

EXT. GATEHOUSE - MORNING

BMW cruises up to the Yosemite park entrance.

Miguel leans out the window and buys a pass from the ATTENDANT, 20s, then drives on.

INT. BMW - MORNING

Miguel drives, peers at various campground signs.

They continue along the road, Alicia looks at the map.

ALICIA  
Another hour or so?

MIGUEL  
Yeah, let's keep going. We're getting away from it all.

They pass a turn for Route 41 south, stay on Route 120 east.

ALICIA  
Um, Miguel, are you gonna kill me?  
If I just check my voicemail? One  
time, before we --

MIGUEL  
What? Off the grid. Wilderness.

He laughs.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)  
Go ahead.

She laughs, turns on her phone.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Technician waddles over to her desk, sips coffee.

Eases into a chair.

Looks at paper, taps the keyboard.

Waits. Blank screen. Sips the coffee.

BEEP. Puts down the coffee.

TECHNICIAN

Hey.

Taps the keyboard again. BEEP.

The computer screen shows a point lit up on a map grid.

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

Hey, Sheriff, I got 'em. They're on one-twenty, southwest o' Hetch-Hetchy. Yosemite.

The Sheriff runs over.

SHERIFF

Headin' east?

TECHNICIAN

Yup.

SHERIFF

Lemme call her.

INT. BMW - MORNING

Alicia smiles, phone to her ear.

ALICIA

Nothing earth-shaking. Hmmph.

She looks at the phone.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Someone's calling me.

MIGUEL

Don't answer it. Wilderness, remember? The great outdoors?

ALICIA

Two-oh-nine area code anyway, probably someone tryna sell me a mortgage.

She turns off the phone, puts it away.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Cops gather around, hoping for a break. Blank screen.

TECHNICIAN  
What the fuck?

Chief looks over his shoulder.

Sheriff puts down the phone.

SHERIFF  
God damn it, it was ringin'. Shit.

Chief looks at the Sheriff.

CHIEF  
Welp, now we know where they're at.

SHERIFF  
And who's probably right  
behind 'em.

WALTER  
Holy shit.

CHIEF  
Let's get barkin' up that tree.

EXT. REST AREA / PARKING LOT - MORNING

Chevy parked alone under a tree.

Benjy mutters to himself, checks the road. Opens the trunk.

Mom, unconscious, still tied and gagged, face bloody,  
forehead bruised.

Benjy slaps her face, no response.

BENJY  
You wake up, just lemme know, I'll  
give you some more, bitch.

He slams the trunk, shuffles over to a pay phone, dials,  
waits, frowning.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
Hey goofy.

Rolls his eyes.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
Yeah I know. All right. Listen,  
just shut up.

He grits his teeth.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
I need you to do somethin' for me.

EXT. REST AREA / PAY PHONE - A MINUTE LATER

He wipes sweat from his forehead with a bandanna.

BENJY  
All right, so THEN, getcha some  
wheels, get back home. I'll  
call ya later.

EXT. GATEHOUSE - MORNING

The Chevy Malibu enters Yosemite National Park.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Cops jump in their cars.

INT. COP CAR - MORNING

Chief on the radio.

CHIEF  
Get the park police. Roll your  
units. Call the chopper.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

DISPATCHER, 30s, makes radio calls.

DISPATCHER  
Roger, unit five, what's your ETA?

COP (FILTERED)  
About twenty minutes.

DISPATCHER  
Chief, unit five's twenty minutes  
out. Chopper's on the way.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Four cop cars head east at 100 mph, lights flashing.

EXT. SOUTH CAMPGROUND - MORNING

The blue Chevy cuts into a secluded campsite parking area occupied only by a gray late-model Ford four-door.

Benjy parks, gets out with the shotgun.

He sneaks through a thick stand of pine trees towards a tent twenty yards away in a clearing.

INT. TENT - MORNING

Two happy CAMPERS, 40s, doze in their sleeping bags.

Benjy flips the tent flap aside, raises his gun.

BENJY  
Hey, wake up. Your day just got a  
whole lot worse.

Campers roll over, terrified.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
Gimme your car keys.

Camper fumbles for the keys, tosses them over.

BENJY (CONT'D)  
Got a phone?

Camper chucks a phone at his feet.

EXT. SOUTH CAMPGROUND - MORNING

BOOM! Shotgun blast shatters the stillness.

BOOM! Another.

Benjy emerges from the tent, fiddles with the phone.

Strolls to his car, sheltered by the canopy of overhanging branches. He opens the trunk.

Distant helicopter zooms overhead, flies closer.

INT. HELICOPTER - MORNING

PILOT IRENE, 30s, CO-PILOT MAUREEN, 20s, zip across treetops, run a tilting search pattern.

They scan the forest through side windows with laser focus.

IRENE  
Old blue Chevy huh?

MAUREEN  
Only about a thousand square miles,  
can't really see shit through the  
trees, we'd have to end up right on  
top of 'em.

IRENE  
We relying on luck, or statistics?

MAUREEN  
Whatever works. Gotta take a look.

INT. COP CAR - MORNING

Deputy drives, Chief works the comms.

CHIEF  
Roger that. You reach park police?

DISPATCHER (FILTERED)  
Negative. Calling again now.

CHIEF  
Damn. Get 'em the APB, tell 'em  
seal the gates.

DEPUTY  
If we're gonna piss on this dog's  
tree then what the fuck are we  
still barkin' for?

EXT. SOUTH GATEHOUSE - MORNING

The gray late-model Ford approaches the park exit, lines up behind other vehicles.

INT. FORD - MORNING

Benjy taps his fingers on the wheel, waits to clear the gate, fiddles with the new phone, oblivious, hears the sound of the helicopter, looks around.

Traffic moves through the exit.

Benjy pulls up to the gatehouse.

ATTENDANT, 30s, looks up, shields their eyes from the sun, watches the chopper fly by.

