

HAPPY HOUR

written by

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EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS / PALO ALTO - AFTERNOON

Colorful songbirds adorn manicured palm trees.

EXT. SECURITY OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Bored CAMPUS POLICE, 30s, observe stylish STUDENTS, 20s, and pompous FACULTY, 50s, hatching business plans.

ALICIA ZHENG, 27, beautifully-groomed Chinese-American Ivy-League prodigy in eight-hundred-dollar glasses, slender and athletic, designer sportswear, speeds her stride to enter a new thirty-million-dollar office complex.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

INT. SPACIOUS FACULTY OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Stuffy beige cavernous den heavily 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.

Tilts her slender neck. Circles, sits back down.

DR. VICTOR SPENCER, 54, surrounded in his plush sanctum by trophies of academic power, hangs up desk phone, gazes at his protégé.

ALICIA

It's already three-thirty.

VICTOR

Just tryna to help you get started.

ALICIA

I don't know if hitting me with a last-minute --

VICTOR
 Preliminary consultation, Alicia,
 just get with it. Parents need a
 sympathetic ear. You'll find out.
 Not like you don't have time.

ALICIA
 I'd like more time. Schedule it for
 next week.

VICTOR
 I told them I'd refer them to you.
 They're working people.

Victor struts across the room.

Alicia pushes herself up out of her chair.

VICTOR
 Kick in the ass.

ALICIA
 Thank you, Victor.

EXT. MODERNIST PROFESSIONAL BUILDING / PALO ALTO - EVENING

Upscale mid-rise. Only two cars in the parking lot.

New metallic-green BMW and an old white Toyota Camry.

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

Books and boxes clutter the floor. Minimal sleek contemporary
 furniture feels spare, lean and stylish.

Framed pictures and diplomas wait to be hung. Alicia stuffs
 loose boxes in a closet, answers a KNOCK at the door.

BARBARA DANKO, 55, and EDWARD DANKO, 60, trundle in and
 shake hands with Alicia.

They're oblivious. Exhausted. She shepherds them to chairs
 near her desk, they sit.

EDWARD
 Sorry we're late. This is Barbara.

BARBARA
 Glad to meet you, doctor.

ALICIA
I'll get you some water.

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Alicia takes notes.

BARBARA
He says he's fine.

EDWARD
In his own time.

ALICIA
I'm sure we can --

BARBARA
Edward, it's time we finally --

EDWARD
Sorry, Doctor.

ALICIA
Alicia.

BARBARA
Alicia, my husband and I.

EDWARD
It's his damn life.

ALICIA
Edward?

BARBARA
Please just hear me out.

EDWARD
It's water under the bridge,
god damn-it Barb, it's only just
his fucking business now.

ALICIA
That's really not appropriate.

BARBARA
He's gonna have a breakdown.

ALICIA
Let's be calm. I can make time
tomorrow morning, if Miguel's
available.

BARBARA

He's right down in Playa Del Rey.

EDWARD

She badgered him about it non-stop.

ALICIA

I understand you all have some friction here. Let's make a plan for tomorrow.

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Alicia wears expensive gray suit, different glasses.

Her eyes blaze with curiosity, shock of the new.

MIGUEL DANKO, 25, sits across from her, seems anxious but maintains eye contact.

Stocky, athletic, clean-shaven baby-face, he wears jeans, inexpensive dress shirt.

Neck wrapped with barbed-wire tattoos and geometric techno-motifs in colorful artistry.

MIGUEL

They're my brother's problem now.

ALICIA

All right, what do you want to talk about?

MIGUEL

Neuroscience?

ALICIA

To some extent, neuroscience informs the ways in which we explore people's thoughts and emotions. There's a foundation of traditional knowledge in our field, and we're learning new things all the time.

MIGUEL

I see a really great career path for myself in tech, you know? Computers are so much smarter.

ALICIA
Finding your work stressful?

MIGUEL
I think it's designed to be like that. But I'm handling it.

ALICIA
Programming is a concept that applies to digital systems, and also to our own neural networks. We use techniques like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Neuro-Linguistic Programming to improve our clients' capacity for self-regulation, and emotional control.

MIGUEL
That's kind of what I'm really interested in, the ways my brain operates like a computer, that's what I want to learn more about.

ALICIA
If that's what you prefer to talk about, I think that's a great subject area for our next consultation. It's up to you.

MIGUEL
I can meet with you again next week, doctor, that'll be fine.

EXT. STANFORD UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - AFTERNOON

Alicia and Victor stroll west.

VICTOR
Is that all you talked about?

ALICIA
Come on, Victor.

VICTOR
Just curious.

ALICIA
Too much pressure. Without any interference.

VICTOR
 Make sure your best practices go
 by the book.

ALICIA
 First, I'm getting to know him.

VICTOR
 Takes time, to build a practice.

ALICIA
 New office is much more than I
 budgeted for.

VICTOR
 Great location. Down the road
 you'll find that's important.

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 to start off with.
 That's important.

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.

He bumps into three TECH-BROS, 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.

TECH-BRO
 You long way from Starbucks homie.

Tech-Bros laugh and scamper back to work.

Miguel picks up his gear.

MIGUEL
Stay with it, man.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - AFTERNOON

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

Miguel scrutinizes a large flat-screen packed with code.

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.

ZOINK! Display screen goes dark.

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 just crashed.

Miguel bangs on the keyboard.

MIGUEL
How?

NICK
Hey, wasn't my fault. Did you just run that upgrade inside the firewall? Oops. Haha.

Miguel leans over, stares at the other screen, pushes Nick away, types in code, hammers the keyboard, frantic.

MIGUEL
I'm screwed.

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 sleek new notebook mega-machine from behind their shiny glass slab of a desk.

They hack 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

Networking essentials. Page one.

Miguel shrinks from Brenyok's withering glare.

BRENYOK

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

Nick gets to his feet.

NICK

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

BRENYOK

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 dashes out the door.

Miguel keeps sweating.

BRENYOK

You. Run the damn back-up, every day. Daily, all right? That means every fucking day.

Brenyok winces with disgust, shakes their head.

BRENYOK
You long way from Starbucks homie.

MIGUEL
You too?

Brenyok tilts their head, swats the air.

