Angel with a Broken Wing

by

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Charles Wiedenmann 545 Saxon Drive Thorofare, NJ 08086 856 981-2491 INT. TAXI - WOODBURY NJ - DAY

The CAMERA opens on a man in his mid thirties. He is CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE. Seated next to him is his mother. They are on their way to the reading of his late uncle's will.

CHRISTIAN

Mom, I'm sorry about Uncle Bill.

MOTHER

It's alright, Chris. He was so sick. At least he died in his sleep. Remember your dad? He suffered for a long time before he passed away.

CHRISTIAN

That's true. I hope that's how I go. I mean...in my sleep.

MOTHER

Can we talk about something else? How's work?

CHRISTIAN

Not so good. You know I gave ten years of my life to Midland Bank. But after the divorce, everything just fell apart. I just couldn't keep my head in the job. I wasn't surprised when they let me go. Susan got the house, the car, and left me with most of the credit card debt.

MOTHER

Well, just be thankful you never had any children with that blood sucking shrew.

CHRISTIAN

Yea, but it still hurts. I just feel like I wasted all those years, and now I have nothing to show for it.

MOTHER

You've got a decent job. Where are you again?

Security Atlantic. But the finance business is a rat race. I've got to find something better. I can't live with myself charging people 28% interest on a loan. They want me to pack on the life, disability, and unemployment insurance too. It's a crime. I might as well be working in South Philly, cause I feel like a loan shark collecting that kind of juice.

He looks out the window in disgust as he lights a cigarette. His mother watches as he draws the smoke deep into his lungs.

### MOTHER

Well, at least you've got your health.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICES OF TIMMONS & WEISS - WOODBURY, NJ - DAY

Christian is seated at a large table with his mother and several lawyers. The will is being read by Mr. Weiss.

# MR. WEISS

...And to my dear nephew Christian, I leave the following possessions: My entire record collection, because I know how much he loves music. My 1974 Ford Pinto, because I want him to have economical transportation, my custom luggage, because I know how much he likes to travel. And finally, my favorite briefcase, so when he goes off to work he'll always think of me.

Christian shakes his head and looks at his saddened mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAW OFFICES OF TIMMONS & WEISS - WOODBURY, NJ - DUSK

Christian is hugging his mother goodbye. She looks as though she's been crying. The wind is cold as it whips down the street around them.

#### MOTHER

I'm sorry your uncle didn't leave you anything of value, Christian. I know how much of a struggle it's been for you the last few years.

#### CHRISTIAN

Don't worry about it Ma, It's not like he singled me out. He didn't really have anything. I can use the luggage and the car. I'm happy he remembered me.

#### MOTHER

I know. You're going to be fine, Christian. You won't always have to work at that finance company. At least you're trying to better yourself by finishing your education.

# CHRISTIAN

Speaking of which, if I don't get over to the college, I'll be late for class.

They hug and his mother gets into a taxi as he waves goodbye. He gets in the Pinto and drives off.

# INT. GLOUCESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE - NIGHT

The hallway is filled with the sound of students chattering and running to class. Most are much younger than Christian. There is an abundance of baggy clothes, strange haircuts, tattoos, and body piercings. When he reaches his classroom, the door is locked. A note is posted to the door. It reads: PSYCH CLASS CANCELLED DUE TO DEATH IN FAMILY.

# CHRISTIAN

Join the club, man.

He heads back down the brightly lit corridor. The walls are lined with bulletin boards displaying upcoming student activities. He is nearly to the exit when a particular sign catches his eye. It is covered with brightly colored advertisements regarding travel. He stops and reads the board: GO ON YOUR DREAM ADVENTURE! TRAVEL TO BEAUTIFUL COLORADO WITH US THIS SUMMER!

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Man...I wish I could get away.

He continues to read the postings on the board: DIG UP DINOSAUR BONES, FEED THE CHILDREN, BE A BIG BROTHER, ROOMMATE WANTED, NEED A RIDE.

# CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

# Need a ride?

The ad is written on a 3x5 card tacked to the corner of the board. Christian pulls the card free of the thumbtack holding it in place on the board. It reads: I NEED A RIDE! AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! GOING WEST. MAYBE CALIFORNIA. WILL SHARE EXPENSES. IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CALL (856)555-6229 ASK FOR Jill. SERIOUS INQUIRIES ONLY!

Christian reads the card again, turning it over in his hand. He glances up and down the hallway, and not seeing anyone, stuffs the card in his pocket.

Christian stands in the warm vestibule, and lights a cigarette before stepping out into the bitter cold night.

#### EXT. GLOUCESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A light snow begins to fall as Christian gets in the old Pinto and solemnly drives home.

# INT. CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Christian is standing in his kitchen looking out at the snow covered ground. He puts on his jacket and goes outside to a storage shed behind the apartment. He unlocks the door and goes inside.

# INT. STORAGE SHED

On the floor against the wall are the two suitcases, and the briefcase left to him by his Uncle William.

He puts the briefcase on a workbench, and snaps it open. Inside are papers and personal effects that belonged to his uncle. He lifts a stack of memos from Eastern Electric, William's former employer. As he sifts through the pile of papers he comes across several photographs. Pictures of his uncle with his mother and a few with him when he was a little boy. He sees a few of him as a child playing on the beach with his uncle. He carefully lays the pictures to the side and continues to dig through the briefcase. He pulls out some letters and some very old black and white photos of some people he doesn't know.

Christian notices one picture in particular. A faded dog eared photo of his uncle and another man. They are both wearing military uniforms. He flips the picture over and on the back it reads: BILL BLACKMORE AND HAROLD ASHEN, APRIL 15, 1969.

He places the photo with the others, and reaches for a book that is inside a flap in the lid of the case. Christian flips through the pages of the small diary. It is full of poetry written by his uncle.

After a few moments, he places all of the items back in the briefcase, and closes the lid. He tries to open one of the leather suitcases, but he discovers it's locked, and so is the other one.

CHRISTIAN

I get all the poetry, and none of the keys. Story of my life.

He grabs a screwdriver and hammer from his toolbox and breaks the lock on the first case. Inside, is his uncle's military uniform, assorted medals, and a small travel case. Beneath that is an assortment of clothes. He checks the three pockets that line the sides of the case. The first one produces an old tie clip, the second, some loose change, and the third, a loaded bulldog .44 pistol.

Suddenly, the door opens behind him and a pretty woman in her mid twenties enters. She is SHERYL STANTON, a classmate of Christian's from school. She has bright blue eyes, blonde hair, and creamy white skin.

Christian quickly conceals the weapon in his coat.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Hey. What's up?

SHERYL

Hoo! It's cold!

CHRISTIAN

Uncle Bill isn't feeling the cold today.

SHERYL

Oh, I heard. I'm sorry Chris.

CHRISTIAN

It's okay. He's at peace now. Anyway, I'm surprised to see you. Did you shock everyone at the hospital and take a day off?

No, I was with the children most of the morning, but I had some reports I needed to finish, so I thought if I left early I could get them done at home. I feel bad leaving but, I have to get this stuff done.

CHRISTIAN

Well, I'm sure those kids appreciate you. I couldn't do what you do. It takes so much patience.

SHERYL

Well, I love what I do. And speaking of work, did you see that piece of work out front?

CHRISTIAN

What?

SHERYL

That relic from the seventies. The Flinto!

CHRISTIAN

Oh. That's mine.

SHERYL

What? Where did you get that antique?

CHRISTIAN

My uncle left it to me. I don't know why.

SHERYL

Maybe so you'd be prepared for the next gas crisis. It's a fucking eyesore. They used to say that if you got hit from behind in a Pinto, it would blow up.

CHRISTIAN

I think I recall hearing that urban legend once or twice.

SHERYL

It's true! Oh, and what's with the phoenix?

CHRISTIAN

What are you talking about?

The word, PHOENIX is etched in the back window.

### EXT. CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE'S DRIVEWAY

They go out to the car sitting in the driveway, and there in the glass is a small picture of a flaming bird, and underneath it the word PHOENIX. Sheryl gets in the car and starts fiddling around with the controls.

CHRISTIAN

Will you get out of there? My uncle left me some old suitcases and I haven't opened them all up yet. You can help me if you want. We'll take them in the house.

SHERYL

Alright. Just let me know when you get classic tags for this collector's item.

CHRISTIAN

You're a pain in the ass.

SHERYL

I know, but you love me anyway.

They walk back to the shed. An icy wind blows as they enter the small wooden enclosure. They pick up the suitcases and take them inside.

## INT. CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE'S APARTMENT

Christian is in the kitchen making Sheryl a cup of tea. Sheryl is jamming a screwdriver behind the clasp on the other suitcase, trying to pry it open. She succeeds, and it pops open revealing nothing but crumbled up wads of paper.

SHERYL

This one's empty, Chris. And the other one just has a bunch of old clothes and shit in it.

Christian appears at the doorway to the living room.

CHRISTIAN

Yea...except for this.

He swaggers into the room brandishing the .44.

Cool! Is it real?

CHRISTIAN

Go ahead...make my day. Of course it's real!

SHERYL

Can I hold it?

CHRISTIAN

Nope.

SHERYL

You're a jerk. What kind of a gun is it?

CHRISTIAN

I was trying to remember where I had heard of this gun before, and it just struck me. This is one bad ass pistol. It is only accurate at close range. Strictly created as an anti-personnel weapon. When fired, the bullet begins to tumble end over end. So, by the time it reaches it's target, it blows a hole in it the size of a grapefruit. Very messy. I remember hearing about it for the first time back in the summer of 1977.

SHERYL

Great. Another story. I was seven years old, grandpa.

CHRISTIAN

I was down the shore that summer. Wildwood. I had just turned fifteen years old. I'm walking this girl home I had met at the motel where I worked as a pool boy.

SHERYL

That is cute!

CHRISTIAN

I was walking her home after taking her to see Star Wars. Seems like such a long time ago.

SHERYL

In a galaxy far, far away?

Shut up Sher, I'm trying to tell a story here. Anyway, her name was Ann. She was from New York. She was beautiful. Blonde hair and brown eyes. I remember she wore white shorts and a blue and white striped tube top. We used to call them, boob tubes!

### SHERYL

You've got quite a memory for the details, don't you? Did she have a rich deep tan that one can only achieve in the late August sun?

### CHRISTIAN

I think you're jealous, Sher... But we can address your problems later. I remember standing with her on the corner. I kissed her good night. She told me she was a little scared to go back to New York. When I asked why, she said: Because they haven't caught that Son of Sam guy yet. David Berkowitz. The .44 Caliber killer. The dude who terrorized New York that summer shooting all those couples in cars. But, the next day, the NYPD caught him. So Ann was safe to go home.

### SHERYL

That's a beautiful little story, Chris. You, as the teenage rogue, Ann the damsel in distress, Berkowitz as the serial killer. Sounds like a love triangle to me.

# CHRISTIAN

Why couldn't my uncle have left me a Walther PPK? That's James Bond's gun. No, I have to get the same kind of gun that some whacko used to shoot up a bunch of people. You know what? I really hate guns. I know this seems cool, but I'm afraid of guns, Sher.

#### SHERYL

Guns don't kill people Christian. People do.

#### CHRISTIAN

But the gun helps!

Maybe you should put it away before you hurt yourself.

CHRISTIAN

You're right. I must be nuts.

Christian returns to the kitchen and puts the gun in a drawer.

SHERYL

So we've got one suitcase full of clothes and another with nothing in it but wads of paper. Weird. They both look identical, except that this one has the gold monogrammed letters on the front. It says H.A.

Christian returns to the room.

CHRISTIAN

The only person I can think of with those initials, is this guy my uncle knew in the military, Harold Ashen.

SHERYL

So I guess this luggage belonged to him. So what's your uncle doing with it? Is this Harold Ashen guy still alive?

CHRISTIAN

No. He died years ago. I remember my mom telling me about it. Died in a fire.

SHERYL

Oh. Sounds nasty.

The kettle in the kitchen begins to wail softly as it comes to a boil. Christian goes to the kitchen to get it. Sheryl is fiddling around with the raised monogrammed letters, while feeling around inside the large case.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Hey, this is strange. Maybe these buttons do something.

CHRISTIAN (O.S.)

What buttons?

SHERYL

Oh my God! Chris come look! Hurry!

He walks back into the living room and Sheryl leads him over to the suitcase on the floor.

CHRISTIAN

This better be good.

SHERYL

I assure you it is. The monograms. They turn.

CHRISTIAN

What are you talking about?

SHERYL

Turn them upside down.

He grasps the gold letters on the case and rotates them. They click as he inverts the H & A. What appears to be a false bottom inside the case pops open revealing a secret compartment.

CHRISTIAN

Hey...

SHERYL

Go ahead. Lift it up.

Stacked in neat little plastic wrapped bundles are more one hundred dollar bills than Christian has ever seen.

CHRISTIAN

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

SHERYL

And Franklin, too.

Suddenly, there is a loud explosion outside.

EXT. CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE'S DRIVEWAY

They both run outside and see the Pinto smashed into a tree across the street. Flames gush from it's core and black smoke billows upward into the clear March sky.

CHRISTIAN

Holy Shit! They really do blow up!

SHERYL

It must have slipped out of gear, and rolled down the driveway!

The neighbors began to come out of their homes as the sirens begin to wail in the distance.

CHRISTIAN

I don't believe this shit. Even the tires are melting!

Sirens are getting louder as the police and fire department approach. The foul stench of burning paint and rubber bring him back to reality.

SHERYL

Somebody's coming Chris.

CHRISTIAN

Not a word.

SHERYL

Pinky swear.

One of his neighbors appears from around the side of the building.

NEIGHBOR

You call the Fire Department?

Christian is still in a daze.

SHERYL

Yea. We called them all right.

NEIGHBOR

That damn thing is really burning. I hope your insurance is paid up, dude.

CHRISTIAN

Yea...burning.

NEIGHBOR

I saw the whole thing. I was out front splitting logs for my fireplace. Damn thing rolled right down your driveway, zoomed across the street, hit that tree, and exploded! That Pinto blew up like a bomb!

CHRISTIAN

Yea...burning.

NEIGHBOR

Alright man, just glad you're okay.

Yea...okay.

The neighbor turns to Sheryl.

NEIGHBOR

You better get him something to drink. He looks like he's in shock or something.

SHERYL

Oh, don't worry about that. He'll be drinking a lot soon! Let's go honey.

Sheryl takes Christian over to the wall and sits him down. They watch as the fire department go to work on the charred auto. The police also arrive and interview some of the neighbors. Satisfied with what happened, they take their statements and leave.

CHRISTIAN

This is too weird.

SHERYL

Chris...The phoenix.

CHRISTIAN

What about it?

SHERYL

It's happening. Don't you know what the phoenix is?

CHRISTIAN

A city in Arizona?

SHERYL

No, Chris. In Phoenician legend, the phoenix is the spirit bird that burns itself to death in a great fire, only to rise from the ashes of its on destruction to live anew!

They both watch as a flatbed truck hauls away the charred husk of what was once Christian's only means of transportation.

INT. CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE'S APARTMENT

CHRISTIAN

There must be a few hundred grand here! I'm rich!

He dances across the room and goes into the kitchen. Still dancing, he opens the refrigerator, and pulls out a cheap bottle of champagne.

SHERYL

I can't believe this. I've never seen so much money in all my life!

He pops the cork from the bottle and fills two paper cups with the icy sparkling wine.

CHRISTIAN

A toast!