Benjy smiles and waves, eases the Ford out through the open gate.

ATTENDANT  
Have a nice weekend.

Benjy drives away from the park in his new wheels.

INT. MAIN GATEHOUSE - MORNING

RANGER, 20s, on the radio.

RANGER  
South Gate, West Gate, be advised,  
seal the gates. Close it up, check  
all vehicles, BOLO for a blue  
mid-sixties Chevy Malibu, suspect  
armed and dangerous.

INT. SOUTH GATEHOUSE - MORNING

Attendant pushes a button, walks out.

Holds up his hand to stop traffic, the gate comes down.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - MORNING

Cop cars zoom along the road inside Yosemite, they pass the sign for Route 41 and follow Route 120 east.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Benjy's gray Ford passes a sign.

'Route 41 - FRESNO, 25 miles'.

INT. FORD - CONTINUOUS

Benjy scratches chin stubble. Picks his teeth with a nasty fingernail, keeps his eyes on the road.

Not much traffic, the road stretches out in front of him.

He lights a cigarette.

BENJY

Guess I won't be showing up for jury duty next week.

INT. LAW OFFICE / SACRAMENTO - DAY

Laura Stratford enters, noshing on a cheeseburger, smiles at secretary Lucy.

Laura wears black leather jacket over white tube top / bare mid-riff, pierced navel, worn black jeans, beach sandals.

LUCY

May I help you?

LAURA

Yes. I'm Laura Stratford? I'm here to see Mr. Otterbine. It's about, settlin' my family's accounts?

LUCY

Oh. Just have a seat, honey.

She buzzes.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Mmm, he's on a call, might be a few minutes. Like some tea?

LAURA

Oh, sure, thank you.

Lucy pours hot water on a tea bag in a cup, adds sugar, brings it to Laura.

LUCY

Miss Stratford, I'm real sorry to hear about you all losing your mama so suddenly like that.

LAURA

Aww, I appreciate that, you know, we're doing much better now.

Lucy sits with phone behind desk, taps buttons on console.

LUCY  
Hello Sandra, this is Lucy Baboulene? Over at Bartholomew Otterbine's office? I need to request a court record on the Alsedek trial from last week?

Laura sets her empty cup on a side table.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
Yes that's correct.

Laura stretches and scratches her belly button.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
You did? Oh good. All right, thanks honey, you have a great day.

She taps buttons for another call.

LUCY (CONT'D)  
Hi this is Lucy Baboulene. Oh, hang on. Honey he'll be right out.

Laura nods. Otterbine comes out.

OTTERBINE  
Ah, Miss Stratford, thank you for calling ahead. Please accept my condolences for your loss.

LAURA  
Aww, thank you for making time for me today, I thought we could take care of some business.

OTTERBINE (AT LUCY)  
Hurry up with those FedEx!

Otterbine shows Laura into his office, closes the door.

INT. OTTERBINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Laura hugs her handbag, leans forward in her chair.

OTTERBINE  
Well, now, Miss Stratford. Laura. Here's the thing. It's actually your brother's signature that I need to complete these documents.

(MORE)

OTTERBINE (CONT'D)

But he's made himself some real trouble. Seems very unfortunate.

LAURA

Oh, Mr. Otterbine, I'm not here about that.

OTTERBINE

Laura please allow me to explain, it's that simply a legal signature requirement may not be arbitrarily transposed to another individual, be they a family member notwithstanding, you follow?

She stands up.

OTTERBEIN

Well then --

LAURA

You dumb son of a bitch.

OTTERBINE

I beg your pardon.

She opens her handbag, pulls a .22 automatic target pistol with a ten-round clip, Otterbine freezes.

LAURA

You ain't gettin' my pardon.

POW POW POW!!! Laura shoots Otterbine in the chest.

Gently lifts the end of the barrel to her lips, blows smoke.

She faces the door, Lucy rushes in.

LUCY

What hap --

POW! Laura taps her in the forehead.

Tucks the gun in her bag, steps over the body and exits.

INT. CORRIDOR - A MINUTE LATER

She strolls for the building's main door.

Passes a MAN, 40s, walking to his office.

MAN

Did I hear .. gunshots?

Laura smiles.

LAURA

Oh, I think they's ice machine  
'sploded. Happens alla time.

She floofs her hair, saunters down the hall.

EXT. CAMPGROUND / YOSEMITE - DAY

The BMW pulls in and parks at a vacant spot among half a dozen other vehicles.

Miguel and Alicia get out, stretch, unpack the car.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - MINUTES LATER

Alicia ambles around the campsite.

Miguel unrolls the tent.

He looks up at chopper flying low and loud over the clearing.

Other CAMPERS emerge from tents and look up.

Two cop cars pull in, lights flashing, slide to a stop, Cops hop out and hustle towards Miguel.

INT. COP CAR / EASTBOUND FROM STOCKTON - DAY

Deputy drives, Chief hangs up the radio.

CHIEF

Found the kid and his girl. No sign  
of the blue Chevy. Park's sealed.

DEPUTY

Ya think --

CHIEF

Lemme call Walter.

Reaches for the radio.

INT. COP CAR - DAY

Walter drives past a sign for 'Sacramento'.

WALTER  
Go ahead Chief.

CHIEF (FILTERED)  
Wantcha go them Stratford's  
trailer. Girl's there, bring 'er  
in. We need to ask 'er s'more  
questions 'bout 'er brother.

WALTER  
Roger that, Chief, I'll head on  
over there now.

EXT. SOUTH CAMPGROUND - DAY

Jeep drives through deserted parking area.

Stops at the tent, RANGER, 20s, gets out, walks around the  
tent, finds the blue Chevy, concealed in a small hollow  
within the foliage.

EXT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Ranger opens the tent flap.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Ranger finds the Campers' bloody corpses.