BRENYOK
What? You're still here.

INT. VICTOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Victor watches Alicia pace the carpet.

VICTOR
Adjustment disorder?

ALICIA
Subtle indications of substance
abuse, and there's lots more.

VICTOR
Parents kept quiet about that.

ALICIA
That's a good sign.

VICTOR
Sure. That's good. Co-dependency?

ALICIA
They're all resisting that.

VICTOR
Good.

ALICIA
Definitely. So, schizo-affective,
possibly. We could see that.

VICTOR
Right, which is everyone now.
Post-quarantine, social media.
What are you gonna do.

ALICIA
Cyclothymic, maybe. Combination of
work stress, and pressure from his
dad to sweep things under the rug.

VICTOR

Hmm.

ALICIA

And from mom, to air it all out. Until he chooses, to let me in on, whatever the underlying trauma was. Parents' bickering seems normal.

VICTOR

Textbook. You need to identify ways to help him work through all of these tangential issues.

ALICIA

Sure. But her sense that he's on the verge of a breakdown, is she manic-depressive, and projecting?

VICTOR

Sounds like a fine preliminary analysis, Alicia, for your next few sessions with this client.

ALICIA

At least I'm not completely in the dark.

EXT. CORPORATE CAMPUS / PALO ALTO - AFTERNOON

Tech-Bros flow out to the 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. Swaps it for a fifth instead.

INT. LIQUOR STORE CHECK-OUT COUNTER - 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. SPARSELY-FURNISHED 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, it coughs up a few 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.

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.

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

CLICK, he flips a switch on a power strip.

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

'CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS - COLD WAR' 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.

VIDEO-SOLDIER
Get him a body-bag!

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 huge 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 SHOUT and 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 bounces to the music on a glass-top side table,
CRASH! they fall through shards of broken glass, laughing.

A drunk Girl SCREAMS, 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 his car door.

INT. NISSAN - 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 tight.

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, cruises away in the distance.

INT. ALICIA'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

Have you agreed to meet with me just to please your parents? Is this something you really want to pursue, or are you kind of stalling right now?

MIGUEL

Doctor, I'm not interested in having a confrontation with you. Is that some type of typical textbook psychotherapy tactic? I'm not angry, just curious.

ALICIA

I'm here as a professional, Miguel,
and also as a human being. But
look, I'm not in any rush.

MIGUEL

I appreciate that, doctor.

ALICIA

If you're here to placate your
parents, well that makes sense,
it's not unheard of, we all go
through things like that.

MIGUEL

Hmm.

ALICIA

I can see there's friction between
your mom and dad, that's something
we could even talk about, for
example. Group therapy?

MIGUEL

Oh god no. Let them deal with their
own shit, I'm trying to make enough
money to get as far away from them
as possible.

ALICIA

Ah. All right. Would you like to
tell me a bit more about that?

MIGUEL

I'm done for today.

ALICIA

Are you feeling all right? You look
a little dehydrated.

MIGUEL

Yeah, thanks, doctor. I'll see you
again on Monday.

EXT. CORPORATE CAMPUS - AFTERNOON

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, trudges towards the
building entrance.

INT. OFFICE / KITCHENETTE - AFTERNOON

Miguel ducks into a secluded upscale oasis. 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 tilts sugar canister into a paper cup, keeps pouring, sugar spills and piles up 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.

DJ-club fantasy magic, more disco balls drift around, desert playa dust on the floor swirls in the breeze, ambient EDM MUSIC burbles up from underground.

Miguel looks at himself in a giant mirror; he's transformed, shirtless, extra chest hair, soul patch, piercings, samurai hairdo, bulging muscles.

Silver shitkicker boots, assless chaps flaunt a huge package, he turns to admire his ass. Wall of cabinets flips open.

EXT. DESERT - AFTERNOON

FIVE TOPLESS COWGIRLS, 20s, dance on a giant booze bar adorned with multi-colored lights, Burning Man fantasy in the coffee kitchen.

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

Twerking like crazy, Black Rock City, dueling DJs on five different stages, ALISON WONDERLAND and MARKUS SCHULTZ?

ANJA SCHNEIDER! ARMIN VAN BUREN! MAGDA, CASSY, OAKENFOLD?

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

Alicia appears, dancing, wearing all pink, pussy hat, bolero jacket, pleated mini-skirt, furry boots swaddle her slim gorgeous calves, she spins fast, twirling in a blur,

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

Her jacket flies open, skirt aloft, skimpy gold lingerie, kissy face, she whispers in his ear.

ALICIA
Miguel, it's happy hour.
Welcome home.

VRRRNT! [TURNTABLE NEEDLE-SCRATCH]

INT. OFFICE / 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
What the fuck are you doing?

MIGUEL
Ah. Yeah. Coffee.

BRENYOK
My office.

INT. BRENYOK'S SLICK OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Miguel's mangled tie hangs crumpled around his collar. Face almost clean, except for glittery sprinkles of sugar.

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

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. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Miguel clears off cluttered kitchen counter.

Lays out tools and spare parts, tinkers listlessly with his Guitar Hero video-controller. Goes to bedroom to test new gadget settings.

EXT. DRAB APARTMENT BUILDING - 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, brings over a case of beer.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Nick unloads spray paint, Miguel and Nick drink and paint, they 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 with phones and shoot photos.

INT. ALICIA'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
I know, right? Do you really think
that's air you're breathing?

They LAUGH. Alicia wears new glasses that elevate her refined appearance of beauty and intellect. Sleek silk suit brings forward her strong feminine power.

Miguel appears more confident, freshly-showered, better dressed in decent pants with shirt tucked in.

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?

MIGUEL
I'm all right.

She puts the last of her empty boxes by the door.

Gives him the once-over, absentmindedly unbuttons a button on her blouse. They sit.

MIGUEL

So, you just moved in here.

ALICIA

I moved down from SF.

Unconsciously warm, she unbuttons another button. Crosses and uncrosses her legs.

ALICIA

I've been thinking a lot, about some of the things we talked about 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, wanders around the room.

He scans her newly-hung pictures and certifications, sticks his nose closer to a framed diploma from Stanford University School of Medicine.

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
Um. 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 again, frowns.

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'm
here to help you.