SHERYL

To your new life!

CHRISTIAN

To the most one hundred dollar bills I ever had!

They pull the cash from the bundles and throw it in the air, roll in it, scattering it like autumn leaves about the small apartment.

SHERYL

Hey Chris...Look.

In the bottom of the suitcase, partially covered with currency, lay a sealed envelope. Christian drops a wad of cash from his hand, and picks it up to examine it.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Go ahead...open it.

He tears the end off the envelope. Reaching in, he withdraws a single sheet of folded paper. As he begins to unfold it, he notices a small brass key taped to it.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Well...Read it!

CHRISTIAN

I am!

SHERYL

Out loud, stupid!

CHRISTIAN

Okay....listen To this: wait until dark, be very discreet. Because you never know, who you might meet.

(MORE)

# CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Go to your place, the one that's close by. Look out the window, and you'll find your prize.

SHERYL

Whoa! That's weird! What's the key for?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know. But there's a number on it.

SHERYL

Eighty-eight. I wonder what it goes to?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know...The poem says: go to your place. Does that mean my house?

SHERYL

No, your Uncle Bill was a sharp guy. He wouldn't give you a clue that easy. I think it's a place you hang out in. Which in your case could be any number of dives.

CHRISTIAN

That's true, but it says it's close by, and I'm supposed to go at night.

SHERYL

You mean...WE, right?

CHRISTIAN

Right. Sorry, Sher. Maybe I'm supposed to go to some bar or a restaurant here in town.

SHERYL

Maybe. I wonder what the key fits? Whatever it is, like the poem says, it has something to do with your prize.

CHRISTIAN

Shit, this money is my prize! I'm rich!

Christian grabs handfuls of hundreds and tosses them into the air. He laughs maniacally and gulps the champagne as he watches them all float to the carpet. One bill blows into the fireplace and begins to burn. He tries to grab it from the fire but it turns to ashes in a matter of seconds.

SHERYL

You dick! That was a hundred bucks!

Shit! I guess I got a little out of control.

SHERYL

Shit is right, Christian. Just because you get all this money, don't go crazy. You can't just take a thousand bucks and wrap it around your toilet paper roll. Cause I know you and I think that's what you're going to do. I know you don't trust the banks anymore, but be careful This is a lot of money. Chris. I don't know where it came from and I don't really care. But I care about you, and I don't want this shit to destroy you. Don't burn it up! Or yourself, for that matter. Literally or otherwise.

CHRISTIAN

You're right, Sher. I'm sorry. But I've been struggling for so long since the divorce. This money is going to save me.

SHERYL

Only you, can save you, Chris. Remember that. Don't get so fucked up that I have to come bail your ass out of whatever trouble this loot gets you into.

CHRISTIAN

I know. I need to chill out and let this all sink in.

He gets down on his knees and begins cleaning up the wads of cash scattered all over the floor.

SHERYL

Here, I'll help you.

CHRISTIAN

No, I got it. You won't tell anybody about this, right?

She stands and begins to put on her jacket.

SHERYL

I promise. Look, I have to get back to Fair Acres. I forgot an appointment I had at four.

CHRISTIAN

Hey Sher, I'm sorry.

It's okay. I understand.

CHRISTIAN

No, I mean it. I know you won't tell. I'm sorry. Really.

SHERYL

I know Chris. I have to go.

He watches her drive away, and goes back to cleaning up the money. He begins to count it as he goes, finally arriving at the amount of \$506,000. He puts all the cash in a trash bag, and looks for a place to hide it.

INT. HONESTY FILES BAR AND GRILL - WOODBURY - NIGHT

Christian and Sheryl are sitting at a table in the corner. It is the most popular after work spot in town. The walls are covered with books, and hunting trophies. The bar area is cluttered with business people, and the restaurant side is filled with a mix of couples, and families.

CHRISTIAN

I hid it. Do you think I'd leave a half a million dollars in cash just laying around? Anyway, I don't want to talk about it. How's things at the institute?

SHERYL

Good, I like the idea of making a difference in these kids lives, but some times it's really hard.

CHRISTIAN

Must be. Having to deal with all those crazy...I mean handicapable people.

SHERYL

Challenged.

CHRISTIAN

Right. How's your martini?

SHERYL

Strong.

CHRISTIAN

Like I always say...One martini is not enough, two is too many, and three is just right.

That's funny.

They sip their drinks and glance at the people around the room.

CHRISTIAN

Sher, what would you do if you could only be in a relationship for six months at a time. If it lasted more than six months you would die.

SHERYL

Wow. I don't know, six months?

CHRISTIAN

That's it. How would it change you?

SHERYL

I guess I could never hope to be in a long term relationship again.

CHRISTIAN

So what else is new. How would it change you?

SHERYL

I don't know. I need to think about that one. Forget about marriage. What about you?

CHRISTIAN

Sadly, I must admit that I would spend the rest of my days having empty, mindless, gratuitous sex with a bunch of trashy sluts, then just dump them biannually.

SHERYL

Okay, so what your saying is... you wouldn't change anything about your current lifestyle.

CHRISTIAN

Actually, I think I answered that quite well. Come on Sher, what would you do?

SHERYL

Well I guess I would date some guys, and then at the end of the fifth month, if they were still around and nice to me, I'd let them have me.

Interesting concept.

SHERYL

Then I would dump them! Actually, rather than have a string of trashy one night stands that didn't mean anything, I would really like to have one perfect meaningful relationship with someone I love very much, and then die.

CHRISTIAN

That's what I thought you'd say. Oh, by the way, I've got some big news.

SHERYL

Find more money from your uncle?

CHRISTIAN

No. I'm not going to work on Monday.

SHERYL

Why not?

CHRISTIAN

Quit. Called them this morning. I'm done.

SHERYL

Are you nuts? That money is not going to last forever.

CHRISTIAN

It's not about the money. It's how I finally got the balls to change my life. You were right about the phoenix thing. I am going to rise from the ashes of my old stupid life and live anew!

SHERYL

So what are you going to do now that you have all this free time?

CHRISTIAN

I think I'd like to travel a little bit. Then figure out what I'm going to do with the rest of my life. Maybe go to California. Why don't you come with me Sher?

SHERYL

Can't. You know I'm married to the job.

You're always working.

SHERYL

My patients need me.

CHRISTIAN

I know. I know.

He looks out the window. Sheryl notices and does the same. After a moment she speaks.

SHERYL

Go to the place. The one that's close by.

CHRISTIAN

Look through the window, and you'll find your prize.

SHERYL

Across the street is the A.C. Storage Company. Do you still have that key?

CHRISTIAN

Yea, got it right here.

SHERYL

Number 88. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

CHRISTIAN

Check please!

The cocktail waitress approaches their table.

WAITRESS

Your bill's already paid.

CHRISTIAN

It is? By who?

WAITRESS

That gentleman over...

The booth across from them is empty, except for a rock glass of scotch sitting on the table.

EXT. A.C. STORAGE COMPANY - NIGHT

Christian and Sheryl cross the busy street to the fenced in storage complex.

The facility is closed, so they try to find a way inside. They follow the high fence along the side to the back of the sprawling property.

SHERYL

There's got to be another way in other than the front gate on Broadway.

They follow the fence another fifty yards.

CHRISTIAN

Bingo!

SHERYL

Did you find a way in?

CHRISTIAN

No. Just an old bingo card laying on the ground over here.

SHERYL

Wait, Chris...Look!

At the end of the back corner of the fence there is a beat up wooden gate. Christian runs to it and yanks on the rusted handle.

CHRISTIAN

Locked.

SHERYL

Wait. Maybe not.

She takes a step back and kicks the clasp as hard as she can. The wood cracks, and the gate swings open.

CHRISTIAN

Nice!

SHERYL

Coming?

EXT. A.C. STORAGE COMPANY

CHRISTIAN

What if there's a big mean dog in there?

SHERYL

We sue the owner if he bites us. Come on.

They enter the giant facility. Inside are hundreds of sheds. They continue on, going deeper into the center of the dark yard.

CHRISTIAN

We have to find number eighty-eight. We're in the sixties now, so it's probably back there somewhere.

SHERYL

What if we're wrong and the key doesn't fit?

Suddenly a voice booms behind them. They both turn around to see a large black man pointing a gun at them. He is JOCHIAM, the owner of the facility. He has long dreadlocks, and is wearing a bright red shirt with green pants and sandals.

JOCHIAM

Turn around slowly!

CHRISTIAN

(whispering)

We're dead.

JOCHIAM

What are you doing back here?

SHERYL

We're looking for our garage.

JOCHIAM

Place is closed. You got a key?

SHERYL

Yea. Show him, Chris.

Christian reaches in his pocket for the key.

**JOCHIAM** 

Do it slow, man. Then throw it over here.

CHRISTIAN

(hesitating)

Who are you?

JOCHIAM

I'm the owner of this place. Give me the key.

How do we know that? Do you have any ID?

JOCHIAM

You're looking down the barrel of my ID, man.

Christian tosses him the key. The man snatches it from the air and examines it closely.

JOCHIAM (CONT'D)

Eighty-eight! The never ending number. Number goes swirling around and around. We've got a number eighty-eight here. Very popular garage today.

SHERYL

What do you mean?

**JOCHIAM** 

There was a guy here today who asked about eighty-eight.

CHRISTIAN

What did he look like?

JOCHIAM

Was a big man. All dressed in black. It was like death himself had come to the yard to visit me. He had the blackest eyes.

CHRISTIAN

Did you let him in?

JOCHIAM

Hell no! I don't even have keys to these sheds! So even if the devil himself wants in, I can't help him.

CHRISTIAN

Look man, you have to let us in that shed. We got the key and you can see we're not dangerous.

The man stares back at them for a moment.

**JOCHIAM** 

Okay. Come this way.

He leads them deeper into the dark maze of storage sheds. Finally they reach number eighty-eight. He works the key into the padlock.

The lock pops, and he opens the big metal door. A musty smell pours forth from the dark garage, as if it hadn't been opened for many years. It is too dark to see inside. Crickets can be heard chirping from the back of the shed.

JOCHIAM (CONT'D)

I'll look for the light switch!

He disappears into the dark garage. A moment passes, and Christian and Sheryl nervously glance at each other.

CHRISTIAN

(whispering)

Maybe we should run.

**JOCHIAM** 

Ahh! Here we go!

# INT. A.C. STORAGE COMPANY - SHED 88

They hear a click, and the interior of the garage is suddenly flooded with bright fluorescent light. They squint, at the sudden glare. The walls are bare except for a few dust covered shelves. In the center of the floor is what appears to be a very large automobile covered in a faded green canvas.

SHERYL

Wow, Chris! Another car. Uncover it!

**JOCHIAM** 

Come on. Let's pull back the cover and see what's under there.

They grasp the canvas and begin to slide it from the body of the vehicle. First revealing the giant chrome grill, then the white rocket ship body, then finally the glistening fins in the back.

SHERYL

Wow!

JOCHIAM

That is a beautiful car, man. Looks brand new. Probably from the fifties or sixties I'd say.

CHRISTIAN

This is a 1959 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz!

See if it works, Chris.

Hanging in the ignition is a single key. Christian hops in the car and cranks the key. The Cadillac roars to life and then settles to a soft purr.

**JOCHIAM** 

Take it for a ride, man!

Christian looks at Jochiam, then at Sheryl and smiles.

CUT TO:

I/E. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Christian and Sheryl cruise the streets of town testing out the car.

CHRISTIAN

I can't believe this! First the money, and now the classic car. All my dreams are coming true!

SHERYL

Just make sure they don't turn into nightmares.

CHRISTIAN

Don't wreck my moment, Sher. Things are finally going my way. I can do whatever I want now. I think I'll just drive to Cal...

SHERYL

I don't mean to interrupt your little fantasy, but I think we're being followed.

Christian looks in the rearview mirror. An old grey sedan looms in the distance. It stays about a half a block back.

CHRISTIAN

How long have they been back there?

SHERYL

I think since we pulled out of the storage site.

CHRISTIAN

I'm going to try to lose them.

Does this thing have seat belts?

Christian stomps on the gas, and the Cadillac leaps forward. He skids around a corner and the back fishtails as he guns it down a dark street.

CHRISTIAN

Still back there?

SHERYL

Yep.

The grey sedan speeds up to keep pace with them.

CHRISTIAN

Who the hell is that?

SHERYL

Obviously someone who wants to talk to you. Maybe some girl you dated once and dumped, and now she's pissed off and pregnant.

CHRISTIAN

That's not funny, Sher. Maybe I can lose them on the interstate.

They enter the freeway and head north. Christian guns the car across the three lanes, cutting off a tractor trailer in the process. The truck slams on its brakes and blows it's horn.

SHERYL

Jeezus! Will you watch it?

Christian doesn't respond, he just keeps going. He weaves in and out of traffic at high speed.

CHRISTIAN

Is it still...?

SHERYL

Yea. It's hard to see now, but I think it's still back there.

Christian continues to speed and passes other vehicles. The road splits up ahead and he must choose to continue on 295 or take 76 west to Philadelphia. He chooses 76 and brings the car up to 85 mph. The grey sedan is still with them staying a few car lengths back.

They begin to cross the Walt Whitman bridge and are still traveling at a high rate of speed. There are toll booths ahead and cars are lining up to pay the bridge toll.

CHRISTIAN

We're screwed now.

SHERYL

No, we're not. Go through that one over there to the right.

CHRISTIAN

The light's red!

SHERYL

It's our only chance!

CHRISTIAN

Hang on!

Christian maneuvers the huge car through the heavy traffic. He blasts through the closed toll booth, setting off an alarm. He floors it and keeps going without looking back.

SHERYL

Careful! Interstate 95 is right there. Get on!

CHRISTIAN

North or South?

SHERYL

North...no, South!

Christian jams on the brakes, and the tires squeal as he barely misses a minivan getting on the ramp. He enters the freeway and guns the car again, merging quickly with the heavy traffic heading towards Delaware.

CHRISTIAN

Well?

SHERYL

I'm looking!

CHRISTIAN

Did we lose him?

SHERYL

I think so.

Christian breathes a sigh of relief. He eases off the gas to stay with the flow of traffic.

That was a great idea, blowing through the toll booth.

SHERYL

Yea.

She laughs and glances back just in time to see the grey sedan bearing down on them again. It is right behind them.

CHRISTIAN

I've had enough of this shit. Whoever that is, they aren't going to follow us where we're going. Hold on!

SHERYL

Oh my God...What are you...?

The tires squeal and Sheryl covers her eyes. The back end of the car begins to come around the front as the vehicle starts to go into a spin. It tips up onto two wheels, then returns to earth with a loud thump. A moment passes, and Sheryl opens her eyes. There is dust swirling around the car as it grinds to a halt. All is silent except for Christian's breath coming in short gasps. Christian's hands tremble on the wheel.

Suddenly, there is a tap on the glass. Christian rolls down the window on Sheryl's side.

She looks up to see a State Trooper. Behind him is a large brown building with the words: PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE on it.

STATE TROOPER

What the hell were you doing?

CHRISTIAN

I must have lost control of the car officer. You know how tricky these older ones can be.

STATE TROOPER

License, registration, and insurance cards please.

The trooper is joined by several other policemen, and they all gather behind the car discussing the incident, as the one runs Christian's license.

(softly)

You okay, Sher?

SHERYL

I'm fine. Any sign of the grey car?

CHRISTIAN

Not that I can see. Whoever it was, they were smart enough to know not to follow us into a police barracks.