Killed in their sleeping bags by shotgun blasts.

EXT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Ranger runs back to their Jeep.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - LATER

Cops work, drink coffee. Deputy sits at a desk with Alicia.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT / CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Chief and Sheriff sit across the table from Miguel.

He faces them with a blank stare.

Wipes away tears. Trembling with shock, rage.

Cop brings Miguel a cup of coffee, exits.

CHIEF

I'm real sorry son. We're doin'  
everything we possibly can.

SHERIFF

Miguel, the park police located  
Benjy Stratford's car, at a  
campsite near the south exit road.

MIGUEL

Did they get him?

SHERIFF

No. Unfortunately, he killed two  
campers, took their car. Must've  
realized we were closing in, left  
by the southwest gate just before  
we got it sealed off. We think he's  
still holding your mother hostage.

MIGUEL

Jesus. I just can't fucking believe  
this. What are we gonna do?

SHERIFF

Let us work on it, son. He's gotta  
be headed south. Route forty-one  
towards Fresno.

CHIEF

We got a chopper searching from  
the air, but the vehicle he  
stole is gonna be damn tough to  
pick out in traffic down there.

SHERIFF

Might be that sister can tell us  
somethin'.

Door opens, Alicia and Deputy enter, sit at the table.

ALICIA

Miguel I'm so sorry. Oh my god.

MIGUEL

This is insane.

He wipes his face with bandanna, chugs coffee, stands and heads for the door.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)  
I'm going after him.

Sheriff stands.

SHERIFF  
Nope, oh no no.

Alicia rises, tosses Miguel her car keys.

CHIEF  
Miguel we have a ton of calls coming in, please let us handle this, we'll get him.

SHERIFF  
Now look I got the authority here.

MIGUEL  
Fuck your authority.

CHIEF  
Hold on.

Deputy exits conference room.

SHERIFF  
I got no time for this shit.

Sheriff exits.

CHIEF  
Look Miguel, Alicia, I'd like for you two to just head back to Stockton, wait at the station. Now I can have an officer escort your vehicle, you get me?

Miguel hands the car keys back to Alicia.

ALICIA  
We'll stick around.

She sits, Miguel nods to Chief.

MIGUEL  
I need some air.

Chief nods, Miguel exits.

INT. TRAILER / SACRAMENTO - LATER

Laura comes in, chucks her jacket on a chair.

Visibly damp and dirty all over, she peels off her grimy tube top, kicks off her sandals, jeans, lingerie, piece by piece, drops things in a pile on the floor, turns on a fan.

Her slender naked body shines with sweat.

She slinks to the kitchen counter.

Spins paper towels from a roll, mops her face, shoulders, neck, runs fingers through her hair.

Wipes the sweat from her breasts, armpits, belly, thighs.

Crumples the damp mess and tosses it in the trash.

INT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Sunlight streams through filthy curtains.

Laura lights up a joint, ambles around naked, tosses a sweater in a duffel bag.

She takes her time, steps into a fresh thong.

Shredded blue jeans, ancient suede boots, a faded skimpy t-shirt with cartoon logo.

The phone rings, she picks up, listens.

LAURA  
Done dinkity deal, dodo-duck.

EXT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

Benjy at a pay phone, wears hat and sunglasses.

BENJY  
Nice work, goofy. Meet me in  
Bakersfield. Out the lake. Haul  
ass, we should git there about  
the same time.

INT. TRAILER - AFTERNOON

Laura smiles, puffs the joint.

LAURA  
Gotcha, Big Bird.

She hangs up the phone. Looks around the trailer.  
Smiles, spits on the floor.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Chief at a desk, hangs up the phone.

CHIEF  
I don't fuckin' believe this. We  
got two more murders in Sacto.

SHERIFF  
What?

CHIEF  
Property manager at a office  
buildin' just found 'em. That  
lawyer, Otterbine, one who  
represented Stratford's brother.  
And his secretary.

SHERIFF  
Benjy musta killed 'em before he  
left town.

CHIEF  
I'm a get Walter go over there'n  
take a look, tell 'im not to  
worry 'bout the girl.

EXT. TRAILER - AFTERNOON

Laura breezes out the door, down the flimsy steps.

Walter pulls up, parks his patrol car and gets out.

Hot as a pistol, Laura puts her gear bag on the back of a  
spotless custom Harley with distinctive paint work.

WALTER  
Hey, Laura.

She smiles, puffs a joint, clutches her handbag.

LAURA  
Hey, Walter. What's up?

WALTER  
That Dwayne's bike?

He steps closer.

LAURA  
Yup. He loaned it to me, you can  
check with 'im.

WALTER  
Whoa. What'd you need to do to get  
him to loan ya --

LAURA  
You don' wanna know.

She squeezes her knees together.

WALTER  
Damn, girl, you're somethin'.  
Listen, you heard from Benjy?

LAURA  
Nope. Why?

Walter's car radio crackles, he ignores it.

WALTER  
Just checkin' into some things. You  
mind comin' to the station? Chief  
asked me to ask ya.

LAURA  
Sure. Just gotta take care of  
somethin' first.

She pulls her pistol, POW! Shoots him between the eyes.

A dog barks, Laura laughs, blows smoke off the barrel.

BLOOMPH, Walter's body hits the gravel.

Laura stows her bags, straddles the bike, fires it up,  
VRRROOOOOOM! She rumbles away, no helmet required.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Chief hangs up the radio.

CHIEF  
Can't reach 'im, damn it. Send  
another unit to that lawyer's  
office. We need to find out  
what the fuck happened.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT / CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Chief enters, shuts the door.

Drops bags of takeout food on the table in front of Alicia.

Miguel gets up from a chair.

He paces, jaw clenched, wears jeans and flannel shirt over  
Starship Troopers t-shirt.

ALICIA  
That was his car. I walked right by  
him, at the motel. He even looked  
at me. My god.