MIGUEL
Fuck. This is crazy. I don't know
if I really want to be a fucking
guinea-pig for some rookie shrink.

ALICIA
Sorry, I didn't clearly disclose
that sooner. But it really doesn't
change anything. I hope not.

MIGUEL

Hmm. Actually, kind of makes me feel better. About trying to tell you what I've been dealing with. Because you're a blank slate. You really won't be comparing me with anyone else, that's for sure.

ALICIA

That's true.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. LAKE - DAY (2005)

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, new sneakers, 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 thick flannel shirt, loafers while other Counselors do the chores.

Boys clumsily paddle canoes in a cove.

Miguel and a FAT BOY, 7, watch with interest as a

LONG-HAIRED COUNSELOR, 21, gathers sticks and cuts 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.

MIGUEL (WHISPERS)
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 clamber into the boats. They 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
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.

Leading canoes race around the rock pile, final stretch.

Miguel and Fat Boy gain on the flotilla, make the turn,
pass two more boats, massive effort brings them 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.

He tries to climb out, prankster Boys run back to camp.

Miguel struggles, wallows closer to shore, reaches for a fallen tree branch, Fat Boy frets helpless on the hilltop.

Miguel grabs the branch, pulls himself up from the mud, 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, 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 struggles to his feet, Tall Boy jumps up. 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.

Miguel doubles over, crumples to the ground, Jim kicks him, he rolls away, arms covering his face, Jim runs and kicks him again, turns around and 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 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 crawls out the back of the tent into the dark.

Boys hide behind the tent flap to watch.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Miguel sneaks to the equipment stash.

Finds the machete, hanging from a post.

Silently 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 in 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.

FAMILY in an SUV pulls up and stops. WIFE, late 20s, lowers her window.

WIFE

Honey, are you all right?

MIGUEL

Can you take me to a police station?

EXT. SUBURBAN BUNGALOW / STOCKTON - MORNING

KIDS play frisbee in the front yard.

INT. BUNGALOW / KITCHEN - MORNING

Home, on a Sunday, Gipsy Kings on the radio.

Barbara Danko, 38, makes brunch.

Edward Danko, 43, slurps coffee, scans the 'Stockton Record' comics section.

BARBARA

I hope he's having a good time.

Miguel's BROTHER, 6, scrambles in, slams the screen door.

BROTHER

Daaaad!

EXT. FRONT YARD / BUNGALOW - MORNING

Barbara, Edward and Brother rush out the front door.

Kids stare at a Modesto County Sheriff's car in the driveway, white with green stripe, TWO COPS, 30s, deliver Miguel, filthy and exhausted.

BARBARA

Oh my god what happened?

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

FLASH FORWARD:

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Alicia sets aside her notebook. Miguel winces.

ALICIA
Miguel, that must have been
so traumatic.

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

ALICIA
So then?

MIGUEL
Police arrested Jim Stratford, for
assaulting me. I really thought he
was gonna kill me, he was fucking
nuts. My folks got a phone call
from the trip coordinator, later
that afternoon.

ALICIA
Would you like some water?

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

ALICIA
Oh, we have time.

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 - AFTERNOON

Miguel extracts a pocket flask, quietly uncaps it.

He drinks. Exhales sharply. Stares at the mirror.

MIGUEL

Fuck, man. Stay with it. It's about
fucking time, you know?

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

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

Couple weeks later we went to
trial.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MODESTO COUNTY COURTHOUSE - MORNING (2005)

TWO LAWYERS, 40s, GRAY suit and BLACK suit, hustle up stairs,
stroll down a corridor, 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
Three strikes and you're out.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

Young Miguel at the plaintiff's table, anxious Barbara and Edward next to him, with

ROBERT HODGES, 45, who faces the bench.

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

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

JUDGE, late 50s, bangs 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.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

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

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.

Trailer-park kids 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
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 cascade down Juanita's face, she hugs the kids closer.

OTTERBINE
Your honor, I feel that --

JUDGE
Be quiet, Mr. Otterbine, it's too
late. You didn't have much to work
with here, counselor.

Otterbine looks at Jim, tries not to shrug.

JUDGE
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.

BARBARA
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 Barbara to the floor,
kicks her.

JUDGE
Stop him!

Bailiff leaps forward, Jim freaks out, on a rampage.

Jim dives at Miguel, Bailiff tackles Jim, Miguel scrambles
out of reach.

Bailiff restrains Jim against the railing, Edward and Fat Cop
kneel to check on Barbara. 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, moves to attack Miguel in the frozen moment.

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

FLASH FORWARD:

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

Miguel looks at Alicia. She shakes her head. Nods.

ALICIA

Now I think I can begin to understand. Just how much you've been holding back.

They almost laugh. Tension collapses.

ALICIA

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

MIGUEL

They called it justifiable.

MIGUEL

I did go to counseling, for two years. After fifth grade we all just kind of moved on.

ALICIA

I'm glad you can share all that.

MIGUEL

I always thought psychotherapy must be total bullshit. Maybe I wasn't ready for it back then. Now I'm just feeling desperate. I might be crazy, Alicia, but I'm strong. I've just gotta find a way, you know? To get right with this.

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.

MIGUEL

You don't really seem too shocked.

ALICIA

I've always been comfortable around guns, since I was a kid. Violence. Death. I've witnessed quite a few killings. Myself.

MIGUEL

How? Why?

ALICIA

My parents' businesses, back in China. They got involved with the wrong people. Life is cheap there, in more ways than one.

She manages a warm smile.

ALICIA

Think you want to continue? Move forward with our work together?

MIGUEL

Just tell me what's next, doctor. Alicia. I appreciate it.

ALICIA

I'd like to continue next time to hear more about how you're really feeling. Self-confidence is going to be your most powerful tool for working through this. Can you come back again later this week?

EXT. TRAILER PARK / SACRAMENTO - MORNING

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 door, hustles up the flimsy steps.

INT. TRAILER - MORNING

Juanita Stratford, 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
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, hot sporty renegade hippie cowgirl.

Skimpy feathered tank top, silver booty shorts, cloud of smoke, she fluffs her hair.

Juanita sniffs the air.

JUANITA
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 - MORNING

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, takes it up to sixty.