The trooper returns and gives Christian his documents back. He also hands him a ticket.

STATE TROOPER

Have a nice day. And be careful.

Christian reads the ticket and hands it to Sheryl.

SHERYL

Holy shit! Three hundred bucks! Reckless driving and speeding! Well done!

CHRISTIAN

It's not like I can't afford it.

SHERYL

Remember what I said?

CHRISTIAN

I know. Where to now.

SHERYL

Just take me home.

CHRISTIAN

What?

SHERYL

Christian, you nearly got us killed. I just can't do this anymore.

CHRISTIAN

It's not like this happens everyday.

SHERYL

That's not what I mean. I just can't be a part of this. Maybe you should just run off to California for awhile.

What are you saying?

SHERYL

I'm saying, I really care about you Christian, but you and I are just not in the same place. I need a stable life, and you need to find yourself.

CHRISTIAN

But...

SHERYL

Just take me home. Go to California. I hope you find what you're looking for. But that money and that gun aren't going to be any help at all.

Christian is silent. He starts the car again. The Cadillac eases away from the shoulder, and merges with the other traffic.

### INT. CHRISTIAN BLACKMORE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Christian enters his apartment to find it completely ransacked. When he makes sure no one is still there, he goes to the kitchen and gets up on a chair. He carefully slides one of the ceiling tiles to the side to reveal a trash bag full of cash. He sighs with relief, then notices the light flashing on his answering machine. He presses the button and listens.

VOICE

You were very lucky today, boy. But our little game is just beginning. I trust you'll be up to the challenge. I want what is mine and things will only get worse until I get it. See you around!

Christian grabs the bag of cash and a few of his belongings and runs out the door. He starts the Cadillac and then returns to the kitchen for the bulldog .44. He gets back in the car and burns rubber down the street. He drives to the outskirts of town and goes to a motel for the night.

# INT. THE LAKES MOTEL - MORNING

CAMERA opens on trash bag of money, CAMERA PANS to pistol on night table, then to Christian awakening in the dimly lit room. Glancing at the clock he jumps out of bed.

He grabs his jeans from the back of a chair. A small card falls from the back pocket. He picks it up and discovers it is the card he took from the bulletin board at the college. He grabs the phone and dials the number. He speaks with someone on the other end briefly, then hangs up.

He grabs the bag of cash and sticks the pistol in his pants. He pulls a pack of \$10,000 out of the bag and shoves it in the inside pocket of his coat.

When he gets to the car he glances around and puts the bag under the spare tire in the trunk. He looks around again to make sure he hasn't been seen, and then drives off.

INT. HONESTY FILES BAR AND GRILL - AFTERNOON

Christian is seated at the bar. He nervously sips a martini while he waits for Jill to arrive.

Suddenly he turns and JILL is there. Her hair is dark brown and her eyes are green. She is wearing a red sweater and jeans with boots. Christian is captivated.

JILL

Excuse me, are you...?

CHRISTIAN

Christian. Christian Blackmore. Jill?

JILL

Yes. Nice to meet you. Can we get a table?

Christian follows her to an empty table in the corner. He pulls her chair out for her and seats her at the table. She sits across from him and orders a beer.

CHRISTIAN

Thanks for coming.

JILL

Thanks for inviting me.

CHRISTIAN

Get many responses to your ad?

JILL

Just you. Guess nobody wants to get out of this town.

I do.

JILL

This month the lease is up on my car. I can't afford it anymore. But really, I just want to get away from this place. I'm so tired of seeing the same people doing the same things, all the time.

CHRISTIAN

Are you still serious about going to California?

JILL

I'm here, right?

CHRISTIAN

Yea.

JILL

So what do you do that affords you the time to take off to California for awhile?

CHRISTIAN

I'm in finance. I mean, I was. I'm between firms right now, so I thought I'd take some time off and relax. You?

JILL

I'm in child care. It's not easy. I worked for a wealthy family. They paid me under the table, so there's no health benefits. They wanted to spend more time with their kids this summer, so they let me go. So I guess you could say I'm in between families.

CHRISTIAN

At least your profession is more admirable than mine.

JILL

I just want to get out and see the world a bit. I'm young and I don't know if I'm ready to get tied down yet. Where in California do you want to go?

CHRISTIAN

Probably L.A., but I'm open to suggestions. I just want to go to the beach, hang out and get my head together.

JILL

Sounds like a good plan. Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?

CHRISTIAN

Fire away.

JILL

How old are you?

CHRISTIAN

How old do I look?

JILL

Around thirty.

CHRISTIAN

I'm thirty-one. I'll be thirty-two this summer. How old are you?

JILL

I'm twenty-two.

CHRISTIAN

Interesting. Why do you really want to get out of this town?

JILL

To be honest with you, I've been dating this guy Don since I was sixteen. I've always loved him. It seems like we've been going together forever. We've broken up, gotten back together, broken up...I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I just met you.

CHRISTIAN

That's exactly why your telling me. Go on.

JILL

Well, I would date other people when we'd break up. There was this one guy, Alex, who I was really attracted to for a long time. We could never sustain any kind of meaningful relationship, but he had that certain something.

CHRISTIAN

Did you find yourself always coming back to Don?

JILL

Every time. I've known him so long, It always seemed like the logical thing to do. Especially when things went badly in my love life.

CHRISTIAN

There is no logic in matters of the heart, Jill.

JILL

I know. I just have this comfy feeling with Don, but there is no electricity. When I saw Alex, I was crazy for romance. I just wanted to kiss him. Unfortunately the Alex dynamic doesn't fit into a domestic setting.

CHRISTIAN

But your life with Don does.

JILL

Yes. I love the solid trust I have with Don, but I hate that there is no energy there. I love him, but he just doesn't...

CHRISTIAN

Doesn't what?

JILL

It's like the lust has already disappeared from our relationship. We're like some old married couple.

CHRISTIAN

So what are you doing about it?

JILL

I'm sitting here drinking with you! No seriously, I know I can't build a life with Alex, so I broke up with him.

CHRISTIAN

What about Don?

JILL

We sort of got engaged.

CHRISTIAN

Sort of? Okay. Congratulations?

JILL

Well, not really...we started fighting again, so I broke it off. I guess I just need some time. Time to figure out if after seven years, a life with him is what I really want.

CHRISTIAN

That's a difficult decision. But I think you're doing the right thing to take some time away to sort things out.

Jill smiles and lights a cigarette.

JILL

You know...you seem okay. I was really apprehensive about coming here tonight. But you seem okay Christian.

CHRISTIAN

Does Don know you're leaving town?

JILL

No.

CHRISTIAN

Are you ready to go?

JILL

Yea.

CHRISTIAN

Could you leave tonight?

JILL

If I had to.

CUT TO:

### SHERYL STANTON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheryl pushes the key into the front door of her apartment. The door doesn't seem locked. She enters her darkened apartment and notices something sitting on a chair in her living room. It is one of her teddy bears. It's head has been ripped off.

Before she can run, she is suddenly grabbed from behind by an unseen man. He is dressed in a long black coat and wide brimmed hat. His face cannot be seen. Sheryl kicks wildly and tries to scream but he covers her mouth with a chloroform soaked rag. Soon her body goes limp in his powerful arms. He tosses her onto the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. CADILLAC - VIRGINIA - NIGHT

Christian and Jill rocket down interstate 95 in the Cadillac. It is raining. They listen to the radio, laughing and talking.

JILL

Want to get high?

CHRISTIAN

I haven't smoked weed in twelve years.

JILL

It'll pass the time. I don't think anybody is going to ask you to pee in a cup for a job interview this week, do you?

CHRISTIAN

What the hell. Fire it up.

Jill produces a joint from her purse and lights it. She takes a long drag and then passes it to Christian.

JILL

Here you go. Just don't lip it.

CHRISTIAN

So much for the corporate life.

Christian takes a huge hit off the joint.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

JILL

This was such a good idea. This morning I was doing nothing in New Jersey, and now I'm on an adventure with you.

CHRISTIAN

Yea. It's great. We can do whatever we want.

It's like this car is a time machine. In here is the present. In the rearview mirror is the past. And through the windshield is the future!

They both laugh hysterically as the pot does it's work on their heads.

CHRISTIAN

If you could go back in time where would you go?

JILL

Probably the renaissance. It was such a great time for art and literature. Plus I like the clothes back then. What about you.

CHRISTIAN

I think I'd like to go back to the time of Jesus. Just to see if it's true. Maybe I could save him from being killed. I'd also like to go back and check out some real dinosaurs! Or maybe, I could just travel back to the fifties and invent rock and roll!

JILL

That's pretty good. Do you think time travel is possible?

CHRISTIAN

That's a good question. The speed of light is 186,000 miles per second, which is roughly 669 million miles and hour. If you traveled at that speed for one year, you would have gone six trillion miles. There are lots of problems with traveling the speed of light or even near the speed of light. Propulsion, navigation, fuel capacities, also you have to take in to consideration the effects of acceleration on space time, mass increase, and of course, length contraction.

JILL

We all know how painful that can be.

I guess to answer your question, we just don't have the elements of technology to achieve the kind of time travel you're referring to. However, traveling great distances probably doesn't have anything to do with rocketing through the cosmos in a linear mode near the speed of light. I mean, everybody knows that the shortest distance between two points is a straight But if this Cadillac you could generate a gravitational field that was intense enough, the fastest way to get from point A to point B, would be to warp or bend the space time between the two points. Put simply, it would literally bring the destination to the source. Like bending a piece of paper.

JILL

I can see why you don't smoke weed anymore.

CUT TO:

# SHERYL STANTON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheryl opens her eyes. She is still fully clothed in her blouse and skirt but she is tied to the bed at her wrists and ankles. The dark figure is looming over her. He is a man in his fifties. He is over six feet tall, with piercing black eyes.

SHERYL

Who are you?

MAN

A friend of a friend.

SHERYL

Chris...

MAN

Very good, Sheryl. I want you to tell me where he is.

She writhes in her bonds, and turns her face away from him.

MAN (CONT'D)

Come on now. Where did Christian go?

SHERYL

Fuck you! Let me go or I'll scream so loud everybody on the whole street will hear me!

MAN

You shouldn't focus on screaming. You need to focus on answering my question. This way you'll have a better chance of surviving this evening.

SHERYL

Why are you doing this? What do you want with him?

MAN

Let's just say, he has something that belongs to me. I'm growing weary of this chatter. Where is he?

SHERYL

I don't know where he is.

MAN

Are you having problems with your memory? Maybe this will help.

The man lifts a large metal fuel can. He unscrewed the lid and began pouring it's contents onto the floor and furniture.

SHERYL

Please...

MAN

Is it starting to come back to you now?

SHERYL

California. He said he was going to drive to California.

MAN

He's probably headed south first due to the time of year. Maybe that clown at the storage lot will know more.

SHERYL

Please let me go.

MAN

I will Sheryl. You've been very helpful to me tonight. You've got a good spirit. I'd love to stay here and consume it. Then I could tell Christian how many times I took you, and all the different ways I had you. I'd make him sit through the whole sordid tale...right before I slit his throat. But...I really must be going.

SHERYL

But what about me? Aren't you going to untie me? I told you want you wanted to know.

MAN

Oh, I nearly forgot. Thank you, my dear.

He takes a pair of stockings from her bureau and ties them around her mouth. Sheryl begins to cry out but her screams are muffled by the gag.

MAN (CONT'D)

What's that Sheryl? I can't quite understand what you're saying.

He walks to the doorway, pauses and turns toward her. Sheryl continues to fight at her bonds, trying to cry out.

MAN (CONT'D)

I'd like to stay, but Santa Claus has a few more stops to make tonight.

He reaches into his pocket and produces a single wooden match. Sheryl watches in horror as he strikes it against the wall and it ignites. He holds it for a moment, smiling as he looks into Sheryl's terrified eyes. He then tosses it carelessly into the air as he quickly exits the room. The room bursts into a blazing inferno.

CUT TO:

INT. GLENSIDE MOTEL - NORTH CAROLINA - NIGHT

JILL

I'm exhausted. I'll be asleep before my head hits the pillow.

CHRISTIAN

I think I might stay up a little.

Jill sits on one of the double beds in the room. She bounces up and down on it, checking it's firmness.

JILL

I call this one! It's the better mattress, plus it's closer to the bathroom.

She fiddles with the TV remote. Flipping through the channels.

CHRISTIAN

Hey turn back. I like that movie.

JILL

Who's that guy?

CHRISTIAN

That's Kris Kristofferson.

JILL

Never heard of him.

CHRISTIAN

I would say out of all the celebrities in the entertainment industry, Kris Kristofferson has the most impressive background.

JILL

How come?

CHRISTIAN

Well, he's the son of a retired United States Air Force Major General. Kris was in high school he was Class President, honor student, and football star. He was a Rhodes Scholar, and attended Oxford University. He's authored several books, and once won first prize in a collegiate short story writing contest sponsored by the Atlantic Monthly. In school he was a golden gloves boxer. He was an Army Captain, and attended flight school, jump school, and ranger school. In Vietnam he was a helicopter pilot. As a civilian he flew helicopters and worked as a janitor at a Nashville recording studio. Kris is a Grammy winner, and composed the songs, Me and Bobby McGee, and Help Me Make It Through The Night. Now, if that's not impressive, I don't know what is.

That is impressive. But what has he done recently?

CUT TO:

### A.C. STORAGE COMPANY - NIGHT

The wooden gate creaks open. Hearing the sound, Jochiam awakens from his nap in his office. When he looks up he sees the man with the black eyes standing over him.

MAN

Time to wake up sleepy head.

JOCHIAM

You back again? I told you before, no key, no admittance.

The man slaps Jochiam across the face. Then places the serrated edge of a large buck knife against Jochiam's throat.

MAN

Tell me everything you know about Christian Blackmore.

JOCHIAM

Okay, okay. He only came here once. He got the big white Cadillac and he left.

MAN

Did he say where he was going?

JOCHIAM

No.

MAN

You're lying.

JOCHIAM

I swear! I don't know.

The blade bit through Jochiam's throat. His body tightens, then goes limp. The man bring his boot up and kicked Jochiam's lifeless body off the chair. It hits the floor with a thud. Blood pours from the wound in his throat. The man bends down and wipes the blood from the blade of his knife on Jochiam's colorful shirttail.

MAN

Soon Christian will be begging me to kill him to end the suffering I will impose on his worthless existence. Then, I will reclaim from him what is my rightful property.

He turns and walks out to his grey sedan. He is laughing as he starts the car and drives off.

CUT TO:

# INT. SHERYL STANTON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sheryl continues to struggle at the ropes. The furniture is burning, as well as all of her belongings. Little trinkets and memorabilia from her life disappear before her eyes. A small picture of herself in a plastic frame melts into a blob on her night table. Tongues of fire lap at two of the bedposts. She continues to struggle, and as she does she notices one of the ropes holding her one hand is on fire. She yanks hard on the rope and it She twists her body and starts to work on the rope holding her other hand. The flames are growing higher, and the water in her fish tank begins to boil. Coughing and wheezing, she manages to get free. She dashes out of the room and runs into the kitchen. throws open a window and climbs out, lowering herself to safety. As she runs across the field behind her house, the building explodes.

She falls to the ground. Sirens can be heard wailing in the distance. She blacks out.

# INT. CADILLAC - TEXAS - 2 DAYS LATER - DAY

The sun shines like a diamond in the big Texas sky. They drive with the top down and the Cadillac glistens in the mid-day heat.