MIGUEL  
He's got her in the trunk of his  
car. We've gotta find her, damn it.

ALICIA  
Oh, Miguel. I'm so sorry, honey.

CHIEF  
Take it easy, son.

MIGUEL  
You have no idea where he is!

CHIEF  
We think he's somewhere near  
Fresno, we got an APB out.

MIGUEL  
An APB? Looking for a typical  
redneck psycho murderer?  
(air quotes)  
"Somewhere near Fresno?"

CHIEF  
Son, we got every cop in every  
town, every county, every  
department workin' on this.

Miguel falls into a chair.

Alicia comes over.

CHIEF (CONT'D)  
Five murders in two days. Believe me, we're doin' everything we can to get your mom home safe. Put an end to this massacre.

Miguel slumps on the table.

Alicia stands by him.

MIGUEL  
I need a drink.

CHIEF  
You know, I like you, kid. You got balls. I like balls.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - LATER

Alicia sifts through a stack of police files at the homicide table, Sheriff approaches her.

SHERIFF  
Any bright ideas?

ALICIA  
I'd like to help.

SHERIFF  
Well, doc, I guess we could use a shrink to crack these nuts.

Alicia looks up at him. She pushes the files aside.

ALICIA  
Walter told me their mother was killed in an accident, last week. Sounds like it must've completely pushed Benjy over the edge.

Sheriff nods, Chief comes over.

ALICIA (CONT'D)  
Caused by the sister, Laura.

CHIEF  
Accident. Couldn't hold her for nuthin'. She caused it, though.

Alicia looks away, reviews pages from a folder.

ALICIA  
God, they were so YOUNG, back then.

SHERIFF  
What are you thinkin'?

ALICIA  
Well, good news and bad news.

SHERIFF  
What's the bad news?

ALICIA  
They're both very unstable. But  
for different reasons.

CHIEF  
Yeah?

ALICIA  
The girl's guilty about her mom,  
unpredictable, delusional, angry  
at ... everyone. I'd be worried  
that maybe she's even more  
dangerous than him at this point.

SHERIFF  
What about Benjy?

ALICIA  
It was really bad enough, back  
then. Sounds like he was very close  
with his mom, even sheltered. His  
grief, anger, it's chewing him up.

CHIEF  
So what's the good news?

ALICIA  
There's a connection, in his mind.  
Because of the transference of that  
relationship, I think it's unlikely  
he'll kill Miguel's mom. Unless  
he's cornered.

CHIEF  
Welp, I guess if we're gonna bark  
up this dog's tree, we damn well  
better get ready to piss on it.

ALICIA  
Ew.

Cop calls Sheriff to the phone. He listens, hangs up.

SHERIFF  
Chief? Girl's gone to catch up  
with her brother. On the road.  
Stolen Harley. Gun.

CHIEF  
Holy Jesus H god-damn fuckin' hell.

Alicia turns away.

CHIEF (CONT'D)  
God damn it, Walter. Shit.

Sheriff heads for his office.

CHIEF (CONT'D)  
Fuck.

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Laura cruises the big bike smiling in the fast lane, truck  
horn blasts in admiration, she waves.

She takes in the scenery, wide-eyed like a child; freedom,  
open road, farthest she's ever been from home.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Miguel paces like a hungry tiger around the parking lot,  
talking to himself. His phone rings.

MIGUEL  
Hello?

EXT. ABANDONED GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

Benjy leans against the Ford.

He smokes a cigarette, the new phone to his ear.

BENJY  
Well, hey, motherfucker.

MIGUEL (FILTERED)  
Jesus. Ben? Ben? Benjamin?

BENJY  
Benjy, dumbass. Benjy.

MIGUEL (FILTERED)  
Benjy. You fucking killed my dad.  
Just let my mom go, man, please.

BENJY  
Your dad attacked me with a knife.  
Your mom, I got nothin' against.  
It's you I want to crush like a  
bug. You're the one who killed  
my brother you fuckin' punk.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Miguel clenches his jaw, heads across the parking lot.

MIGUEL  
Tell me where.

BENJY (FILTERED)  
No cops. I see anybody but you,  
I'll slit 'er throat. You show up  
and stand down, I'll let her go.  
Then you're mine.

MIGUEL  
Yeah. No cops, man. Shit, we've  
been looking for you.

BENJY (FILTERED)  
You got a car?

MIGUEL  
I'll be there before sunset.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

The BMW heads east out of the parking lot.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Technician sees a blip on her screen.

TECHNICIAN  
Chief, I got a ping on the kid's  
phone a minute ago.

CHIEF  
So? Kid can talk on the phone,  
can't he?

TECHNICIAN

Well it looks like he's moving.

CHIEF

What?

EXT. LAKE / BAKERSFIELD - AFTERNOON

Benjy drives past a sign for "Buena Vista Lake".

EXT. LAKE / CAMPGROUND - AFTERNOON

Benjy parks the Ford in a remote spot.

He gets out of the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Laura Stratford bombs down I-5 on the Harley going 120 mph, no helmet, big smile, blasts past a sign for 'Bakersfield'.

EXT. LAKE / CAMPGROUND - MINUTES LATER

Laura waves, parks the Harley next to the Ford.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - MINUTES LATER

Laura and Benjy sit on a picnic bench.

He chugs a beer, hands her a cold one.

Mom slumps on the ground, huddled against a signpost a few yards away.

BENJY

Got a plan.

LAURA

Figured you would. Wow. Fun ride.

BENJY

Nice bike, goofy. Get some action?

Laura wiggles her ass.

LAURA

Little pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey.  
 Coulda been a lot worse, know what  
 I mean jelly bean?

She rips a blunt, gazes up at the sky, runs her fingers  
 through her hair.

BENJY

I don't know shit. I ain't got laid  
 in so long I can't remember which  
 end of my dick to use.