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

Juanita turns the radio down again.

JUANITA

Get me to work in one piece,
darlin', 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.

Slow car pulls off the shoulder, Laura looking at radio,

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,

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

INT. VICTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Victor frowns in disbelief. His mouth hangs open.

Alicia shrugs.

ALICIA

I mean it's been seventeen years,
sounds as though he's adjusted to
what happened. But obviously not
entirely. 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, it's not true. The law was fully on his side. I need to find a way to help him work through this.

She looks pensive.

ALICIA
He thinks part of his problem is his drinking.

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

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

VICTOR
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
Psychiatry is difficult, for everyone involved. Alicia, I know you know this. You know this whole thing is gonna take time. You're entirely qualified to take on this case, in its full scope, with all the challenges involved.

ALICIA
The drinking's just a symptom. Miguel's got severe PTSD. He's been burying it his whole adult life. I've never even treated a case, I feel like I'm so out of my depth.

VICTOR
This is the work.

ALICIA
How do I deal with this?

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
Hmm.

She plops back into the cushy chair, stares 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
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

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
I am such an idiot.

Hands on hips.

ALICIA
You want to fuck me. You want to
loan me money, so you think 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.

EXT. HOSPITAL / SACRAMENTO - EVENING

Benjy trudges from road to main entrance, dusty and beat.

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.
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 ID 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 their head.

Laura shrieks, breaks down sobbing.

Door opens, Benjy shuffles in.

INT. ALICIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Alicia and Miguel sit on her new leather sofa, she adds her notebook to a stack on the coffee table.

MIGUEL
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'm tired. Worried. Drinking a lot.

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. Self-defense.

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. 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.

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 thinking it through. Around this intense experience of yours, I'm trying to be gentle, and get to know you even more, so we can dig deeper. It can take time.

Miguel lets out a deep breath.

MIGUEL

I appreciate that.

ALICIA

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

She takes off her glasses.

ALICIA

YOU'RE going to be the one to solve your own problems. With complete radical acceptance of whatever helps you cope, while you're in here doing the work.

MIGUEL

Oh.

ALICIA

Yes. If you choose to drink during our sessions, that's really none of my business.

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. As long as you get full awareness of where you are, and why.

ALICIA

Seek that freedom. And we can certainly talk about other types of medication. Although I don't think that's necessarily the way to go.

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, we can go over them 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

I feel like we're making progress.

ALICIA

Good. So let's focus some more on your other 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. The future that you really want to create for yourself.

MIGUEL

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

ALICIA

Are you Catholic?

MIGUEL

Not any more.

INT. FUNERAL HOME / MODESTO - AFTERNOON

Dark burgundy carpet smells of mothballs.

Tuneless ORGAN MUSIC DRONES.

Laura and Benjy slump in the front row of a musty chapel.

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.

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

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, I guess.

OTTERBINE

Benjamin, I'd like you to come to my office, this week, if you would. 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. ALICIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

On the couch, Alicia and Miguel revel in passionate embrace of new-found lust,

they kiss and fondle, clinched with grasping hands all over each other, she MOANS with pent-up enthusiasm.

Alicia pushes Miguel against the cushions, pulls him on top of her, he kisses her neck,

she slides his hand under her skirt.

MIGUEL

Alicia.

ALICIA

I need it.

They tumble onto the plush new carpet, she straddles him, wriggles out of her shirt.

His face reveals complete surprise.

She peels off her bra. Rolls over, unzips his pants.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - EARLY MORNING

Benjy emerges from the trailer, clomps down the wobbly plywood steps. Scowls with fatigue, trudges up the road.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Benjy shuffles along the shoulder, miles to go.

Resolute, pissed-off, confused, empty.

Doesn't bother to hitchhike.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MORNING

Benjy stalks in, sweaty and grim.

He stares down the CLERK, 18, who averts their gaze.

Benjy gets a soda from the cold-case, drops some change on the counter and walks out.

INT. OTTERBINE'S LAW OFFICE / SACRAMENTO - MORNING

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 backs up against the wall.

Benjy swaggers through the door, Otterbine follows.

INT. OTTERBINE'S OFFICE - MORNING

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.

Benjy flips through the folder. Sifts through a paltry seventeen years of legal paperwork, the Stratford file. All the way to the buried back page.

Otterbine cowers, motionless.

Benjy scans, reads, remembers.

BENJY
Holy shit.

Memory floods back into his fragile mind.

BENJY
Miguel Danko.

Benjy nods, almost frozen, jaw clenched like a bear-trap.

BENJY
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 yer concerned this case is closed.

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

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 truck.

BENJY

Hey.

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

KEVIN

Hey, you. Comin' 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

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, turns and comes back.

KEVIN
Whassup?

BENJY
You got a shotgun I could borrow?

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. Piles knick-knacks on the counter.

EXT. TRAILER - MORNING

'Sacramento Police Department' car parks in driveway.

INT. TRAILER - MORNING

Laura opens the screen door.

WALTER YOUNG, 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. Slumps into a chair.

WALTER

You still goin' to classes?

LAURA

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

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? News to 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, 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. STYLISH SIDEWALK CAFÉ / PALO ALTO - MORNING

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

Miguel and Alicia get up from a table.

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 - MORNING

Alicia puts her arm around Miguel.

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

ALICIA
Gaining an amazing boyfriend.
My choice.

They cross to a parking lot.

ALICIA
Can't really 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
Design a terrific new digital marketing platform for your web site, and help you bring in more new clients for your new practice.

ALICIA
Aw, that's a great idea.

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

ALICIA
Oh, yeah.

MIGUEL
I really 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. Grab some lunch.

ALICIA
Right on. One question.

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

ALICIA
Could we take my car?

INT. GAS STATION / GARAGE / SACRAMENTO - MORNING

Kevin walks around the truck under repair, closes the hood.

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. Benjy around?

KEVIN
Nah, 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
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
It's just another hour or so.
My folks are looking forward
to seeing you again.

INT. BMW - MORNING

Lovebirds' convoy phone-chat.

ALICIA
You didn't really give them a
detailed progress report or
anything like that, did you?

INT. NISSAN ART CAR - MORNING

MIGUEL
Hah. Much as my mom would totally
appreciate that, I say we keep it
private. I think they're already
more than a little surprised.