They come upon a run down saloon called Happy Times. All of the windows are boarded up except one in the front. A plastic sign on the front door read: YES... WE'RE OPEN. Along the side of the building is an old fuel pump.

CHRISTIAN

See that sign there?

JILL

You mean the one that said, Last Gas for next 50 miles?

Yea. We should fuel up.

JILL

Let's get something to drink first. I'm dying of thirst.

They walk up the rickety wooden steps of the old roadhouse. Music can be heard coming from somewhere in the back.

INT. HAPPY TIMES BAR

Christian pushes the door open. They blink their eyes to adjust to the dark tap room.

CHRISTIAN

Anybody here?

The door shuts behind them. The place looks deserted. There are a few tables off to the right, and a dusty upright piano stands against the wall. A long bar runs along the opposite wall. The place looks deserted. Suddenly a young girl named BOBBIE JO pops up from behind the bar. She is a teenager. She is wearing a belly shirt and a pair of denim cutoffs.

BOBBIE JO

Hi there, folks! Would you like to see some menus?

CHRISTIAN

No, thanks. Just a couple of whatever you have on draft.

They get their beers, and sit at a table near the front window.

BOBBIE JO

You're not from around here are you?

CHRISTIAN

No, we're not.

BOBBIE JO

Bet I can guess where? New Jersey, right?

CHRISTIAN

Very good. How did you do that?

BOBBIE JO

Saw it on your license plate when you pulled in.

JILL

(whispering)

This chick is a genius.

CHRISTIAN

You know what's weird? I haven't seen another car in two hours.

JILL

It hasn't been two hours. I saw a car about a half hour ago, but it was back a few miles.

CHRISTIAN

What car?

JILL

I don't know. It never caught up with us. It must have turned off somewhere.

Christian looks out the window and down the road. It disappears into infinity. His thought are interrupted by the barmaid.

BOBBIE JO

Nice car, mister. That a `59?

CHRISTIAN

Sure is.

Jill is standing at the window looking down the highway in the direction they just came from. Christian walks toward the bar.

BOBBIE JO

I like cars.

CHRISTIAN

Do you?

Suddenly a man sticks his head out of the back room. It is the girl's father.

**FATHER** 

Bobbie Jo! Stop your yapping and let these nice folks drink their beers in peace! Now, finish those dishes!

(whispering)

Who pissed in his cereal this morning?

BOBBIE JO

Don't mind him. He's just mad cause I got home so late last night.

CHRISTIAN

You out raising hell?

BOBBIE JO

Sure was! Look.

She pulls her hair back to reveal an angry looking hickey on her neck.

CHRISTIAN

Wow! That golf ball must have been going pretty fast to leave a mark like that.

BOBBIE JO

Wasn't no golf ball, mister.

CHRISTIAN

How old are you, Bobbie Jo?

She leans over the bar towards him.

BOBBIE JO

Fifteen. But my boyfriend says I look a lot older.

Jill suddenly appears at the bar.

JILL

I'm ready to go, Romeo.

Christian slaps a ten dollar bill on the bar. He watches Jill stride out the door. Then he turns back to Bobbie Jo.

CHRISTIAN

Keep the change, cutie.

EXT. HAPPY TIMES BAR

By the time Christian gets outside, Jill is already at the car. She is leaning against the door.

CHRISTIAN

What's wrong with you?

Nothing.

CHRISTIAN

Seems like there is.

JILL

Well there isn't. Can we just go?

He smirks and they get in the car.

INT. CADILLAC - DAY

JILL

Oww! This seat is hot!

CHRISTIAN

It's hot, cause you're in it!

JILL

(rolling her eyes)

Let's go.

Christian cranks the key, and the car awakens with a low growl. The car lurches forward, and they are on the road again. Jill pulls down the visor and looks in the vanity mirror. She begins to apply her lipstick.

CHRISTIAN

Have you seen the map?

JILL

I thought you had it.

CHRISTIAN

I left it right on the seat when we went into the bar.

JILL

Maybe it blew away.

CHRISTIAN

That would suck. I had our whole itinerary written on it.

JILL

It'll turn up. It probably fell on the floor and is under one of the seats.

CHRISTIAN

Probably. That lipstick looks great on you.

You were flirting with her.

CHRISTIAN

With who? Is that what this little huff is all about? Cause if it is, I'm liking it.

JILL

It's not a little huff! She was fifteen!

CHRISTIAN

Eight to eighty. Blind, crippled, or crazy. If they can't walk, drag 'em.

JILL

You're terrible.

CHRISTIAN

But, you're laughing.

JILL

I bet you like them young, don't you, old man.

CHRISTIAN

Not the old man routine.

JILL

So young...so ripe...

CHRISTIAN

Shit!

JILL

What?

CHRISTIAN

I forgot to get gas, and we're on E.

JILL

Too busy flirting.

CHRISTIAN

Will you stop? We have to go back. I'm driving on the fumes here.

JILL

Maybe there's a gas station down the road.

CHRISTIAN

There's not. Remember the sign?

They turn the car around and head back towards the roadside bar.

JILL

What if you run out of gas before we get there?

CHRISTIAN

I was afraid you'd say that.

EXT. HAPPY TIMES BAR

They pull the car up to the old pump on the side of the building. They both walk up the creaky steps.

INT. HAPPY TIMES BAR

The bar is quiet except for the sound of buzzing flies, and a single squeaking ceiling fan.

CHRISTIAN

Hello? We're back.

JILL

Maybe they left.

CHRISTIAN

Where would they go? It's only been twenty minutes.

JILL

How should I know? I'll go out and try the pumps, and you see if you can find the old man.

CHRISTIAN

Good idea. Just put twenty bucks in it.

Jill walks toward the door, but pauses and turns back to Christian before exiting.

JILL

Oh, and Chris? Find the old man. Don't play with the girls.

She steps out the door, and her boots can be heard on the wooden stairs as she returns to the car. She unhooks one of the gas pumps and starts searching for the gas tank on the enormous Cadillac. She finally locates it under the back license plate.

# INT. HAPPY TIMES BAR

### CHRISTIAN

Hey, is anybody here?

He walks toward the back room where the man had stuck his head out earlier, and knocks on the door. Nothing. He knocks again, but still no response. He gently begins to turn the doorknob. The door creaks open.

He enters an L-shaped kitchen. It goes down about twenty feet and turns to the left. Pots and pans line the walls over a row of steel basins. A few flies buzz about the room, as he makes his way through the cluttered kitchen. He gets to the corner of the kitchen, and steps past a large black broiler across from a dirty refrigerator. A large clock hangs on the wall, buzzing along with the flies. He turns the corner to the left. Sitting in a chair with his back to Christian is the old man.

# CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Hello?

Christian touches the old man's shoulder, and the chair rotates on it's axis. The man is now facing him, but he is dead. His throat has been slit from ear to ear. Blood still flows copiously from the wound in his neck. What was once a grease stained T-shirt, is now a crimson soaked rag.

Christian claps his hand over his mouth to keep from throwing up. He turns and runs from the image of gore sitting before him. He knocks several of the pots and pans from the walls in his haste to escape.

He bursts through the kitchen door, nearly tearing it from it's hinges. He trips over a bar stool and tumbles over it, he falls to the dusty floor behind the bar. Looking up and sees a phone mounted on the wall above him. But it doesn't have a receiver hanging on it, just a curling cord leading down to the floor on his right. He can hear the phone beeping off the hook. He turns his head and comes face to face with Bobbie Jo. The cord is wrapped tightly around her neck. Her tongue and eyes bulge from her head. Christian can still see the hickey blending in with a large purple bruise from the cord cinched around her throat. He gags in horror as he scrambles to his feet. A wine bottle is smashed on the floor next to her. A large jagged piece of glass from the broken wine bottle protrudes from the girl's belly. Carved into Bobbie Jo's stomach are the words: YOU'RE NEXT. And below her navel is the name: JILL.

Christian bolts for the door as if shot from a cannon.

EXT. HAPPY TIMES BAR

CHRISTIAN

Jill! Jill!

He clambers down the steps and hits the dirt running. He doesn't see Jill by the car. She suddenly pops up, frightening him further.

JILL

All filled up. You pay him? Hey, you're looking a little pale, dude.

CHRISTIAN

Let's go.

They jump in the car and Christian punches the accelerator. The tires spin in the dirt. Gravel blasts from the back wheels in a cloud of dust. The wheels chirp on the asphalt as they are on their way again.

JILL

Are you alright? You're acting like you robbed the place! Slow down!

CHRISTIAN

Sorry. Just want to get going.

He slows the vehicle slightly and looks in the rearview mirror. He watches as the bar get smaller and smaller. Then he sees what appears to be a face in one of the windows. He guns the motor again.

INT. CADILLAC - SEVERAL HOUR LATER - DUSK

CHRISTIAN

My eyes are killing me. What do you say we pull off at the next motel?

JILL

Yea, I'm beat too.

The sun sinks below the horizon. They see a neon motel sign illuminated in the distance. He pulls off the highway, and follows a long dirt road into the desert. Christian eases the car alongside the square stone building.

Behind the office, leading back away from the road into the darkness are twelve units. They get out of the car and walk toward the office.

CHRISTIAN

The Desert Flower Motel.

JILL

Looks a little wilted.

INT. DESERT FLOWER MOTEL - NIGHT

The office is a dingy little room with a counter in the middle of it. A dusty lamp glows in the corner of the room on a table that is scattered with outdated brochures. Sitting behind the counter is a man in his thirties. He has long greasy hair, bad teeth and a pasty complexion.

On the counter in front of him is a child's coloring book. His chubby fingers grip a tiny stub of a crayon. He struggles to stay inside the lines.

MOTEL CLERK

Need a room?

CHRISTIAN

Actually, we just stopped by to pick up your application to Mensa.

They fill out the registration card and pay for the room. The man counts the money very slowly, and places it in an old upright cash register. He methodically logs their names into a book, hands them a key, and two white bath towels.

MOTEL CLERK

You're in the last room on the end. So you two can get some privacy. You can drive on back.

EXT. DESERT FLOWER MOTEL

They walk outside, get in the car, and drive down the long row of efficiencies. They pull up to the last one and cut the engine.

JILL

That guy gives me the creeps.

Seems harmless enough.

JILL

Chris...We're in Texas. He probably has a chain saw under the counter.

When they turn off the headlights the area is pitch black. There is no moonlight, only darkness surrounds them. The only visible light comes from a hanging lamp a few doors down from them. The light is so dim because the globe is clogged with dozens of dead insects.

The curtain in the room beside them moves slightly as if someone were watching them. Then it is still.

CHRISTIAN

It would be nice if there was a little more light out here.

He fumbles with the key in the darkness. He accidentally drops it, and Jill picks it up. As she does, she sees a huge cockroach on the door. She screams.

JILL

Oh shit! Get it, Chris.

He swats the insect away with one of the towels. It scampers away.

CHRISTIAN

Calm down. It's gone.

JILL

That's your towel now, buster.

INT. DESERT FLOWER MOTEL - ROOM 12 - NIGHT

Christian opens the door. The room is even darker than outside. He runs his hand up and down along the inside wall trying to feel for a light switch. There isn't one.

CHRISTIAN

Stay close, there's probably a lamp inside somewhere.

They enter the inky blackness of the room. Jill clings to Christian's arm as he waves his hand in front of him to make contact with any piece of furniture or light fixture. They're is a soft crunching sound under their feet. Something brushes against Christian's face.

 $\mathtt{JILL}$ 

Ooh...I don't like this.

Christian reaches up and grabs at the air above him. He grasps something and finds it's a piece of twine. His fingers follow the string upward. It is tied to a beaded chain.

CHRISTIAN

I think I found the light.

He yanks down on the string. Nothing. He tries again and again, but the light doesn't respond. Jill grabs his arm tighter.

JILL

Bulb must be burned out. Do you have a flashlight in the car?

CHRISTIAN

No. Hey, you've got quite a grip. Don't worry. I'll find the lights.

They slowly take a few more steps until Christian runs into a large bureau. He runs his hand over its dusty surface. He feels a lamp. He runs his fingers up its length until he feels a small knob near a bulb. He wiggles it, then turns it clockwise with a click. The room is suddenly flooded with light.

Jill screams frantically. Christian turns and sees that the walls, floor and even parts of the ceiling are covered with huge cockroaches. They scamper wildly in the now lighted room. Jill is jumping on Christian. She seems to be trying to climb him to get away from the writhing malignancy of insects.

The roaches begin to crawl all over them. The room is alive with them. Christian and Jill run for the door brushing them off as fast as they can. They reach the outside and hit the dirt. They brush the roaches from themselves and shake them out of their clothes. Jill is hysterical.

They leap in the car, and toss the towels in the backseat. They drive up towards the office. Jill is still extremely frightened. Christian stops out front.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I'm going to go in and get our money back

Don't worry about the money. Just please get me out of here!

The clerk looks up as the car is pulling away.

They drive for a few moments on the long dirt road that leads back to the main highway. Christian notices a pair of headlights racing up behind them. The vehicle is approaching fast and is upon them in seconds. Christian tromps on the gas pedal and the Cadillac responds. A cloud of dust billows behind them. The car pursuing them is swerving back and forth.

CHRISTIAN

Who the hell is that?

The car behind them begins to flash its high beams on and off.

JILL

Maybe they want us to stop!

CHRISTIAN

And maybe we should keep going!

The dark sedan behind them is just a pair of headlights in the darkness. They can't see who is driving or even how many occupants are inside the car. Christian drives faster, but the road is winding. He can't seem to outrun the vehicle. There is a fork in the road, and Christian goes to the left to fake them out. He then cuts to the right. His trick works and the car behind them stays left, and disappears behind the bushes and trees.

JILL

What the hell was that all about?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know, but I think we lost them. We should be at the main highway soon.

As he continues to drive, he becomes more confused. They appear to be going in circles.

 $\mathsf{JILL}$ 

We'll never get out of here!

CHRISTIAN

Wait! I see lights over there! That must be the interstate. I think we're headed in the right direction now. Yea...this is it. Right around this bend.

Suddenly, Christian jams on the brakes. Jill flies forward and nearly strikes the dashboard. The car grinds to a halt.

Just at the opening to the interstate sits an old dark colored sedan blocking the way out. The car faces them head on. Its high beams blind them.

JILL

Chris! What do we do?

Suddenly, the door on the other car creaks open. Christian reaches down into the storage pouch on the inside of his door. He grips the cold black metal of the loaded .44. He can't see through the dust and glaring lights to identify who is approaching. Christian draws the weapon from the pouch and places it next to his seat. Jill cannot see what he is doing. Now the figure is upon them. Christian looks up to see the face.

MOTEL CLERK

I want my towels!

They both burst into laughter, and hand him the bath towels they had forgotten in the back seat.

INT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL - ROOM 204 - LATER THAT NIGHT

Christian and Jill enter their room on the second floor of a motel 10 miles down the road. The place has a few tenants, and clean bright rooms. Jill enters first and drops her bags on the floor.

JILL

Two fresh beds!

CHRISTIAN

Man, I'm beat.

JILL

Me too. This is a zillion times better than that first nightmare we were in. I think I'll take a bath.

CHRISTIAN

Sounds like a good idea. I think I'll run down to the liquor store across the road. I need a drink after today.

JILL

Don't take too long, cause I might start getting scared.

If you're really scared, we could always push the beds together tonight.