LAURA

Don't look at me, Play-Doh, I'm  
 done for today. Why don'tcha take  
 Milfred there for a spin?

BENJY

Pfff.

Benjy tosses a pack of crackers at Mom, she flinches, he  
 steps over, removes her gag, unties her hands, drops a bottle  
 of water on the ground, points to a cinder-block bathroom.

BENJY (CONT'D)

You got five minutes. Fuck around,  
 my sister'll pop ya.

Laura smiles, stands up, slides out her pistol, spins it on  
 her finger, cowgirl-style.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Chief scrambles to his desk, grabs a printout, runs over,  
 shoves it at the Technician.

CHIEF

Finally got the number on the phone  
 he took from the campground.

Technician keys it in, blank screen, shakes her head.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Try it again, damn it.

Technician keys it in, waits. A circle pops up on-screen.

TECHNICIAN

Holy shit, still on. Bakersfield.  
 Buena Vista Lake.

CHIEF

'Bout fuckin' time we got a break.

Chief whirls an imaginary lasso.

He cracks the whip.

Beckons to another Cop standing by.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Let's round 'em up.

Chief hands Cop the printout.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Got the I.D. on the vics from the  
campground, registration's a gray  
oh-three Ford Taurus, APB that  
fucker. Go.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - AFTERNOON

Benjy circles around the Harley, checks out the paintwork.

Laura strolls, mind elsewhere, admires lush forest scenery.

Miguel's Mom peeks out of the bathroom.

She sneaks out, makes a frantic dash for the road.

Laura laughs, pulls her gun, takes a stance, steady hand.

Aims from twenty yards.

POW! Blows out a kneecap, Mom spills face-down in the gravel.

INT. BMW / NEAR LITTLE LAKE - LATER

Miguel turns off of 395 onto Route 178 East, pulls in,  
parks at a strip mall.

Gets out of the car, heads for a sign that reads 'Guns/Ammo'.

INT. GUN SHOP - AFTERNOON

Miguel leans on the counter.

MIGUEL

Twelve-gauge automatic.

GUN DEALER, early 50s, not to be fucked with.

Reaches under the counter, hands him a clipboard, firearm purchase order, looks him over.

DEALER  
No waiting, for shotguns.  
Whatcha looking for?

MIGUEL  
Remington eleven-hundred.

DEALER  
Twelve-gauge.

MIGUEL  
Yup.

DEALER  
Huntin'?

MIGUEL  
Yeah. Uh, no, actually, um, home  
defense, personal protection. I  
live in, kind of, uh, bad  
neighborhood.

Miguel looks at the purchase order.

DEALER  
Oh, yeah, where's that?

Miguel looks the Dealer in the eye.

MIGUEL  
Palo Alto.

Dealer picks up the clipboard.

DEALER  
Oh, yeah. I hear it's gettin' real  
rough up there.

INT. GUN SHOP - MINUTES LATER

Dealer brings him the gun. Lays it on the counter.

DEALER  
Home defense. And huntin', maybe,  
right?

MIGUEL  
Yeah, uh, yes.

Dealer reaches under the counter for a box of cartridges.

DEALER  
Twelve-gauge. Buckshot magnums.  
These'll do for pretty much  
anything. Um, did you complete  
that purchase order?

MIGUEL  
Yup.

He hands back the clipboard.

Dealer pulls the sheet, flips it, signs it, flips it over.

DEALER  
Oh. Any, uh, let's see, mental  
health issues or under the care of  
a mental-health professional?

MIGUEL  
Nope.

DEALER  
Sounds good. Have a great day.

INT. COP CAR / PASSING FRESNO - AFTERNOON

Technician drives, Chief on radio, Alicia in back seat.

ALICIA  
Now what?

CHIEF  
Got a hit on your man's debit card.  
Gun shop, off of three-ninety-five,  
past Little Lake.

TECHNICIAN  
Gettin' ready for a showdown?

ALICIA  
Trail of popcorn.

TECHNICIAN  
What?

ALICIA  
He's leaving us a trail of popcorn.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The BMW flies east on 178.

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

Miguel wipes sweat from his face with a bandanna, sees a gas station, turns in and pulls up to a pump.

EXT. REMOTE GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

Miguel gets out, heads across the parking lot, looks at a hand-lettered sign in the window.

'LAST GAS BEFORE DEATH VALLEY'

He laughs. Death Valley's only ten miles wide.

But tourists don't know that.

EXT. BMW - A MINUTE LATER

Antiquated gas pump fills the tank.

Miguel opens the passenger door, gets his backpack, looks around, there's nobody for miles.

He pulls out the bottle of wine.

EXT. REMOTE GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

He unscrews the bottle cap.

Leans back against the car, sniffs the bottle, takes a deep breath of the familiar aroma.

Gazes off in the distance. Nods to himself.

Pours it out in the dirt.

Clicks the gas nozzle off. Takes the nozzle from the tank, holds it up and fills the bottle with gasoline.

EXT. HIGHWAY / DEATH VALLEY - AFTERNOON

Benjy parks the Ford on the shoulder, gets out.

Laura pulls up behind him on the Harley.

EXT. HIGHWAY / DESERT - MINUTES LATER

Laura stretches her legs, lights a joint.

Benjy looks in the trunk at Mom, bloody and scared.

BENJY

We'll see what happens when your  
little man gets here.

He slams the trunk. Gets the shotgun. Reloads.

Laura reloads her pistol. Puts the ammo away.

LAURA

Denver.

BENJY

Pete's garage. We can get wheels,  
dope, IDs. Clear uh all this. Once  
we take care of the kid.

LAURA

Yeah. That'll feel better.

BENJY

Take the bike a ways back there.  
Holler if there's cops on his tail.

LAURA

Okey dokey doggy daddy.

She mounts the Harley and starts it up.