EXT. STREET / STOCKTON SUBURB - AFTERNOON

Chevy crawls past mailboxes, Benjy scans house numbers.

EXT. CRAFTSMAN-STYLE HOME - AFTERNOON

Benjy rings a doorbell, looks around, shotgun at his side.
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 back.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benjy closes door, Housewife shrinks away, 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 - MINUTES LATER

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 - AFTERNOON

TROOPER, 30s, and SHERIFF, 40s, put their heads together.

TROOPER

Sacto APB, Benjy Stratford. Gotta
be him. Big blue car, she said,
asked about the Dankos. Had to give
Stratford their address.

SHERIFF

What the hell, why?

TROOPER

Just about fell over when he
walked in her livin' room with
a damn shotgun.

SHERIFF

Damn that's fucked-up.

TROOPER

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

SHERIFF

Got the address?

TROOPER

Yup. I'll call 'em, maybe you can
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.

SHERIFF

All right, Chuckie, but just remind
me for a second, who the fuck's in
charge around here?

TROOPER

Yes sir. I mean --

SHERIFF

Never-mind, you got it under
control, dumb-ass.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - AFTERNOON

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

Alicia and Miguel park their cars out front.

Barbara and Edward come on out to greet them, they gather around the Nissan, check out the new paint job.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Barbara arranges numerous sandwiches on a colorful platter, Alicia pours lemonade.

BARBARA
Great week ahead.

ALICIA
Should be really nice to get outdoors.

BARBARA
I'm really happy for you two.

ALICIA
Thanks. It's a big adventure.

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

BARBARA
He told you what happened.

ALICIA
Of course.

BARBARA
Please, go ahead dear.

EXT. BACK YARD - AFTERNOON

Alicia brings a tray out to a patio by the garage.

INT. GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Edward helps Miguel push aside garden tools, reveals dusty pile of camping equipment, Edward sneezes from the dust.

Miguel yanks out the gear, avalanche of antiquated crap CRASHES down, they both sneeze and laugh.

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

EDWARD

Oh, hey.

Edward pulls out his wallet, hands Miguel some cash.

MIGUEL

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

EDWARD

Ah, just take it. Enjoy.

MIGUEL

Thanks.

EDWARD

So work's going well? Market looks great.

MIGUEL

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

EDWARD

Hey, good for you, son. Now 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 keepin' me pretty busy.

EDWARD

Well just enjoy your campin' and keep in touch once you get home. I don't know what's going on, but she sure seems like a smart girl.

MIGUEL

Um, yeah, Dad, you know, she's got a PhD from Stanford.

EXT. PATIO - AFTERNOON

Alicia, Barbara, Miguel and Edward sit around a table and watch the camping gear dry out on the grass.

They nibble sandwiches.

ALICIA
What a nice place.

BARBARA
Well, doctor, it seems like a lot's happened since we met you. Three weeks ago.

EDWARD
Barbara.

ALICIA
I know this must seem pretty unusual.

EDWARD
Well I sure can recognize happy kids when I see 'em.

MIGUEL
Alicia, we're on solid ground here.

BARBARA
As long as everything's OK.

ALICIA
These things happen. We're in love. We're partners now.

EDWARD
We're so happy for y'all. Miguel, you know we love you, you've done a great job gettin' through this.

MIGUEL
Alicia's helped me so much. I'm really feeling a lot better. About everything.

ALICIA
Sometimes after a long delay, you can really make fast progress, when you're ready.

BARBARA
I'll say.

EDWARD
Barb, don't you say a word.

BARBARA
I'm just a little surprised, I
mean, I would've thought --

MIGUEL
Mom.

ALICIA
What.

EDWARD
Anyway, look, this is terrific,
probably you kids better hit the
road before traffic gets bad.

ALICIA
You know you're right. Thank you
for lunch!

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Miguel and Alicia carry the camping gear to her car,
stow it in the back, exchange hugs with Barbara and
Edward. They saddle up, the BMW drives away.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Barbara washes dishes, Edward frowns, hangs up the phone.

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

The doorbell RINGS. Barbara laughs, dries her hands.

BARBARA
Oh, they must have forgotten
something.

EDWARD
Don't answer it.

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

EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Benjy stands at the front door. Shotgun in hand.

Looks around. Tries the knob.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

Edward stops. Pushes Barbara back into the kitchen.

EDWARD (WHISPERS)
Call the police.

Benjy shuts the door. Edward takes two steps to confront him, Benjy raises the gun.

EDWARD
Get the hell out of my house.

Benjy stalks forward.

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

Edward backs up, Barbara dials the phone.

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

Edward pulls a large chef's knife from a knife-block.

Hurls it at Benjy's face, CLANG! He deflects it with the gun.

BOOM! Benjy shoots Edward in the chest, Barbara SCREAMS.

EXT. HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Benjy drags Barbara, mouth gagged, hands tied, kicking and struggling, out to the car.

Dumps her on the asphalt, kicks her, pulls out his keys, looks around, opens the trunk.

INT. CHEVY - AFTERNOON

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 - AFTERNOON

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

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - AFTERNOON

Alicia and Miguel stroll across the parking lot.

EXT. OUTDOOR STORE - AFTERNOON

Windows full of camping equipment, they duck inside.

INT. OUTDOOR STORE - SERIES OF SHOTS

Alicia picks out a camp stove and fuel, bandannas, a hat.

She holds up a gray sweater, flirts with Miguel.

He passes 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 - AFTERNOON

Miguel hands the machete and other gear to the check-out CLERK, 18.

Alicia adds her items, pulls out her wallet.

Miguel waves her off, hands over his debit card.

EXT. SCENIC MOUNTAIN VALLEY - AFTERNOON

BMW cruises northeast under sunny skies.

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
If we get separated, just leave a
trail of popcorn.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Stockton police patrol car. Ambulance.

Coroner's meat-wagon. State Police cruiser. Modesto County
Sheriff's car.

Highway Patrol. All parked at the scene of the crime.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Sacramento Police car arrives. Walter gets out.

CHIEF, 50s, exits the car, scans the line-up.

He's seen it all, has the scars to prove it.