JILL

Very funny.

He leaves, and Jill gets in the bathtub. The bathroom door is ajar. She lies back in the tub and stretches in the warm water. She is humming when Christian returns a few minutes later.

CHRISTIAN

Hey, I'm back. Got some beer and a bottle of wine.

JILL

Wine? Can you pour me a glass and bring it to me.

CHRISTIAN

Sure!

Christian rifles through the drawers in the kitchenette.

JILL

Where's my wine?

CHRISTIAN

Forgot to get a corkscrew. Don't move. I'll be right back.

EXT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL

Christian runs out the door, and down the steps. He scampers across the courtyard to the office. The night manager is sitting at the front desk watching television.

INT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL OFFICE

CHRISTIAN

Excuse me, sir. Do you have a corkscrew I can borrow?

NIGHT MANAGER

I think so. Let me check in the back.

Christian looks at the TV while the man goes in the back and looks for a corkscrew.

Have you found it yet? It's kind of an emergency.

The man appears from behind a curtain separating the office from his living quarters. In his hand is a rusty corkscrew.

NIGHT MANAGER

Isn't it always an emergency when you're trying to get laid?

Christian grabs the tool, runs out the door, and back up to the room. He opens the door and enters. Jill is still in the bathtub. The bathroom door is still open.

INT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL - ROOM 204

JILL

You're going out again? Where's my glass of wine?

CHRISTIAN

I'm not going out again. I just came back.

JILL

Oh, I thought I heard you come in a minute ago.

CHRISTIAN

No...Hey, where's the wine?

JILL

Don't you have it out there somewhere? You were supposed to bring me a glass.

CHRISTIAN

Jill, I'm not kidding around. I left the bottle right here on the table.

Christian looks about the room, as he is over come by a sudden wave of nausea. He goes to the refrigerator and looks inside. There is a six pack of beer, but no wine.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Is everything okay in there?

Everything's fine. I'm just dying of thirst that's all. Are you having trouble getting the cork out? You're probably used to those screw top bottles!

Christian begins to panic. He continues to glance around the room. Nothing has been disturbed. He slowly walks toward the closet while Jill hums happily in the bathroom. Bracing himself for the worst, he grasps the knob and throws the door open.

The closet is empty except for a few metal hangers swaying back and forth. Suddenly he hears a voice behind him. He turns around, and there is Jill standing there in a white terry cloth robe with a towel on her head.

JILL (CONT'D)

I thought maybe you needed some help.

CHRISTIAN

Hey Gunga Din. I can't find the wine.

JILL

Are you sure you even bought wine?

CHRISTIAN

Yea. I just can't remember what I did with it. Beer?

JILL

Sure.

She takes a can of beer from the fridge, and walks back into the bathroom. Christian steps out onto the balcony.

Jill soon emerges from the bathroom and joins him.

CHRISTIAN

Sure is a beautiful night.

JILL

Look at all the stars. There must be thousands of them.

CHRISTIAN

More like billions. They look like diamonds scattered across a velvet pillow.

JILL

That's really beautiful.

Not as beautiful as you.

Jill doesn't respond to his words. Instead, she walks to the other side of the balcony and looks up at the sky.

JILL

Do you believe in UFOs?

CHRISTIAN

I guess so. I once saw some weird lights in the sky back in Jersey.

JILL

Interesting. I saw a fire escape on the side of the motel when we were driving in tonight. I have a pair of binoculars in my bag. Maybe we could sneak up on the roof and look at some more stars. Maybe we'll see a UFO.

#### EXT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL

They climb the set of metal stairs that lead to the roof. A gentle breeze blows from the west. From above, Christian can see that the motel is a large U-shaped building. It had three floors and a pool at the end of the courtyard. From where they are standing, they can see all of the rooms on the other side of the motel. This includes their own room.

Jill is wearing a tank top and denim shorts. She stands a few feet in front of Christian, looking up at the dark sky through the binoculars. Christian directs her field of vision to different constellations and planets.

CHRISTIAN

Okay, just a little more to the left. See that bright one? That's Mars.

JILL

Really? Looks like a big star with a little twinkle of red.

CHRISTIAN

Now if you'll look over to the right. That's it, keep going. That one. Right there. I think that's Venus.

JILL

Oooh! The love planet!

Yea, probably where you came from. Okay, now look straight up.

JILL

Hey! It's the big dipper!

CHRISTIAN

Very good.

Christian smells her freshly washed hair and body. Her backside is brushing against him as she looks at the stars.

JILL

My neck is getting stiff.

She lowers the binoculars, but continues to look through them. Christian begins to carefully massage her shoulders.

JILL (CONT'D)

That feels good. Hey, I can see in everybody's rooms from here. Maybe I'll catch somebody having sex.

CHRISTIAN

So, you're a voyeur?

JILL

What's that?

CHRISTIAN

Means you like to watch.

JILL

Oh. What's the word for a person who likes to be watched?

CHRISTIAN

An exhibitionist.

JILL

I think that's more me.

CHRISTIAN

Really?

He continues to gently knead her shoulders getting closer to her. She continues to scan the rooms across the courtyard with the binoculars. He leans in to try to kiss her neck, but she suddenly stiffens. Embarrassed, he withdraws.

What's our room number?

CHRISTIAN

204. I'm sure you won't be seeing anyone having sex in there.

JILL

Oh my God!

CHRISTIAN

I'm sorry Jill, I didn't mean to...

JILL

Christian! There's somebody in our room!

CHRISTIAN

What?

He grabs the binoculars from Jill, and looks through them. The curtains in their room are slowly being drawn by some unseen person. Christian begins to tremble.

JILL

What's going on?

CHRISTIAN

I can't see! The blinds are drawn!

TTT.T.

Are we being robbed?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know. Stay here, and stay down!

JILL

Where are you going?

CHRISTIAN

I'm going to find out who the hell is in our room!

JILL

What if it's somebody who works here?

CHRISTIAN

Shit! The lights just went out! Listen...whatever you do, stay up here, okay?

She nods, and Christian creeps across the roof towards the fire escape.

He glances back at her, and she is lying on her stomach, propped up on her elbows, watching him through the binoculars.

Christian gets to the ground floor, and heads for the Cadillac. He crouches down, opens the driver's side door and pulls out the .44 from the door pouch. He quietly climbs back up the steps to their room. Tucking the weapon in his pants, he creeps past the other efficiencies toward their room. He reaches the door, and pauses to listen. He can now hear objects being tossed around the room. He glances across the courtyard. Jill is still where he left her on the opposite roof. She waves to him.

Christian knocks on the door. All sounds coming from the room stop. He knocks again.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Room service!

He draws the huge firearm from his pants. He again glances over at Jill. She is staring wide eyed at the appearance of the gun.

Suddenly the door bursts open. A large figure all dressed in black dashes from the room. The metal door slams into Christian with the force of a freight train. He is sent reeling, tumbling to the ground. The gun flies from his hand, bouncing once on the terrace, then plummeting to the thick bushes below. The man in black retreats down the steps. Christian staggers to his feet and gives chase. The sound of heavy boots descending the metal stairs can he heard coming from the end of the hallway.

Christian runs down the hallway, jumps down half the steps and out into the courtyard. He fishes through the bushes but is unable to locate the gun.

He runs around to the edge of the building. Peers around the corner, but doesn't see anyone. He continues along the wall until he reaches the office. Ducking inside, he quietly closes the door behind him.

# INT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL OFFICE

The TV is on but the manager is no where in sight. Taking a deep breath, he taps the little bell on the front desk.

CHRISTIAN (whispering)
Is anybody here? I need some help!

Only the sound from the TV can be heard. He creeps around the counter toward the doorway that leads to the back room. He slowly draws back the curtain, and enters the room. Out of the darkness off to his right he sees a sudden movement. Before he can react he is struck in the head. He falls to the ground unconscious.

Minutes later, Christian awakens. In the distance a faint beeping sound can be heard. Getting to his feet he looks around the room. He looks to his left and suddenly recoils in horror. Laying face down in the corner appears to be the body of the night manager. Christian runs from the back room and out of the office.

He dashes across the courtyard and up the steps to the second floor. He glances again to the roof on the opposite side of the building. This time Jill is nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, he hears some faint sounds coming from the room. Determined not to be caught off guard again, he opens the door.

INT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL - ROOM 204

As he enters the room he can see that it has been ransacked. Drawers are pulled out and dumped, furniture is turned over, and their clothes are scattered about the room. Then, there is a loud click behind him.

JILL

Looking for this?

Christian whirls around to face the business end of the bulldog .44. Jill is standing in the corner holding the gun with both hands. It is pointed right at Christian's face.

CHRISTIAN

Jill! Oh, thank God you're alright! I thought you were...

JILL

Dead? Not hardly. Do you want to tell me what the hell is going on?

CHRISTIAN

I...I don't know!

JILL

I think you do. Where did you get this gun?

It was my uncle's gun.

JILL

Was that guy you're uncle?

CHRISTIAN

No! My uncle's dead!

JILL

Did you kill him?

CHRISTIAN

No!

Jill cocks the hammer back on the pistol.

JILL

I know there's some bad shit going on here. You know more about who that guy is then what you're telling, so you better start talking.

MUSIC OVER THIS MONTAGE

Christian takes a deep breath, and begins to tell Jill everything he knows about the man with the black eyes. He can be seen acting out the car chase in New Jersey. The discovery of the bodies at Happy Times. The night manager's body downstairs.

Jill continues to keep the gun trained on him and stares in disbelief at what he is telling her.

CHRISTIAN

So, I think this guy has been following us the whole trip. I swear that's all I know.

Jill looks like she's going to cry, but steadies herself. She slowly lowers the gun, grabs the barrel and hands it to him.

JILL

I believe you. We have to call the police, but I believe you.

He gently takes the pistol from her and places it on the table.

CHRISTIAN

Thank you. I'm sorry about all this.

Call 911.

EXT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL

The police arrive, and with them a detective, Sergeant RICHARD SARLOT. He is listening to Christian's story. Jill is chatting with the a female officer, KARLA BELUCCI. He interrupts Christian to speak with the her.

SGT. SARLOT

Karla! Why don't you call the sheriff in Sealy and have someone go over and check on the purported, Happy Times Massacre?

OFFICER BELLUCCI

Sure thing, chief.

She consoles Jill, then heads off to the motel office. Sgt. Sarlot turns his attention back to Christian and Jill.

SGT. SARLOT

What were you saying?

CHRISTIAN

I said, that's when we took off!

SGT. SARLOT

Why didn't you tell Jill about what you saw in Happy Times?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know. I guess I was too scared.

SGT. SARLOT

Why didn't you call the police when you found these two murdered people?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know.

SGT. SARLOT

You don't have something else you want to tell me do you? I mean, other than the Man in Black routine.

CHRISTIAN

I swear I'm telling you the truth. That's all I know.

SGT. SARLOT

Where are you two headed anyway?

JILL

California.

SGT. SARLOT

Well, right now I can't charge you with anything, but you may want to stick around for a day or so.

CHRISTIAN

That's it?

SGT. SARLOT

Yea. That's it. But I am having a little problem.

CHRISTIAN

What do you mean?

SGT. SARLOT

We can't find the night manager.

JILL

Can't find him?

SGT. SARLOT

Just what I said. He's missing.

CHRISTIAN

What? A dead man just doesn't get up and walk away.

SGT. SARLOT

How do you know he was dead?

CHRISTIAN

He wasn't moving...I guess I just assumed after what happened at...

Suddenly officer Bellucci approaches the three of them.

OFFICER BELLUCCI

Just got off the phone with Sheriff Traut in Sealy.

SGT. SARLOT

And?

OFFICER BELLUCCI

He and some of his officers searched the place from top to bottom. They can't come up with any bodies. No blood. Nothing. Place is empty. Said it looks like it's been deserted for years.

No one speaks. They all just look at each other in mute protest.

EXT. COUNTRY COURT MOTEL - THE NEXT MORNING

Christian and Jill are sitting by the pool. Christian sits in a lounge chair and Jill is standing, rubbing sunscreen on her legs.

JILL

Did you tell the cops about the gun?

CHRISTIAN

Hell no.

JILL

Were you scared when I pointed it at you last night?

CHRISTIAN

Soiled my shorts.

Jill laughs and takes off her robe. She is wearing a black bikini. Christian tries not to stare.

JILL

I think I'll go for a swim.

She dives in the water and begins to swim laps. Christian watches her intently as he sips his drink in the sun. Suddenly, he hears a voice from behind him.

SGT. SARLOT

Are we having a super day or what? I see you're watching all the little fishies swim up and down the bay.

CHRISTIAN

Wouldn't you be?

SGT. SARLOT

Listen, I can't keep you here. We got nothing. No bodies, no blood. I know you saw something, and we got an APB on this guy in black you're talking about but...

CHRISTIAN

We're free to go?

SGT. SARLOT

Yep.

Jill emerged from the pool. Her wet bathing suit clings to every curve. The sergeant stares at her body.

JILL

Hello detective. I'm up here.

SGT. SARLOT

Afternoon, Ma'am.

JILL

Are we still prisoners?

SGT. SARLOT

You're free to go. So I guess I'll see you folks later.

CHRISTIAN

Hopefully not.

INT. CADILLAC - SEVERAL HOURS LATER - EL PASO, TX - DAY

The Cadillac cruises across the rolling chaparral country of western Texas.

JILL

I love this car.

CHRISTIAN

It's great isn't it?

JILL

It's big and comfy.

CHRISTIAN

Yea, I love it. I feel like I'm the king of the highway.

JILL

Cause you are!

Jill, what would you think if I told you scientists had come up with a machine that would allow people to travel all over the world quickly and cheaply?

#### JILL

That would be great! I could zip over to Paris and buy a dress in the morning, and get a pair of shoes that afternoon in London!

### CHRISTIAN

Yea, but what if I told you that even though the machine was really safe, one hundred thousand people would die using it?

### JILL

Oh that would suck. I would be totally against the development of a machine where so many people could lose their lives.

### CHRISTIAN

Okay then, what if you and I were riding in a horse drawn carriage back in the late 1800's, and I told you that scientists were working on a machine called an automobile. The automobile would take us quickly and cheaply anywhere in the country, but...would cause five million fatalities in the next century.

JILL

Holy shit! That is deep, man. You are something else.

### CHRISTIAN

I thought you'd like that story. Cause it's true.

## JILL

That is some fucked up shit. Five million people killed by cars. Shit!

# CHRISTIAN

Yea...you know, I've noticed you've been cursing a lot lately, young lady. Which reminds me of another funny story.

Well don't keep me waiting.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. I remember when I was in junior high school, I knew these brothers named Ernest, and Arnold Bubka.

JILL

Bubka?

CHRISTIAN

Yea, Ernie and his little brother Arnie. They were the worst kids in school. They were so bad that their mom started seeing a psychiatrist.

JILL

Wow. That's sad.

CHRISTIAN

Yea, I'll never forget them. We called them Dirty Ernie and Dirty Arnie.
Anyway, their mother didn't know how to deal with these little monsters, so the psychiatrist gave her some sound advice. He said that the next time they did anything wrong, just beat the crap out of them. Even if they said only one word of profanity. Just beat the living shit out of them.

JILL

Did it work?