EXT. CAMPGROUND / BUENA VISTA LAKE - LATE AFTERNOON

Cop cars in the parking lot.

Missed them again. By a mile.

Deputy squats in the gravel, pulls out a handkerchief,  
dabs at a spot on the ground.

Inspects the white square, red with blood, stands up,  
walks over to Chief, on radio at car window.

CHIEF

Say again.

DISPATCHER (FILTERED)

Got another hit on the kid's debit  
card, Chief. Gas station.

CHIEF

Where at?

DISPATCHER (FILTERED)

Route one-ninety, east of Olancha.  
Think he's goin' to Vegas?

CHIEF

Not likely that far. One-ninety?  
Goin' east? Nothin' out that  
way but .. holy shit.

EXT. HIGHWAY / DEATH VALLEY - LATE AFTERNOON

Benjy leans against the Ford.

BMW appears in the distance.

INT. BMW - LATE AFTERNOON

Miguel cruises past Laura lounging on the Harley.

Can't help but check her out.

Reflexively he whistles quietly to himself. Wow.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

She smiles, raises her gun and fires, POW!

Laughing, pops a hole in his fender just for fun, shoots  
again, POW! bullet ricochets off the car.

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

Miguel flinches, frowns, slows down.

He looks back over his shoulder at Laura.

Focuses forward on Benjy standing behind the Ford, a  
hundred yards ahead by the roadside.

MIGUEL

We got this. I love you Mom.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Forty yards.

Benjy raises the shotgun, points it at Miguel's windshield.

Thirty yards away.

BMW slows to idle speed in first gear.

Twenty yards.

INT. BMW - SUNSET

Ten yards away.

Miguel glances at the shotgun and machete beside him.

He puts the car in second gear, keeps the clutch down, coasting, drifts almost to a stop, twenty feet away, he taps the brakes

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Miguel floors it to red-line, pops the clutch

VROOOOOM! SCREEEEECH !!

BMW burns rubber, leaps the last ten feet, smash!

Benjy shoots, BOOM! gets crushed as he fires

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME

VROOOOOMMM !!!

A hundred yards west, Laura fires up the bike, twists the throttle all the way pops the clutch

SCREECHING peeling rubber 250-horsepower burning, melting rear fat-tire catches fire, leaves a flaming strip of molten plasma on the highway, she roars straight at 'em

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miguel ducks below the dash, foot hard on the gas

Benjy's shotgun blast shatters the windshield

Benjy fires again BOOM! gets a piece of him

Benjy jumps too late, the bumper of the BMW crushes his legs, the cars collide

BMW airbags blow out through the broken windshield

Benjy screams, writhes in pain, knees wrenched by the impact,  
shins crushed between the bumpers, his twelve-gauge falls  
from his hands to the BMW's hood

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gunning the bike to top speed Laura wrenches a huge  
wheelie, yanks her pistol, shoots across her body  
fires non-stop left-handed at the BMW

POW! POW! POW! POW!

twenty yards, bullets hit the fender and driver's door,  
Laura's front tire plonks back down on the highway  
75 mph Laura flies past the BMW

EXT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

POW! Miguel dives out the passenger door, shirt bloody from a  
.22 shot to the rib cage, grabs his shotgun

blood gushes from a shotgun wound in his left shoulder

Laura peppers the driver's door with rounds, POW! POW!

slams the foot brake, skids out, drops the bike, CRASH!  
she jumps off, spins around, runs at him

Laura fires her penultimate shot POW! Miguel crouches next to  
the car, points his gun across the hood

POW! Laura's final round rips Miguel's face,

he flinches not one bit, bullet ricochets off the cheekbone  
just one-and-a-half inches below his left eye, gouges a  
bloody furrow and punches a hole through his ear

Laura's pistol slide locks open, empty, her gun arm drops  
slack to her side

Desert wind from the south blasts sand across her face

She takes a step, staggers, drops to her knees,

Roars like a FURIOUS lioness into the sunset

LAURA  
RRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH !!!

BOOM!

Miguel's close-range blast of magnum force  
vaporizes Laura's head to vacant pink mist

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Crash of gunfire roars across Death Valley, echoes from a  
distant canyon, vultures circle overhead

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Laura's body flies backwards through the air,

SPLAT lands flat on her back

EXT. HIGHWAY / DEATH VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Miguel drops his gun, reaches into the car, grabs the wine  
bottle filled with gasoline, bandanna stuffed in the neck,  
flicks a lighter puts a flame to it

He hurls the molotov cocktail high in the air, rolls and  
grabs his gun

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benjy screams, trapped between the cars, struggles, reaches  
his gun, Miguel and Benjy trade shotgun blasts BOOM!

KAPLOOSH! The gas bomb explodes on the Ford's trunk lid,  
showers Benjy with burning fuel

BOOM! Miguel scores a hit to Benjy's right shoulder, but  
BOOM! gets his right leg blown out from under him

Miguel falls to the asphalt

BOOM! Miguel fires again from his low position on the road,  
catches Benjy in the left shoulder, practically blows  
his arm off

BOOM! Benjy's last shot goes wild, sprays buckshot in the air

He slumps back in shock, flails, freaks at the flames,  
screams, blood spurts from his wounds

BOOM! Miguel blasts Benjy in the guts with his final round.

EXT. DEATH VALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Miguel tries to stagger to his feet, crumples and falls flat as his bleeding leg gives out.

He reaches for the front tire of the stalled BMW, pulls himself up to the fender, uses his empty gun as a crutch.

Drops the gun to the gravel shoulder, limps around to the back of the BMW, up to the driver's door, opens it.

He reaches in the car for the machete, hacks the airbag away from the gear shift, knocks it into neutral.

Gets out, pushes the car back a few yards.

It rolls to a stop.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Benjy falls to the gravel, moans, pushes himself up.

On his knees, he straightens up, grasping hands hold together his bleeding stomach wounds.