Paces along the row of vehicles. 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

Edward 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 - EVENING

More Cops search the yard, talk to NEIGHBORS, a Cop inspects Miguel's art car, still parked in driveway.

Walter, Chief, Trooper and Sheriff converge in front yard.

WALTER
Stratford. APB's confirmed.

CHIEF
Trail's pretty hot.

SHERIFF
Chopper's headin' for the freeway.

TROOPER
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 - NIGHT

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

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

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 Barbara's bankroll handy.

BENJY
Mmmph. All right.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter hands Trooper a print-out.

CHIEF
This'll give us his location?

WALTER
Tried callin'. Nothin'.

Trooper taps keys, blank screen.

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

CHIEF
Tried the mom's phone? Where's that
number?

TROOPER
No signal on the mom either.

WALTER
Maybe the kid left earlier.

TROOPER
What's our radius?

CHIEF
Drivin' what car?

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?

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Alicia's BMW follows the twists and turns.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Alicia drives.

ALICIA
How much longer, baby?

Miguel taps the dashboard GPS.

MIGUEL
No signal.

He checks a map print-out.

MIGUEL
Getting kinda late, you know,
pitch a tent.

ALICIA
That's what I was thinking.

She takes his hand.

ALICIA
How are you feeling?

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

ALICIA
Aww. Ready for a new adventure?

MIGUEL
Thanks to you.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

BMW slows, pulls in, 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
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 takes hold of the bottle, puts it in the bag, kisses him.

Steps back, pulls off her sweater.

Unzips her pants, slides them down, tugs at her panties, reveals her own tattoo in an intimate spot.

INT. MOTEL ROOM #10 - NIGHT

Zonked-out Benjy SNORES.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

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

TROOPER

Hey Chief, I got something for ya.

Chief hustles over, Walter follows with coffee.

TROOPER

Tracked the kid's bank card.
Used just after five-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.

INT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Cops review evidence. Sheriff checks the home computer.

Opens files on-screen, CLICKS, opens the Print Queue.

'Recent Web Sites'

CLICKS a button. Pulls a page from the printer.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Walter hangs up a phone.

WALTER

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, 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.

CHIEF

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

WALTER

You saw the case file.

CHIEF

Yeah. Guess it's all fittin'
together. Straight-up revenge.
Holdin' the mom, 'til he can
get the kid.

TROOPER

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
Mornin'.

She winces, gives him a brief 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.

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, fruitcake.

BMW drives away.

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.

EXT. MOTEL - EARLY MORNING

Benjy dawdles across parking lot, swigs coffee, BELCHES,
FARTS, drops cup on pavement.

Hears a THUMPING noise, looks around. Nothing, nobody.

Gets in, starts up the Chevy, PEELS OUT, tires smoking for
a hundred yards VRRROOOOM!! 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's got his damn
girlfriend with 'im?

WALTER

Try the number.

Chief glares at Walter. Sheriff dials, waits.

SHERIFF
Nothin'. See if you can locate it.

INT. CHEVY - MORNING

Benjy scratches chin stubble, picks his teeth with a nasty fingernail, road stretches out in front of him.

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

INT. LAW OFFICE / SACRAMENTO - MORNING

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

Black leather jacket over white tube-top, bare mid-riff, pierced navel, worn torn 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. 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.

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 doin' much better, now.

Lucy taps keyboard, 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 - MORNING

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. But he's made himself some real trouble. 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 gun 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

Laura strolls for the building's main door.
Passes a MAN, 40s, entering an office.

MAN
Did I hear .. gunshots?

Laura smiles.

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

She fluffs her hair, saunters down the hall.

EXT. CAMPGROUND / YOSEMITE - MORNING

BMW pulls in, parks at a vacant spot among half a dozen other vehicles, Alicia and Miguel get out, stretch, unpack the car.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - MINUTES LATER

Alicia ambles around the campsite. Miguel unrolls the tent.
Looks up at a 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 - MORNING

Cop drives, Trooper leans forward from back seat,
Chief hangs up the radio.

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

TROOPER
Ya think --

CHIEF
Lemme call Walter.

Reaches for the radio.

INT. COP CAR - MORNING

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.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

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

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT / CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

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.

Alicia and Trooper enter.

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. Found two dead campers, looks
like he murdered them and stole
their vehicle, must've 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?

ALICIA

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

MIGUEL

We've gotta find her, damn it.

ALICIA

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

SHERIFF

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

CHIEF

We got a chopper searchin' from
the air, but his stolen vehicle's
gonna be damn tough to pick out in
traffic down there.

SHERIFF

Might be that sister can tell us
somethin'.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - LATER

Alicia sifts through a stack of files.

Sheriff approaches her.

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

Any more 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.

Sheriff nods, Chief comes over.

ALICIA

Caused by the sister, Laura.

CHIEF

Accident. Couldn't hold her for nothin'. 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

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. She's even more dangerous than him at this point.

SHERIFF

What about Benjy?

ALICIA

It was really bad enough, back then. Close with his mom. Sheltered. His grief, anger, it's chewing him up.

CHIEF

Good news?

ALICIA

There's probably 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.

Alicia and Trooper sit at the table.

Miguel exits conference room, comes over and sits with them.

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

I'm going after him.

Sheriff stands in his office doorway.

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.

Trooper exits.

SHERIFF

Chief, I got no time for this shit.

Sheriff goes in his office, slams the door.

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.

Chief nods, heads for Sheriff's office.

Miguel slumps in a chair, defeated. Eyes closed.

Alicia gently touches his shirt collar.

She quietly picks up his phone, slips it in her bag.

Gets up and moves to the doorway.

ALICIA

I need to get some air.

INT. TRAILER / SACRAMENTO - MORNING

Laura comes in, chucks her jacket on a chair.

Damp and dirty, 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, lights up a joint.

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 ambles around naked, tosses a sweater in a duffel bag, steps into a fresh thong, shredded blue jeans, ancient suede boots, faded skimpy t-shirt with cartoon logo.

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.

Laura puts her duffel on the back of a spotless custom Harley
with distinctive paint work.

WALTER
Hey, Laura.

She smiles, 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.

Dog BARKS, Laura laughs, blows smoke off the barrel.

BLOOMPH, Walter's body hits the gravel.