CHRISTIAN

Well, the next morning, Ernie and Arnie are coming down for breakfast. Ernie walks in the kitchen first. His mom says, Good morning, Ernie. What would you like for breakfast? And he says, Just give me some fucking cheerios. his mom says, what did you say? And he says, You heard me bitch, Give me some fucking cheerios! And with that, Ernie's mom goes nuts. She grabs him by the scruff of the neck, pulls him out of the chair, and throws him against the wall. She starts punching him. She's working his head like a speed bag. She kicks him in the shins, punches him in the stomach, till he falls on the floor.

JILL

Wow!

CHRISTIAN

She continues to kick him in the ribs as he crawls across the floor, until he collapses in a heap. His little brother Arnie is watching this whole scene unfold before his eyes, while he's standing in the doorway trembling with fear. His mother turns to him and says, And what would you like for breakfast this morning, Arnie? And he meekly replies, Anything but those fucking cheerios, bitch!

They laugh hysterically, as the car speeds down the road. The Cadillac swerves to the right and skids onto the dirt shoulder. At the last second, Christian sees a young woman at the side of the road hitchhiking.

The rearview mirror strikes her, and spins her off her feet into the bushes. They grind the car to a halt in a cloud of dust. The woman is RHONDA SEVERINO, she is in her early twenties, and has run away from home. She has a short denim skirt on and a white cotton top that is tied beneath her breasts.

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

Christian and Jill leap from the car and run back to the girl lying on the ground. Rhonda is trying to get to her feet.

JILL

Oh my God! Are You alright?

RHONDA

I think so.

CHRISTIAN

Can you stand?

They help her up. They hold her as they walk her to the car. They lean her against the trunk.

JILL

What are you doing all the way out here?

RHONDA

Hitchhiking.

What's your name?

RHONDA

Rhonda.

CHRISTIAN

I'm Christian, and this is Jill. Nice running into you.

She laughs and then scowls as she realizes that she has a large splinter in her leg. Christian has Jill run to the glove box to get the first aid kit, and a bottle of vodka. He kneels in front of her to examine the wound. Jill returns and hands him the kit and bottle.

JILL

Well, isn't this cozy.

CHRISTIAN

This will hurt for a moment.

RHONDA

What's the vodka for?

JILL

Chris thought that since he ran you over, the least he could do was offer you a drink.

CHRISTIAN

I always like to do shots before I operate.

He grasps her thigh and begins to work on the splinter with a pair of tweezers.

RHONDA

Oww! Be careful!

JILL

Yes, Christian...we wouldn't want you to strain yourself.

He draws the sliver of wood from her flesh, and presses a vodka soaked gauze against it.

CHRISTIAN

Good as new. Just hold that against it for a few minutes and then we'll put a bandage on you. So where are you hitchhiking to?

RHONDA

Los Angeles. Going to be an actress.

CHRISTIAN

Really? What a coincidence. We're going to...

JILL

Phoenix.

INT. CADILLAC - DAY

Christian and Jill decide to take Rhonda as far as Phoenix. She is sitting in the backseat and making eyes at Christian.

RHONDA

How long before we get to Phoenix?

CHRISTIAN

Couple hours.

RHONDA

How long have you two been married?

CHRISTIAN

We're not married.

RHONDA

Just going out?

CHRISTIAN

No, we're just traveling together.

RHONDA

Oh. So you're not boyfriend and girlfriend?

CHRISTIAN

Nope. I mean...I can dream.

RHONDA

Yea, but about who?

The car zooms along Interstate 10 across the flat desert landscape of Arizona. Christian glances occasionally into the rearview mirror at Rhonda. She smiles and winks at him.

RHONDA

I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't come along. I was burning up out there today.

JILL

Probably still standing out there with your thumb out. Do you have any connections in the entertainment industry in L.A.?

RHONDA

No. But I don't think I'm going to need them.

JILL

Why? Isn't that business really competitive?

RHONDA

Not in the area I'll be working in.

JILL

Like what? Industrial stuff?

RHONDA

I'll be doing porn.

Christian coughs and shifts in his seat as he glances at the beauty in his back seat. Jill just smirks and continues her inquiry.

JILL

Oh...I see. Do you have any experience?

RHONDA

Of course! Don't we all?

EXT. PHOENIX MARRIOT PARKING LOT - DUSK

Jill gets out of the car. Rhonda is curled up in the backseat fast asleep. Jill walks around to the driver's side of the car. She leans in and whispers in Christian's ear.

JILL

I'll make the arrangements for our room. Get rid of her, okay?

Christian shakes his head in affirmation. Jill strides off and goes inside the hotel lobby. He reaches back and looks at the sleeping beauty in his backseat.

He places his hand on her knee and gently shakes her. She awakens and smiles when she sees Christian.

RHONDA

End of the line?

CHRISTIAN

Yea. We have to get going, and so do you.

RHONDA

Thanks for stopping and giving me a ride after you hit me.

CHRISTIAN

I'm so sorry...

RHONDA

That's okay. I'm fine. I liked the way you looked at me today.

Christian blushes and looks at the ground.

CHRISTIAN

I didn't mean to...

RHONDA

Take it as a compliment. If there's one thing I know about, it's men. I know you love that girl. I can tell by the way you look at her. She'll come around. Just be yourself.

He smiles and glances over to the office. He can see Jill chatting with the desk clerk. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out a wad of cash. He presses it into Rhonda's hand.

CHRISTIAN

Please take this. I can't resist a damsel in distress.

RHONDA

Dude! This is a lot of money! There must be a thousand bucks here! I can't...

CHRISTIAN

Just take it. If you don't I'll be insulted. It'll help you get an apartment when you get to L.A. Now go. Please.

RHONDA

Oh man, you don't know how much I appreciate this.

She grabs him and kisses him on the mouth.

CHRISTIAN

I do now.

He wipes the lipstick from his lips. Rhonda is giggling as she walks away.

RHONDA

If you're ever in L.A., look me up. I'll let you have your way with me. See you.

She turns and walks across the highway towards a saloon across the road. Christian stands for a moment watching as she goes into the bar.

INT. PHEONIX MARRIOT - RESTAURANT - EVENING

JILL

Any problems cutting her loose?

CHRISTIAN

Nope.

JILL

She seemed nice Chris, but...

CHRISTIAN

She was a slut, right? Isn't that what you wanted to say?

JILL

No. She just seemed like a drifter. A girl with a lot of baggage in her life. Someone who hasn't worked out all of the problems in her head yet.

CHRISTIAN

Didn't you just describe us?

JILL

You know what I mean. I feel sorry for her.

If you really felt sorry for her, you wouldn't have said that we were only going to Phoenix. We could have taken her all the way to Los Angeles.

JILL

I know, she just seemed...I don't know.

CHRISTIAN

She'll be fine. She's a survivor type. She was gone by the time I went out to get the luggage. Who gives a shit, right?

JILL

Why are you getting an attitude? I'm not the one who kissed her.

CHRISTIAN

I like your sudden interest. But she kissed me. I didn't kiss her. It was a friendly exchange. She was just saying good-bye.

JILL

So she's really gone?

CHRISTIAN

Yea...She's really gone!

JILL

Did you like it when she kissed you?

CHRISTIAN

I don't know.

JILL

Tell the truth.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. Yes I did. For one fleeting moment I liked it. She kissed me, and now she's gone, and that's it.

INT. THE SALOON ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE HOTEL - NIGHT

Rhonda is chatting with an older gentleman she has just met at the bar. His back is to the CAMERA.

GENTLEMAN

Would you like some more wine?

RHONDA

Yea. I'm pretty buzzed. Usually I don't like red wine. Gives me a headache.

**GENTLEMAN** 

That's because you've probably never had a good bottle of red.

RHONDA

What is this?

**GENTLEMAN** 

Merlot.

RHONDA

Smooth!

**GENTLEMAN** 

Yes. So smooth.

RHONDA

I'm glad I met you. You're a really nice guy.

**GENTLEMAN** 

Thank you, Rhonda. You're a very charming young lady. So I guess that's why I was wondering...why the porn industry?

RHONDA

I don't know. I guess cause I love sex so much, I thought I'd be good at it. I might as well make money doing something I love.

GENTLEMAN

It just seems like such a vile profession, Rhonda.

RHONDA

I know but I feel like I can't do anything else.

GENTLEMAN

Really? Have you tried anything else?

RHONDA

Well, no, not really. I used to work in a dry cleaners in Philly.

GENTLEMAN

That seems so beneath you.

RHONDA

I was going to be a bartender once. Then another time I was going to go to school for physical therapy.

**GENTLEMAN** 

What happened?

RHONDA

I talked about it for awhile, and a lot of people I knew told me I should go for it. They said they couldn't see me working in a dry cleaners ten years from now.

**GENTLEMAN** 

So why didn't you do it?

RHONDA

I guess I was scared.

GENTLEMAN

But you weren't too scared to come all the way out here on your own.

RHONDA

I know, but I did this because I felt that I'd run out of choices. I had to get away. I had to get away from...me.

**GENTLEMAN** 

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

RHONDA

No. It's not you. I shouldn't be burdening you with my screwed up life.

GENTLEMAN

No, Rhonda. You're really a wonderful girl.

Rhonda slides around on the seat in the booth. She puts her arms around him, giving him a big hug.

RHONDA

I'm sorry i got all blubbery.

**GENTLEMAN** 

There's not an ounce of blubber on you, sweetie.

RHONDA

Oh, you know what I mean.

**GENTLEMAN** 

Of course. Now, how about some dessert?

RHONDA

That would be great. I'd love some ice cream.

GENTLEMAN

Sure, honey. I have some up in my room.

RHONDA

Let's go.

GENTLEMAN

Ice cream, you scream...

CUT TO:

INT. PHEONIX MARRIOT - GIFT SHOP - NIGHT

CHRISTIAN

All these shops are filled with the same crap. Anywhere you go in the whole country, you'll see the same junk. They just put different state's names on them.

JILL

Well I like it.

Jill wanders about the store looking at all the souvenirs. Rather than look at all the stuff in the shop, he follows Jill around admiring her beauty.

JILL (CONT'D)

Chris! Check this out!

She points to a glass case filled with little figurines.

JILL (CONT'D)

Look at that.

CHRISTIAN

What? The elf?

 $\mathsf{JILL}$ 

No. Not the fucking elf. The angel. See her? She's beautiful.

Instead of looking at the case he looks at her, as she stares at the angel on the shelf.

Yes...she is beautiful.

The clerk comes over. She is an elderly Hispanic woman.

JILL

I'd love to have something like that. Excuse me, how much is that?

STORE CLERK

What? The elf?

JILL

No. The angel.

STORE CLERK

I never saw that one until today. Let me check.

JILL

Well?

STORE CLERK

Two hundred and fifty dollars. Do you want it?

JILL

Oh no. I can't afford that much. Thanks anyway. Let's go Chris.

They leave the store and take the elevator back to their room. Once inside, Jill heads to the bathroom.

INT. PHOENIX MARRIOT - ROOM 325

CHRISTIAN

Damn. I'm out of cigarettes. Jill, I'll be right back.

JILL (O.S.)

Okay. Don't forget your key card.

CHRISTIAN

Got it. I'll make sure the door locks on  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{my}}$  way out.

He leaves and the door locks with a loud click. Jill washes her face. A few minutes pass and she thinks she hears something. She turns off the water. She hears someone in the room.

JILL

Chris? Is that you?

Again she hears some movement in the room. She slowly opens the bathroom door.

CHRISTIAN

Baby, I'm back!

JILL

Didn't you hear me calling you? You scared the living...

She notices something on the bureau. There illuminated by the lamp is the little angel figurine.

CHRISTIAN

The living what?

JILL

Oh my God!

Jill goes to the table and picks up the fragile statue with both hands. She cradles it as if it were a baby's face.

CHRISTIAN

Like it?

JILL

I love it. You shouldn't have done this. It's too expensive.

CHRISTIAN

A mere bag of shells to a man of my position, my dear.

Jill places the angel back on the bureau and pads across the carpet toward Christian.

JILL

Hey...

CHRISTIAN

What?

JILL

This.

She throws her arms around him and gently kisses him on the lips. She squeezes him tightly, sighs, and then releases her grip.

Wow. Had I known it was going to get that kind of reaction, I would have picked up one of those back in Jersey!

She walks back toward her bed and touches the angel's head lightly with her finger. She gets in her bed and pulls up the covers, still smiling at Christian and the little figurine.

JILL

That was one of the nicest things anyone's ever done for me.

CHRISTIAN

It was worth it to see you smile. Get some sleep. Tomorrow we'll be in L.A.

JILL

Oh, Chris. I was wondering...could we stop in Palm Springs first? I always wanted to go there.

CHRISTIAN

Sure. Do you want to hang out, and make that our last night on the road?

JILL

Yea. Then we'll go to L.A. the day after that.

CHRISTIAN

Sure. Sounds cool. Okay, Good night, Jill.

JILL

Night.

## PHEONIX MARRIOT - ROOM 325 - THE NEXT MORNING

Christian opens his eyes and looks at the ceiling. The sunlight of a new day shows brightly through the curtains. He rolls on his side and looks over at Jill sleeping on the other bed across the room. He glances at the clock on the night stand. It shows nine o'clock. He rolls on his back and smiles. Then he hears a faint click against the locked door.

He rises from the bed and approaches the door. He looks through the peephole but sees no one. He puts his ear against the door, but still he hears nothing.

Slowly, he glides the security chain across it's track and lets it fall. He grasps the doorknob cautiously, and begins to turn it. Opening the door a crack he looks out. Down the hallway he hears the bell for the elevator. The elevator doors shut. Peering down the hallway in the other direction, and sees a chambermaid loading towels onto her cart. She is a Hispanic woman in her early forties.

CHRISTIAN

Excuse me, Senora, But did you see anybody in the hallway just now?

CHAMBERMAID

El hombre con los ojos del tiburon.

Christian doesn't understand. She then points to his feet. He is confused for a moment, then looks down and sees a videotape lying of the floor in front of him.

He picks it up and goes back into the room. He hears Jill beginning to stir, so he places the tape in a drawer of the bureau.

JILL

Good morning. What time is it?

CHRISTIAN

After nine.

JILL

We slept late. I'm going to jump in the shower.

He smiles and glances over at the TV. Jill enters the bathroom and closes the door. Soon the water can he heard running in the shower. Christian grabs the tape and pops in the VCR under the TV. He sits down on the edge of the bed and waits. The screen is snowy at first, then the show begins.

At first it appears that someone has left him a cheaply made amateur bondage flick. On the screen is a girl completely nude handcuffed to a bed. Her back is turned to the camera. She has a white scarf or blindfold tied around her head so that she cannot see. The woman giggles nervously as she wiggles her backside at the camera.

Christian notices that the room looks very much like the one he and Jill are staying in. The girl on the video speaks.

VIDEOGIRL

What are you going to do now, baby?

Then he hears a low dark laugh coming from whoever was shooting the video.

CHRISTIAN

That voice. Sounds like...

Christian watches as a man steps up behind the girl. His back is to the camera too.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

No...no she...

The man in the video begins having sex with the girl. She turns her head to the side and Christian suddenly recognizes her.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Rhonda!

Christian grimaces as he watches the homemade video. He can hear Jill singing in the shower in the background as the scene on the TV unfolds. He glances at the bathroom door and then back to the action on the TV. He watches in horror as the man in the video suddenly picks up a large serrated hunting knife from under the sheets. He raises it up above his head as if displaying it for the viewer. The man in the video continues to have sex with Rhonda, before bringing the blade down on her with tremendous force. It penetrates her neck and he rips it backward tearing out her throat and spraying blood against the white wall above the headboard.