His clothes smoking, flames finally flicker out. His eyes lose focus. Blood gushes from his mouth. Miguel bleeds from his wounds. He staggers, stumbles, falls to the searing asphalt. Bleeding hard.

Miguel crawls towards Benjy.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miguel drags his mangled leg, machete in his right hand.

He gets closer to Benjy.

Miguel stands up, regains his balance.

Gets a good look at what's left of his father's killer.

MIGUEL

Dog only lasts as long as its  
teeth.

He takes a full backswing, one hand, the machete flashes.

THWOCK!

A fountain of blood spurts from the neck.

Benjy's severed, scorched head rolls across the gravel.

EXT. DARK DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

Cool wind in his hair, Miguel staggers past Benjy's corpse to the crumpled rear end of the Ford, sticks the machete in a gap, pries at the bent trunk lid.

Wrenches it open with a shriek of twisted metal.

Mom, eyes wide with terror.

Then even wider with relief, to finally see her son again.

EXT. FORD - CONTINUOUS

He reaches in, pulls the gag from her mouth.

MOM

Miguel!

He cuts ropes with machete, helps her climb out of the trunk.

MOM (CONT'D)

What happened?

She favors her bleeding knee, they embrace, sirens wail.

WOCKA WOCKA WOCKA MedEvac chopper comes in for a landing.

EXT. DEATH VALLEY / HIGHWAY - EVENING

The chopper splashes down, Miguel falls flat on his back in a pool of blood, Mom puts her ear to his chest.

YVON, 20s, jumps out the chopper door with a stretcher, sprints to their side. Cop cars arrive, screech to a stop.

BUCK, 20s, jumps out with more gear.

YVON

Get a body bag!

Buck jumps back in the chopper.

MOM

No!!!

Buck comes back out with a body bag, lays it next to Miguel, they lift him in, Mom tries to stop them.

Yvon yells over the chopper noise.

YVON  
We're gonna save him! Gotta  
keep him from bleeding out!

Mom's mouth drops open.

The EMTs lift the bag atop the stretcher, run Miguel to the chopper, load him up and shut the doors. More Cops arrive, hop out of vehicles.

They duck from the rotor-blades' splashing jet-wash as the chopper goes up and flies west into the sunset. Chief exits his car. Alicia jumps out, runs over to Miguel's Mom. Cops approach the scene like zombies.

Chief spits on Laura's splattered headless corpse.

INT. HELICOPTER / COCKPIT - MINUTES LATER

PILOT TOM, 40s, CO-PILOT JERRY, 50s, focus on instruments.

JERRY  
Man he's fucked. Seventy-seven  
miles.

TOM  
Damn. Wind's against us, hard.

JERRY  
He's fuckin' critical as hell.

TOM  
Betcha we get there under an hour.

INT. MED-EVAC CHOPPER CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Yvon and Buck reach into the body bag, wrap Miguel's shoulder with pressure bandages.

Blood seeps from his wounds. Yvon hangs units of plasma and saline on a hook.

Inserts emergency I.V. in Miguel's good arm, Buck holds two fingers to Miguel's neck.

Yvon spins the crank on a small plastic hand-cranked speed-pump medical device in the I.V. line, fluids drain fast from the hanging units into Miguel's body.

BUCK

Got it.

Buck wraps Miguel's leg wound.

Yvon swaps a full unit of saline for the one that's already empty.

Buck checks Miguel's shoulder.

Packs gauze and bandages on the wound, but they're immediately soaked through, there's too much blood.

Yvon slaps a bandage on the wound in Miguel's rib cage.

Buck swaps in another unit of plasma.

Cranks it through the I.V. line as fast as possible.

INT. CHOPPER CABIN - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Pilot leans back into the rear cabin.

PILOT

Ten minutes.

The EMTs exchange a look of chagrin.

They glance at the messy stack of a dozen plastic fluid bags hanging over Miguel.

All empty.

Yvon grabs a kit, pulls out a large needle tube.

Yanks the I.V. feed off the last empty bag, twists and snaps the tube onto the feed, pulls the cap off the needle.

Rolls up a sleeve.

BUCK

No crossmatch?

YVON

It's not gonna matter.

Yvon smacks their sculpted bicep, flexes it.

Jabs the needle deep in a vein.

YVON (CONT'D)

Crank it!

Buck cranks the pump, fresh blood flows to Miguel, direct live transfusion, body bag overflows with blood.

Buck holds up the sides of the bag above Miguel's abdomen to prevent the pool of blood from spilling out.

Checks for a pulse.

BUCK  
Hang on dude. Almost there.

EXT. HOSPITAL / HELICOPTER LANDING PAD - EVENING

'Barstow Community Hospital'.

Chopper comes in for a landing, hits the tarmac.

MEDICAL TEAM rushes over with a gurney.

Door opens, Buck jumps out.

EMTs maneuver the body bag to the door, Yvon still tethered to Miguel by the I.V. line. Team members assist, they hoist out the stretcher, blood spills from the body bag.

They get the stretcher down on the gurney, roll for the E.R. entrance, Yvon runs alongside, still holding on.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE - EVENING

Loud background hospital chatter.

BAM! EMTs and Medical Team burst through the doors.

Roll the gurney with Miguel's comatose body straight to an operating room, leaving a trail of blood down the hallway.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They roll in, stop next to a table.

Team Members lift the stretcher with the body bag and place it on an operating table, roll the gurney out.

Four NURSES, 20s, get to work, secure a fresh I.V., check vital signs, attach EKG wire, insert breathing tube.

SURGEON, 40s, hustles in, followed by DOCTOR, 30s, MEDIC, 20s, ANESTHESIOLOGIST, 30s, they attend to tasks, syringes, gauze, surgical tools.

SURGEON  
Deep shock.

NURSE  
Doctor --

Blood spurts from Miguel's shoulder.