Laura secures 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 door, drops takeout bags on the table.

Miguel gets up from a chair, he paces, jaw clenched, wears
jeans and flannel shirt over Starship Troopers t-shirt.

MIGUEL
Fuck.

CHIEF
Take it easy now, 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?
'Somewhere near Fresno?' Is that
standard protocol? Sounds really
fucking effective.

CHIEF
Son? We got every cop, in every
town, every county, every
department. Workin' on this.

Miguel falls into a chair. Squeezes his sweaty forehead with
one shaky hand.

CHIEF
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.

MIGUEL
I feel like I'm going crazy. Man, I
need a fucking drink.

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

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

SHERIFF
Chief. Girl's gone to catch up with
her brother. On the road. With a
stolen Harley. And a gun.

CHIEF
Holy Jesus H god-damn fuckin' hell.

Chief faces the wall.

Alicia casually picks up a print-out from the Chief's desk,
tucks it away. She floats back towards the exit.

CHIEF
God damn it, Walter. Shit.

Sheriff heads for his office.

CHIEF
Fuck.

Chief rests his forehead against the wall.

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

Alicia paces like a hungry tiger around the parking lot,
talking to herself.

She pulls the paper from her bag.

Frowns, resolute. Taps the phone.

ALICIA
Hello.

EXT. ABANDONED GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

Benjy leans against a dented gray Ford Taurus.
He smokes a cigarette, stolen phone to his ear.

BENJY
Who the fuck is this?

ALICIA (FILTERED)
Coffee and donuts, asshole.

BENJY
What in the actual fuck.

ALICIA (FILTERED)
So. Ben? Ben? Benjamin?

BENJY
Benjy, dumbass. Benjy.

ALICIA (FILTERED)
Benjy. You fucking killed Miguel's
dad. How about if you just let his
mom go. Please.

BENJY
His dad attacked me with a knife.
His mom, I really got nothin'
against. But since you're puttin'
your sweet ass on the line here,
I'll be fuckin' happy to crush you
like a bug, bitch.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Alicia clenches her jaw, heads across the parking lot.

ALICIA
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.
You're all mine, Miss Fancy-Pants.

ALICIA
All right, man. Shit, we've been
lookin' for you. Dick-brain.

BENJY (FILTERED)
You got a car?

ALICIA
I'll be there before sunset.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON
BMW heads east out of the parking lot.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON
Technician sees a blip on their screen.

TECHNICIAN
Hey Chief, I got a ping on Miguel's
phone a minute ago, we were still
trackin' it.

CHIEF
What? He's sittin' in the
conference room.

TECHNICIAN
Well apparently his phone is
on the move.

INT. BMW / NEAR LITTLE LAKE - LATER

Alicia 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'.

EXT. LAKE / BAKERSFIELD - AFTERNOON

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

EXT. LAKE / CAMPGROUND - AFTERNOON

Benjy parks a gray Ford in a remote spot, slowly drags
himself 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 - 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. She punches his shoulder.

Barbara 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 even 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.

INT. GUN SHOP - AFTERNOON

Alicia leans on the counter.

ALICIA
Twelve-gauge automatic.

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

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

DEALER
No waitin', for shotguns.
Whatcha looking for?

ALICIA
Remington, please.

DEALER
Huntin'?

ALICIA
Home defense. Personal protection.
I live in, kind of, uh, bad
neighborhood.

She looks at the purchase order.

DEALER
Oh, yeah, where's that?

ALICIA
Palo Alto.

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

INT. GUN SHOP - MINUTES LATER

Dealer brings her the gun. Lays it on the counter, with a box of cartridges.

DEALER
Home defense. Twelve-gauge.
Buckshot magnums. These'll do
for pretty much anything. You
complete that purchase order?

ALICIA
Yup.

She hands back the clipboard, Dealer pulls the sheet, flips it, signs it, flips it over.

DEALER
Any mental health issues, or under
care of mental-health professional?

ALICIA

Nope.

DEALER

Sounds good. Have a great day.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - AFTERNOON

Benjy tosses a pack of crackers at Barbara, she flinches.

He ambles toward her. Bends down and removes her gag, unties her hands. Drops a bottle of water on the ground. Points to a cinder-block bathroom.

BENJY

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, pushes papers around.

CHIEF

Miguel's phone's not answerin',
says he doesn't know what happened
to it. Gotta be the doc. I had the
god-damn number on the phone Benjy
took from the campground, where the
fuck is it?

TECHNICIAN

I got it on-screen, Chief.

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

CHIEF

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, beckons to Cop standing by.

CHIEF
Let's round 'em up.

Chief hands Cop the printout.

CHIEF
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.

Barbara 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, Barbara
spills face-down in the gravel.

INT. COP CAR / PASSING FRESNO - LATER

Technician drives fast.

Chief wraps up a call on his mobile phone. Miguel leans
forward from back seat.

MIGUEL
Now what?

CHIEF
Got another hit on your debit card,
kid. Gun shop, off of three-ninety-
five, past Little Lake.

MIGUEL
Holy guacamole, Alicia, you crazy
super-hot fucking bitch.

TECHNICIAN
She gettin' ready for a showdown?

MIGUEL
Trail of popcorn.

TECHNICIAN

What?

MIGUEL

Leaving us a trail of popcorn.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

BMW flies east on 178.

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

Alicia wipes sweat from her face with a bandanna.

Sees a gas station, turns in, pulls up to a pump.

EXT. REMOTE GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

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

'LAST GAS BEFORE DEATH VALLEY'

She LAUGHS,

tourists don't know Death Valley's only ten miles wide.

EXT. BMW - A MINUTE LATER

Antiquated gas pump fills the tank, Alicia opens the passenger door, gets the bottle of wine.

EXT. REMOTE GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

She unscrews the bottle cap, leans back against the car.

Sniffs the bouquet.

Pours wine in the dirt. Clicks gas nozzle off.

Takes the nozzle from the tank, holds it up, fills the empty wine 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 Barbara, bloody and scared.

BENJY

We'll see what happens, when
your little man's fancy-pants
girlfriend gets here.

He slams the trunk. Gets the shotgun. Reloads.

Laura reloads her pistol. Puts the ammo away.

LAURA

Denver.