Christian begins to retch and grabs the wastepaper can from under the desk. He dry heaves in agony, as he watches what was once Rhonda Severino die before his startled eyes. The man is now out of the picture and the camera has been picked up and moves toward the bloody corpse. Rhonda's lifeless face stares at Christian as he heaves and spits bile into the trash can. He can no longer look at the screen. Then he hears a voice coming from the TV.

**GENTLEMAN** 

I'm so glad you made it this far Christian. If you thought that was messy, wait until you see what I do to...

Christian quickly ejects the tape. The images of evil are suddenly replaced by some sunny morning talk show.

He yanks out the tape, holding it by the corner with his thumb and forefinger. He drops it into his suitcase and covers it with clothes. He wipes his mouth and tries to pull himself together as he hears the water turn off in the bathroom.

Jill emerges from the bathroom, in an ethereal cloud of steam, a white towel wrapped around her body.

JILL

What are you doing?

CHRISTIAN

Get dressed. We have to go.

JILL

Why?

CHRISTIAN

Cause he's back.

# EXT. PHOENIX MARRIOT - MORNING

Christian and Jill run to the car. They toss their bags in the trunk and hop in the car. Christian cranks the key and the car starts with a roar. He puts it in drive and the auto leaps forward. They are nearly out of the parking lot.

INT. CADILLAC

JILL

Chris, wait! I got to go back in a second.

Jill leaps from the car and runs back towards the hotel lobby. Christian tries to stop her, but she's gone. He turns and pulls the car to the front of the building. He then bangs his fists on the steering wheel.

CHRISTIAN

I don't believe this shit! What the hell is she doing?

He looks around. Nothing seems out of the ordinary. Jill reappears and gets in the car.

JILL

Let's go!

He guns the motor, and they are out of the parking lot and headed out to the highway.

Why did you go back in there?

Jill holds up her hand. In it is the little angel figurine.

JILL

Left it on the night stand.

CHRISTIAN

Oh Jeez...

JILL

Where did you see him?

CHRISTIAN

I think I saw him by the elevator. Yes, it was by the elevator.

JILL

I don't think he's following us.

CHRISTIAN

The guy's a killer. He's probably already ahead of us. He somehow knows where we're going to be long before we get there.

JILL

Why do you think this guy is after you?

CHRISTIAN

I have no idea. It's like he's just toying with me. Doing stuff to those around me to affect me indirectly. Like he's trying to drive me insane.

JILL

I'm scared, Chris. I've never even gotten a good look at this guy. I wouldn't recognize him if he was sitting right in the back seat.

They both quickly glance back at the rear seat, then back at the road.

INT. CADILLAC - PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA - DUSK

JILL

It's just how I pictured it.

Christian pulls off South Canyon Drive into the parking lot of the Las Brisas Hotel. It resembles a giant pueblo, with little cottages scattered about the property.

CHRISTIAN

This is nice.

JILL

I can't believe it's our last day on the road.

CHRISTIAN

I know. L.A. Is just a few hours from here.

INT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL

They follow the bellman as he carries their bags out to one of the little cottages.

The room is laid out like a traditional hotel room, but decorated in a Southwestern motif. A steer skull hangs on the wall and is illuminated from behind. The other walls are covered with Native American rugs and artwork. The bellman lingers for a moment and Christian slaps a ten dollar bill in his hand before he leaves.

JILL

Let's go out and take a look around before it gets too dark.

EXT. PALM SPRINGS - EVENING

Christian and Jill stroll the resort complex. The warm Santa Ana breeze blows through the palm trees. The moon is just a sliver, and the sky is littered with stars. They walk in silence taking in the beautiful surroundings. They climb a path that leads up a small hill. On top is a white gazebo. They go inside it and sit facing each other.

JILL

It's so beautiful. I'm so glad we stopped here.

CHRISTIAN

Yea. It's so peaceful.

JILL

Thank you.

For what?

JILL

For everything.

CHRISTIAN

You don't have to...

JILL

Yes I do. My life was shit back in Jersey. You took me away from all of that. You're a really nice guy, you know that? You're going to make some lucky girl very happy some day.

CHRISTIAN

Yea...some lucky girl.

JILL

What's wrong?

CHRISTIAN

Nothing. I'm just scared that's all.

JILL

What...of that guy?

CHRISTIAN

Of course, but I'm afraid of wrecking this.

JILL

Wrecking what?

CHRISTIAN

This. The trip. I'm afraid I'll ruin all we have. You know, the tension. The energy. This friendship.

JILL

That's really sweet, but you're not going to wreck the friendship. Just tell me what's bugging you.

CHRISTIAN

I can't.

JILL

Just say it.

Christian turns to her, and taking her face gently in his hands, he kisses her on the lips.

She does not resist as he kisses her deeply, then after a few moments, releases her. She says nothing.

He kisses her again. A short quick encore.

JILL (CONT'D)

I didn't know...

CHRISTIAN

I did.

He holds her in his arms. The energy rises between them. The air crackles around them. He looks deep into her eyes.

JILL

I didn't think you thought about me that way.

CHRISTIAN

I always thought about you that way. I should have done this long ago, but I was scared. Scared like I've been about everything my whole life. So I'm sorry, but I'm not sorry.

JILL

Huh?

CHRISTIAN

I apologize for grabbing you and kissing you...but I will never regret having done it.

She smiles at him, as the wind swirls around them.

JILL

I'm chilly.

CHRISTIAN

Do you want my jacket?

JILL

No. I want you to hold me.

CHRISTIAN

Jill, you're like an angel. An angel who came down from heaven to bring me out of the darkness that has been my life. You've come down and illuminated my heart with your brilliant beautiful light. So I'm the one who should be thanking you.

JILL

I never knew you felt this way about me.

CHRISTIAN

I felt this way when we first met at Honesty Files.

JILL

Christian, take me back to the room.

INT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL - ROOM 17 - NIGHT

The room is lit with candlelight. Soft music plays on the stereo. Christian is lying on the bed, covered by a sheet. The room has an orange glow. The bathroom door opens, and Jill emerges wearing a silk black night gown. She joins him on the bed and they make love.

INT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL - ROOM 17 - LATER

JILL

Chris?

CHRISTIAN

Yea?

JILL

Will you take me out dancing?

CHRISTIAN

I thought I just did.

JILL

You know what I mean. I want to go to that disco across the street. We can drink and smoke and then come back here and fool around some more.

CHRISTIAN

Why don't we skip the drinking and smoking and just fool around some more?

JILL

I'm not going to let you devour me all in one bite. You'll have to nibble on me a little bit at a time. Please?

CHRISTIAN

Alright. Meet me in the shower.

#### INT. BACKSLIDERS BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Christian and Jill enter the crowded nightclub. The music is pounding and the place is bathed in rainbow lights. People are dancing and drinking. Before they can get to the bar, they are stopped by a large bouncer.

CHRISTIAN

Dude, I swear to God she's over twentyone. She just has great skin!

BOUNCER

No ID, no admittance. Sorry man, house rules. Liquor control board's cracking down.

CHRISTIAN

Let's go Jill, we don't need this hassle.

JILL

It's okay, I'll just run back to the room and get my license.

CHRISTIAN

Are you sure?

JILL

Yea. Get us a table. I'll be back in a second.

He watches as she scampers out the door and toward the hotel. Christian grumbles and moves through the crowd. He finds a booth near the stage and sits on the side facing the door so he can see Jill when she returns.

He sits watching the band play as the dance floor fills with drunken people gyrating to the music. A woman trips over her own feet and lands in the booth he is sitting in. She has bleached blonde hair and is about thirty years of age. She is wearing a red mini dress and too much make up. She is obviously very drunk and begins to hit on Christian.

DRUNK GIRL

Hey handsome. Can I buy you a drink, or should I just give you the money?

CHRISTIAN

Oh, that's okay. I'm fine.

DRUNK GIRL

What's a good looking guy like you doing here all by yourself?

She slides around the seat and moves in next to him.

CHRISTIAN

Actually, I'm waiting for someone.

DRUNK GIRL

Well, here I am!

CHRISTIAN

You're funny.

DRUNK GIRL

I better lay off the kamikazes. I'm getting shitfaced. Hey, do you want to dance?

CHRISTIAN

Thanks anyway, but the music doesn't go with the voices in my head.

DRUNK GIRL

Fine. Then can you do a girl a favor? There's this guy who has been bothering me all night, I can't get rid of him. He's headed this way. I need you to play along.

CHRISTIAN

What guy?

DRUNK GIRL

That guy over there.

She suddenly grabs Christian and kisses him on the mouth. She is a little too passionate. She grabs him in under the table. He pulls away from her.

CHRISTIAN

(laughing nervously)

Hey, what the hell are you doing?

Suddenly a familiar voice cuts through the noise.

JILL

Yea...what the hell are you doing?

CHRISTIAN

Jill! I can explain!

JILL

I turn my back for one minute!

CHRISTIAN

I don't even know this girl?

JILL

That makes it worse! I trusted you! I gave you my heart. I should have known you're just like every man I've ever known! You're all alike!

CHRISTIAN

No!

JILL

I know what I saw. I thought you were different. I must be the most naive person in the world!

She bursts into tears and runs through the crowd away from him.

CHRISTIAN

Oh, fuck! I've got to fix this.

DRUNK GIRL

Let her cool off. Hang out for awhile.

CHRISTIAN

What? You're the one who got me into this mess! I love that girl, and now it's all fucked up because of you!

Suddenly, the guy that's been following the drunk girl all night comes over to her rescue.

LOSER GUY

Hey Man, don't scream at her!

CHRISTIAN

Not this asshole...

The loser guy cold cocks Christian right on the chin. Christian's legs go rubbery and he tumbles to the floor. He is knocked out with one punch. The bouncers are all over the loser guy in a second. They grab him and throw him out of the bar.

INT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL - ROOM 17

Jill wipes the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. Without folding them, she throws her clothes into her suitcase. She runs about the room gathering things that belong to her. In her haste, she bumps something off the table and hears it break as it strikes the tile floor.

She pauses, and looks to see what it is. There on the floor is her beloved angel figure. It's right wing is broken off.

Jill's cries become a wail as she picks up the broken object.

JILL

Angel with a broken wing. That's me all right.

She lays the broken statue down on the table, and goes out the door.

EXT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

She walks out into the night and comes upon the Cadillac. She stands beside it looking at the bar she just left.

JILL

God Damn you, Christian Blackmore!

She looks at the Cadillac with disdain, and in one swift motion, kicks the side as hard as she can. Her boot strikes it's hide with a dull metallic thud.

JILL (CONT'D)

You bastard! How could you do this to me?

She kicks the car again, this time missing the quarter panel, and hitting the hubcap. It pops off and spins on the pavement like a plate. Happy that she has damaged Christian's car, she looks down at the dented hubcap as it stops spinning. She picks it up and is going to throw it across the street like a frisbee, when she feels something fastened to the inside of it. Turning the hubcap over she sees that it is a small leather bag. She works at the tape that holds it fast to the hubcap. She manages to free it, then notices that the bag has no opening. It has been sewn up on all sides like a small black pillow. There seems to be something inside it.

She glances about the parking lot, stuffs the bag into her jacket pocket, and begins to walk down the dark highway.

INT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL - ROOM 17 - LATER

Christian bursts through the door of their room.

CHRISTIAN

Jill! Where are you?

The room is silent. He looks in the bathroom, then opens the deck doors and looks out. He turns back and enters the room, and that's when he sees the angel statue on the table. He quickly begins picking up the broken pieces and puts them on the bureau.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

No....no...no...

He runs panting into the lobby and rings the bell at the front desk. The desk clerk comes out from the back.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. But have you seen the girl I came in with this afternoon?

DESK CLERK

Sir, I just started working. I'm third shift. I haven't seen anybody.

Christian turns and runs across the street to Backsliders. He bursts through the doors.

INT. BACKSLIDERS BAR & GRILL

BOUNCER

Whoa there! Where do you think you're going? I don't want anymore trouble from you.

CHRISTIAN

No. The girl I came in with...the little brunette. Did she come back here looking for me?

BOUNCER

Nope. Haven't seen her.

CHRISTIAN

Are you sure?

BOUNCER

Are you calling me a liar?

EXT. LAS BRISAS HOTEL - ROADSIDE

Christian heads back outside. He runs back out to North Canyon Drive. By the side of the road is an old pickup truck. And elderly man kneels next to the wheel fixing a flat tire.

CHRISTIAN

Excuse me, sir. Did you see a young girl come out here?

OLD MAN

As a matter of fact I did, son.

CHRISTIAN

You did?

OLD MAN

Yep. Pretty little thing.

CHRISTIAN

How long ago?

OLD MAN

About a half hour.

CHRISTIAN

Did you see where she went?

OLD MAN

Well...she came out here, and started walking that way like she was headed out of town. Out towards the interstate, I guess.

CHRISTIAN

And...

OLD MAN

She stuck her thumb out like she was trying to hitch a ride. I would have picked her up myself, but as you can see...

CHRISTIAN

Where did she go?

OLD MAN

Well, she stood out there for a few minutes till somebody picked her up.

CHRISTIAN

Did you see what kind of car it was?

OLD MAN

It was an old car. Grey. Like it needed a paint job.

INT. CADILLAC - MOMENTS LATER

Christian tromps on the gas pedal. The Cadillac roars down the highway. He glances down at the speedometer, and it reads 100 mph. The automobile splits the night like a white rocket.

Christian sees nothing but the road. The car devours the black asphalt ribbon as he speeds toward Los Angeles. He can feel the sting of tears in his eyes and wipes them away. He just keeps driving like a madman.

INT. OCEANSIDE MOTEL - SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

Christian is sitting in a chair. He looks out the window of his motel room. Holding a bottle of vodka in one hand, and the .44 pistol in the other, he rocks back and forth in the seat. He is extremely drunk. Tears roll down his cheeks. He speaks to the walls.

CHRISTIAN

Why the fuck did I come here? He's probably killed you by now.

He takes a swig of vodka, then looks at the pistol in his other hand.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I hate my life. It would be so easy to just let go.

He holds the .44 And the bottle up in front of his face. He gazes for a moment at the objects through drunken eyes.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I can do it fast...

He puts the gun to his head.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
...or, I can do it on the installment
plan. One drink at a time.

He takes a big swig of the vodka. He slumps back in the chair and both weapons slip from his hands as he passes out.

INT. OCEANSIDE MOTEL - SANTA MONICA, CA - MORNING

Christian wakes up face down on the floor. He crawls across the carpet to the bathroom. He throws up and then staggers out into the brightly lit room. He looks out the window. There is a little sidewalk along the front of the motel. Stone paths lead through a small park complete with palm trees and bushes that burst with brightly colored flowers. Beyond that, the white beach and the deep blue of the Pacific ocean.

Parents sit on blankets and in beach chairs, watching their children play in the sand and water. A group of teenagers play volleyball, while a few surfers sit on their boards about thirty yards off shore, waiting for the perfect wave.

CHRISTIAN

Looks like a damn postcard.

He draws the drapes and goes to the phone. He dials a number and hears an automated recording.

AUTOMATED VOICE

The number you have reached has been disconnected. Calls are being taken by, (856) 555-8934.

Christian scrawls the new number on the complimentary stationary, and dials the number.