SURGEON  
Brachial artery. Looks like the  
subclavian artery also. Clamps!

Miguel moans.

MIGUEL  
Ahhhhh!!

He screams, struggles, his voice muffled by the  
oxygen mask, they restrain him.

DOCTOR  
Local anesthetic. Jesus he's lost  
too much blood.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Frantic but controlled action. Double I.V. lines refill  
Miguel with blood. Medic probes Miguel's leg wound. Blood  
gushes, splashes red across the Medic's scrubs.

MEDIC  
Femoral artery!? Clamp!  
Needs more blood!

A Nurse assists the Medic. The Doctor works on the wound in  
Miguel's rib cage. Surgeon probes the shoulder wound.

Bloody gauze litters the floor.

SURGEON  
All right. Cut the bag away.

Doctor grabs clippers, snips the zippers. Takes a scalpel and  
slits the bag from end to end. Gallons of blood gush out and  
splash across the floor.

He peels the bag away, gets help from all sides, a  
river of blood drenches their feet.

SURGEON (CONT'D)  
That's better. Thank you.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Calm prevails, but much work remains.

Miguel opens his eyes.

A Nurse exits, the Others work like robots.

Surgeon extracts a pellet of buckshot from the shoulder.

Rinses it with saline, examines it under bright light,  
drops it in a steel pan, intact. Clink. Another. Clink.  
Doctor pulls out the .22 slug. Plink.

DOCTOR

Twenty-two. Cracked the rib. Inch  
higher and it would've gone right  
through his heart.

MEDIC

Your lucky day, kid.

Medic pulls buckshot from the leg, plink, Surgeon pulls more  
buckshot from Miguel's shoulder, clink, they keep working.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Miguel sits up in bed, bandaged but alive, a Nurse adjusts  
his I.V., smiles.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

Yvon, a large bandage on their arm, with Buck, Pilot Tom and  
Co-Pilot Jerry, they trundle slowly back to the chopper, with  
coffee and sandwiches.

PILOT TOM

You're both O-positive.

YVON

Right.

PILOT TOM

You rely on luck, or statistics?

YVON

Some o' both.

BUCK

Here you go.

Buck slaps a red-and-white sticker on Yvon's chest that says I GAVE BLOOD TODAY.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - LATER

Nurse walks out of Miguel's room, nods to the Surgeon.

Surgeon turns, approaches a row of chairs.

Alicia sits waiting.

Along with the Ranger, Deputy, Cop, 'Low-Cal', Chief, Sheriff, and Mom, with crutches, her leg in a cast.

SURGEON

You can see him now.

They all stand in unison.

Surgeon smiles.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

Maybe not all at once.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Mom hovers over Miguel, rests her hand on his good shoulder.

Alicia holds his hand.

The Chief comes in.

CHIEF

How ya feelin' champ?

Chief shakes the steel pan of lead fragments.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Seventeen buckshot and a twenty-two slug. Looks like somebody was usin' you for target practice.

Miguel smiles.

MIGUEL

Not any more.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Cops clean up the mess, write their reports.

Case closed.

'Low-Cal', Sheriff, Chief. Trooper, Ranger, Cop. Deputy, Technician, Dispatcher.

They say their goodbyes.

LOW-CAL

Welp.

DEPUTY

He'll eat stuff that'd make a BILLY-goat PUKE.

CHIEF

New day, man.

SHERIFF

And that fucking shit, my friend, is how the West was won.

CHIEF

Jesus H Christ on a fucking cracker.

LOW-CAL

Chief. Watch your language.

CHIEF

OK boomer.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

The cop cars roll out to various points of the compass.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - MORNING

Silence, disturbed only by the sound of running water.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Miguel's Mom washes dishes at kitchen sink, stares out the window at an empty yard.

Vacant. Alone.

Yet peaceful.

But crushed with grief.

But joyful.

EXT. BARSTOW COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - DAY

Blazing summer sun scorches the roadway. High-speed traffic flies by in the distance. Sheriff stands with Chief next to their cars in the south parking lot.

Miguel emerges from the hospital entrance. Sporting extra fifteen pounds and a three-week beard, looking a little out of shape but happy as fuck.

With a wicked scar on the cheekbone below his left eye. A fresh shiny .22 cartridge graces the hole in his ear.

His smile welcomes the Cops in a group hug.

SHERIFF

Got a minute?

He hands Miguel an envelope. They amble around to the west side of the building.

There's the Harley formerly known as Dwayne's, keys in the ignition, adorned with a yellow ribbon.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - A WEEK LATER

Miguel and Alicia cruise south on the Harley, loaded with new camping gear.

EXT. PARADISE COVE RESTAURANT / BEACH - SUNSET

Miguel and Alicia enjoy drinks, toes in the sand, surrounded by attentive SERVERS and laid-back LOCALS.

ALICIA

Feels nice. Little civilization.  
Got any more deep dark secrets,  
tough guy?

MIGUEL

Hope not. Might have to go back  
into 'therapy'.

ALICIA

I think I could use some now, baby.

MIGUEL

Well doctor, you sure fixed me up  
pretty good.

Miguel rises from his beach chair, he wears board shorts,  
takes off his shirt.

Despite the convalescence he now looks in better shape than  
ever. He holds out his hand. Alicia joins him, they stroll  
down to the water. They kiss.

She slips out of her shirt, bikini underneath. They wade into  
the Pacific, together, they embrace, kiss. Alicia squints at  
the blazing sun.

ALICIA

My man. It was tough.

MIGUEL

That's why you get the big money,  
love.

ALICIA

Yeah. Soon.

She smiles, winks. He kisses her forehead.

MIGUEL

We never did go camping.

ALICIA

You still want to?

MIGUEL

Not really.

Lovers melt together into the epic Pacific sunset.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

I'm just happy to be home.

FADE OUT.