BENJY

Pete's garage. Wheels, dope, IDs.
Clear uh all this. Take out the
girl. 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 her tail.

LAURA

Woof.

She mounts the Harley, starts it up, VWOOOOM!!

EXT. CAMPGROUND / BUENA VISTA LAKE - LATE AFTERNOON

Cop cars in the parking lot. Missed them again. By a mile.

Trooper 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 Olancho.
Think Benjy'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

Alicia cruises past Laura lounging on the Harley.

ALICIA

Wow.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Laura smiles, raises her gun, POW!

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

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

Alicia flinches, slows down.

Looks back over her shoulder at Laura.

Focuses forward on Benjy.

He stands behind the Ford, a hundred yards ahead
by the roadside.

ALICIA

Fuck these fucking crazy pieces of
shit, I'm gonna be the one to piss
on this fuckin' tree right now.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Forty yards. Benjy raises the shotgun, points it at Alicia's windshield. Thirty yards away.

BMW slows to idle speed in first gear. Twenty yards.

INT. BMW - SUNSET

Ten yards away. Alicia glances at the shotgun and machete beside her.

She puts the car in second gear.

Keeps the clutch down, coasting, drifts almost to a stop, twenty feet away, she taps the brakes. Benjy smiles.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Alicia 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 - CONTINUOUS

VROOOOOMMM !!!

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!

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alicia ducks below the dash, foot hard on the gas

Benjy's shotgun BLAST SHATTERS her windshield

Benjy fires again BOOM! gets a piece of her

but he jumps too late the BMW bumper crushes his legs, cars COLLIDE, airbags BLOW OUT through the broken windshield

Benjy SCREAMS! Writhes in pain, knees wrenched broken by the impact, shins crushed between the bumpers,

shotgun falls from his hands to the crumpled hood.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Laura GUNS the bike to top speed

yanks a huge wheelie, pulls 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

Alicia takes a bullet in the rib cage,

ALICIA

AHH!!

dives out the passenger door, grabs her shotgun,
blood gushes from shotgun wound in her 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 Alicia

Laura fires, POW!

Alicia crouches at the fender, points her gun across the hood

POW! Laura's bullet rips Alicia's unflinching face,
gouges a bloody furrow across her cheekbone punches through her ear

ALICIA

OW!!

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

ALICIA
Hah! Fuck you, bitch!

Alicia shakes the blood from her face.

Desert wind sand-blasts from the south,

Laura falls back, takes a step, staggers, drops to her knees
on the road,

ROARS like a furious lioness into the sunset.

LAURA
RRRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH !!!

BOOM!!!

Alicia's close-range blast of 12-gauge magnum-force vaporizes
Laura's head to a vanishing cloud of 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

Alicia drops her 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,

she hurls the molotov cocktail high in the air, rolls and
grabs her gun.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Benjy SCREAMS, trapped between the cars, he struggles,

reaches his gun, Alicia and Benjy trade shotgun blasts BOOM!

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

BOOM! Alicia scores a hit to Benjy's right shoulder.

BOOM! gets her right leg blown out from under her.

She sinks to the asphalt.

BOOM! she fires again from her low position on the road, the blast rips away flesh from Benjy's left shoulder,

BOOM! Benjy's last wild round sprays buckshot in the air.

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

BOOM! Alicia blasts Benjy in the guts with her final round.

EXT. DEATH VALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Alicia tries to stagger to her feet, crumples and falls flat as her bleeding leg gives out.

She reaches for the front tire of the stalled BMW, pulls herself up to the fender, uses her 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.

She 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 SPILLS from his mouth.
Alicia bleeds from her wounds.
She staggers, stumbles,
drops to the searing asphalt.

Bleeding hard. She crawls towards Benjy.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alicia drags her mangled leg, machete in her right hand.
She gets closer to Benjy.

Alicia stands up, regains her balance.

Gets a good look at what's left of the blood-drenched
demented revenge killer.

ALICIA
Dog only lasts as long as
its teeth.

She takes a full backswing, one hand, the machete FLASHES.
THWOCK!

Fountain of blood SPURTS from the neck.

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

EXT. DARK DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

Cool wind in her hair, Alicia 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.

Barbara, eyes wide with terror.

Then, even wider with relief.

EXT. FORD - CONTINUOUS

Alicia reaches in, pulls the gag from her mouth.

BARBARA

Alicia.

She cuts ropes with machete, helps Barbara climb out of the trunk.

BARBARA

What happened?

Barbara favors her bleeding knee, they embrace.

Sirens WAIL. MedEvac chopper comes in for a landing.

EXT. DEATH VALLEY / HIGHWAY - EVENING

Chopper SPLASHES DOWN,

Alicia falls flat on her back in a pool of blood.

Vehicles arrive, Cops approach the scene like zombies.

They duck from the rotor-blades' jet-wash, EMTs carry Alicia aboard, chopper flies west into the sunset.

Miguel runs over to Barbara.

Chief exits his car. Spits on Laura's bloody headless corpse.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Miguel hovers over Alicia, she holds his hand.

Chief comes in.

CHIEF

How ya feelin' doc?

Chief shakes a steel pan of lead fragments.

CHIEF

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

Alicia smiles.

ALICIA
Not any more.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Cops clean up the mess, write their reports. Case closed.
Sheriff, Chief. Trooper. They say their goodbyes.

SHERIFF
Welp.

CHIEF
She'll eat stuff that'd make a
billy-goat puke, man.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Cop cars roll out to various points of the compass.

EXT. WEST STOCKTON RANCH HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Silence, disturbed only by the sound of running water.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Barbara 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 - MORNING

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.

Alicia emerges from the hospital entrance.

SHERIFF
Got a minute?

He hands Alicia 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

Alicia drives the Harley, cruises south with Miguel hanging on behind, new camping gear.

EXT. PARADISE COVE RESTAURANT / BEACH - SUNSET

Alicia and Miguel 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.

Miguel rises from his beach chair.

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
It was tough.

MIGUEL
That's why you get the big money.

ALICIA
Yeah. Soon. But we never did go
camping.

MIGUEL
You still want to?

ALICIA
Not really.

Lovers melt together into the epic Pacific sunset.

ALICIA
I'm just happy to be home.

END