INT. LAX - GATE 24 - 6 HOURS LATER

Christian sits in one of the many plastic chairs bolted into rows in the airport waiting area. He reads a newspaper to pass the time. As he flips through the pages, he reads the headlines: MAN SHOOTS FAMILY, KILLS SELF. TEEN SOUGHT IN RAPE, SLAYING, SANTA MONICA PIER CLOSED FOR RECONSTRUCTION. OFFICIALS DEEM PIER UNSAFE.

He watches as a Boeing 757 eases it's nose into the terminal. He tosses the newspaper aside and yawns. He stretches and closes his eyes. Then he hears a familiar voice behind him.

SHERYL

Christian Blackmore, you look like shit!

CHRISTIAN

You don't know how good it is to see you.

He rises to his feet. Sheryl drops her bags as Christian hugs her tightly. Tears well up in his eyes.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Thanks so much for coming, Sher...I'm all fucked up.

SHERYL

Hey, what are friends for?

CHRISTIAN

I've missed you.

SHERYL

Yea, right. Can you carry this for me? It's kind of heavy. Actually I've thought about you on occasion. I really miss all the food and drinks you used to buy me at Honesty Files.

Christian smiles and carries her suitcases. They head toward the parking garage.

INT. LAX - PARKING GARAGE

Christian and Sheryl walk cautiously through the cavelike silence of the garage. Their footsteps echo through the structure. As they approach the car they hear the rumbling of another vehicle moving on the same floor. When they pause to listen, it has stopped.

SHERYL

Hey, what's that?

On the windshield is a white envelope. Christian snatches it from the wiper and tears it open. Inside is a single sheet of paper. He swiftly unfolds it and begins to read it aloud.

Dear Christian, at last I have you. was growing so weary of our little game of cat and mouse. You are in possession of something that belongs to me, and now I have something that belongs to you. don't have to chase you anymore Christian, because now you will come to I think it's time we met and exchanged our gifts, don't you? Please consider this letter to be your invitation to be my guest at the Santa Monica Pier this evening. Please arrive no later than midnight. This is your big moment, so don't disappoint me by doing something stupid. You give me back what is mine, and I will give you back what's yours. If I see any law enforcement, I'll kill her. See you then.

SHERYL

Interesting...

CHRISTIAN

Jesus! That bastard was here!

SHERYL

Dude, that's good news. That means your friend Jill is still alive.

CHRISTIAN

No it doesn't. He could have already done it, and he's just screwing with my head.

SHERYL

I doubt it Chris. You better give him the money. I'm serious.

CHRISTIAN

I've got to end this.

SHERYL

Why don't you call the cops?

CHRISTIAN

Because this is a personal matter.

SHERYL

I'll help you.

CHRISTIAN

Oh, no. No way Sher.

SHERYL

I didn't come all the way out here to let you do this alone.

CHRISTIAN

Sher, last time you encountered this guy, he almost killed you!

SHERYL

Yea, and the great thing about that is, he doesn't know I survived the fire.

CHRISTIAN

So?

SHERYL

So, that will give you the edge! He thinks I'm toast!

CHRISTIAN

I can't Sher. It's too dangerous.

SHERYL

Aww, come on.

CHRISTIAN

No!

## EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - 11:45 PM

Christian carries a black duffel bag down Ocean Boulevard towards the pier. The pier has an archway over the front of it, with the words: Welcome to Santa Monica, on it. The archway has been somewhat obscured by a large canvas that covers part of the structure. The pier is blocked off to the general public by a twelve foot cyclone fence topped with razor wire.

He straps the bag to his back, and climbs along the base of the fence, inching his way along the edge of the pier. Looking down, he can see the ocean lapping at the pilings some forty feet below. He moves along the crumbling ledge that surrounds the pier and holds on to the wooden railing.

It is an unusually quiet night. The only sound to be heard is the light metallic rattle of Christians fingers clutching the cyclone fence. After nearly falling twice, he finally gets around it. Then he climbs over the rickety wooden railing.

He pulls off the duffel bag and sets it on the ground. Unzipping it quickly, he checks the contents. Over five hundred thousand dollars in cash, and a bulldog .44 pistol. He runs his hands over the money, then pulls out the gun. He glances around, and seeing no one, he sticks the gun in the back of his pants. He picks up the bag, and continues walking.

The pier is very wide. Along the left side is a row of run down store fronts, long since open.

Christian steps carefully along the deteriorating pier. He keeps to the left, near the row of old shops. The pier is silent and deserted. He looks down toward the end of the pier. It widens and there is a small square building at the very end.

The sound of the ocean pounding against the old pilings can be heard from below. He glances back and sees that Santa Monica is far away. He takes a deep breath and listens. Only the sea churning below him and the occasional seagull cry can be heard.

He slowly approaches the solitary building at the end of the pier. It is a dilapidated Coast Guard station. The paint is chipped and peeling from it's surface. All the windows have been boarded up. He approaches the door and grasps the knob. The door creaks loudly, and he winces at the sound as he carefully steps inside.

INT. COAST GUARD STATION - SANTA MONICA PIER - MIDNIGHT

The inside of the building is pitch black. The room has a damp musty smell to it. He trips on something on the floor, it is an empty bottle rolling away from him. He sets the duffel bag down, and reaches in his pocket for a lighter. He spins the flint wheel. It sparks, but does not light. Suddenly he hears a familiar voice.

**GENTLEMAN** 

Put it away.

Christian jumps at the sound and drops his lighter to the wooden floor. a flashlight snaps on and a beam of light shines in Christian's eyes. He squints, but cannot see past the glare.

GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)

I'm so glad you've come, Christian.

CHRISTIAN

Who the hell are you! Where's Jill?

**GENTLEMAN** 

Settle down, my boy. She's right here.

The man swings the beam of light from Christian's face and turns it toward Jill. He is holding her next to him. Her hands are bound behind her back. The beam from the flashlight reflects off the large serrated blade of the buck knife the man holds against her throat. Christian cannot see the man's face.

CHRISTIAN

Jill? Are you alright?

JILL

I'm sorry, Christian. I didn't mean to run away. I was just so angry at you. Please...oh God...I don't want to die.

CHRISTIAN

Don't worry, honey. You won't.

**GENTLEMAN** 

Ahh...what a tender moment.

The man turns the beam of light back to where Christian is standing.

But Christian isn't there.

The man swings the beam about the room, searching for Christian. When the light finds him, he is holding the bulldog .44.

CHRISTIAN

Let her go, man.

**GENTLEMAN** 

Look at you with your big gun.

CHRISTIAN

I'll shoot you.

**GENTLEMAN** 

Is that a .44, Christian? It looks very familiar to me.

CHRISTIAN

I'll do it. I will.

#### **GENTLEMAN**

Come now, boy. If you shoot me, I could slip and accidentally cut Jill's sweet throat. You wouldn't want me to do that, would you? Such a lovely neck. I wonder if the inside is as pretty as the outside. Somehow, I doubt it, don't you?

CHRISTIAN

Who the fuck are you, man?

**GENTLEMAN** 

You might as well know.

The man turned the light toward himself, illuminating his visage.

CHRISTIAN

Oh my God! No!

GENTLEMAN

Surprised? You should be!

CHRISTIAN

Harold Ashen! I...Harold...why?

## HAROLD/GENTLEMAN

A long time ago, your uncle and I were in the military together. During that time, we accumulated many...I'll say, artifacts. The spoils of war, so to speak. One night during a raid, I was captured by the enemy, but your uncle escaped. He was not only able to elude the enemy, but he took with him what rightfully belonged to me. Obviously my treasure would have been confiscated by the enemy, but I thought I could trust your uncle. I thought he'd take good care of it for me.

CHRISTIAN

Okay...

## HAROLD

But that wasn't to be the case. I rotted away in that stinking POW camp for years, while he enjoyed the fruits of our bounty. To add insult to injury, he took several liberties with my wife once he got stateside. He even went so far as to tell her I was dead. When I finally got out, I had no idea where he lived.

I never knew...

HAROLD

I remember you were always his favorite nephew, since he never had any children of his own. I thought that he might take care of you in the event of his death. I happened to read his obituary in a military publication and I had to find out. That's when I was able to procure a copy of his will. I noticed he had left you several of his most personal possessions. Although on the surface they appeared to have little value, I was sure he must have hidden what was mine in his effects and left them to you. That's if he still had them.

CHRISTIAN

But Harold...why all the killing?

HAROLD

Oh why not! Killing is all I know. I killed so many people during the war, when I got out I couldn't stop. I love to kill. Many of the unsolved murders or disappearances you read about in the news may be some of my work. I'm addicted to it. God gives life, and I am the angel of death that takes it away. I can't stop, and I won't stop until I get what's mine.

CHRISTIAN

You could turn yourself in...and get help.

HAROLD

Oh, please. I have been in and out of mental institutions my whole life. I told you I like what I do. I think your friend Sheryl was one of my favorite kills. Besides, I thought she would be a nice buildup to my final slaughter.

CHRISTIAN

Which is...?

HAROLD

You, my boy. You and anyone else with you.

You're insane.

HAROLD

Oh no, Christian, that's just the thing. I am quite sane. I've suffered for a very long time. I've been a dejected loner my whole life. I've lived like a bum. I have nothing! I can't hold a job, and my best friend ran off with the woman I loved. I want my satisfaction. I deserve to have what is rightfully mine.

CHRISTIAN

Look, Harold, I'm really sorry about what my uncle did to you. But that has nothing to do with me.

HAROLD

It has everything to do with you. I want what's mine!

CHRISTIAN

Okay...okay...calm down. I've got the bag right here. Why don't you just let Jill go, and we'll walk out of here, and forget we ever saw you, okay?

HAROLD

Do you really expect me to believe that? You're a bigger fool that I thought you were. Since when do you think you make the deals around here? Let's remember, I'm the one with the knife against sweetmeat's throat!

Jill is whimpering and crying.

CHRISTIAN

Let her go!

HAROLD

Don't squirm, sweetie. I could slip.

JILL

Mister...listen, I want to tell you something.

HAROLD

Shut your hole, bitch!

How about we all relax and you let her go.

## HAROLD

How about you drop the gun and kick it over here? Then I'll decide whether I let her go, or spill her blood.

Christian slowly places the gun on the floor. He raises his hands in the air so the man can see them. He slowly kicks the gun. It slides across the floor and stops just under the stool where Harold is holding Jill. He sets the knife down on the table next to him. He keeps the flashlight beam on Christian as he reaches down to get the pistol.

In a split second, Christian is upon him. His boot catches Harold in the chin. The blow sends him flying backward off the stool. The flashlight flies from his hand and smashes on the floor, plunging the room into total darkness.

## CHRISTIAN

Run, Jill! Now!

She screams as Harold grabs her ankle. She manages to kick it away and with her hands still bound behind her back, she stumbles towards the door.

Christian fumbles for the gun on the floor, while Harold gets to his feet. He feels around on the table top for his knife. Jill pushes the door open with her shoulder, which throws a sliver of moonlight into the room. affords Christian enough light to see Harold to hit him again. He punches him in the face and Harold falls to Unable to find his gun, Christian grabs the the floor. knife from the table and dives toward his opponent. Harold has located the gun and fires it into the The sound is deafening as the gun discharges. The bullet tears through the wall next to Christian's Christian brings the knife down on Harold's thigh. Harold screams and strikes Christian in the face with the butt of the gun. Christian drops the knife but reaches for Harold's throat. His fingers tightening around his neck, until Harold brings the muzzle of the gun up under Christian's chin. Christian let's go and rolls to the side as the gun fires again. It tears a hole the size of a softball through the ceiling. Shattered plaster and wood rains down upon them. Christian grabs the bag of money and heads for the door. Harold does not give chase. He wipes the dust from his eyes, and pulls the knife from his bleeding leg.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER

Christian runs over to Jill. She is standing over by the railing working at the ropes that bind her wrists. Christian quickly unties her.

CHRISTIAN

Are you alright?

JILL

Yes. I'm sorry, Christian.

CHRISTIAN

Shh...Move over here, behind the building. Jill, listen to me. There isn't much time. I want you to go up these steps that lead to the roof and stay up there, okay?

JILL

But I found...

CHRISTIAN

There's no time! Get up there!

She scampers up the steps and hides on the roof. Moments later, there is a sound behind Christian.

HAROLD

Turn around slowly.

Christian turns, and faces him. Blood leaks from the wound on his leg. He has torn a piece from his coat and fashioned it into a tourniquet. Harold raised the .44 And points it at Christian.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Fitting you should be killed by the weapon you brought to kill me.

Christian closed his eyes. Suddenly a loud crashing sound could be heard coming from the front of the pier. They both looked toward the sound.

Christian smiles. Approaching them at 60 m.p.h. is a white Cadillac, driven by a pretty blonde they both know. Sheryl floors the car, and it speeds down the pier toward the two men. Harold aims and begins to fire at her.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I killed you once! I'll kill you again!

Christian tries to stop him. He struggles with him, but Harold manages to fire several shots at the car. The first bullet deflects off the hood. The second blows out the front tire. The third explodes through the windshield striking Sheryl. The car begins to skid out of control. It swerves right and left, bouncing off store fronts along the pier.

Christian dives to the left and hangs onto the railing. The car skids sideways, the right tail fin smashing into the corner of a building. This sends the car flying in the opposite direction. Sheryl is thrown from the vehicle, landing on the pavement like a broken ragdoll.

The back end of the car fishtails to the left, and one of the tail fins strike Harold. The impact knocks the gun from his hand. The car slams into the railing where it finally comes to a halt. The hood pops open and flames begin to leap from the car's engine.

CHRISTIAN

You fucker!

Christian leaps from the railing and onto Harold, pounding him with his fists. Harold fights back and gets a few good shots in on Christian. Finally, Christian pounds him until he stops moving. He picks up the gun and walks over to where Sheryl is lying. Her sweater is bloody.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Oh please, God. Sheryl, are you all right?

He puts his ear to her chest and listens. Sheryl opens her eyes.

SHERYL

My shoulder is killing me.

CHRISTIAN

We're going to get you fixed up Sher. You're going to be okay. I promise.

SHERYL

Chris...behind you.

Christian wheels around and sees Harold staggering toward him, lunging with the hunting knife. Christian brings up the .44. He pulls the trigger and fires. A tongue of fire leaps from the barrel as the bullet is discharged. It strikes Harold in the chest, and catapults him backward onto the pier's concrete surface.

He hits the ground with a wet smack in a pool of gasoline that is now leaking from the car.

CHRISTIAN

Sheryl, I know I'm not supposed to move an injured person, but you're going to be in worse shape than you are now if I don't get you out of here!

He drags her backward away from the burning car. She winces in pain as he gets her a good distance from the inferno.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I got him. Stay here.

SHERYL

Where am I gonna go?

Suddenly, he hears a voice from the roof.

JILL

Christian!

CHRISTIAN

Jill! You've got to get down from there!

The flames from the burning car catch onto the building. Christian feels the warm concussion as the Cadillac explodes in a ball of fire. Bits of metal and glass scatter everywhere.

JILL

Christian! I can't get down! The steps are on fire!

CHRISTIAN

You're going to have to jump!

He suddenly notices the bag of money laying next to the building. It is beginning to smolder. He looks back and forth between Jill and the bag of cash. He reaches in his jacket pocket and feels the wad of bills he has been carrying.

JILL

Christian! I'm afraid!

CHRISTIAN

Jill, Jump! Please jump!

The bag begins to burn. Christian is too far from the bag to get to it. The whole back of the pier is on fire now. Black soot pours into the California sky.

Christian lifts his arms up to Jill and continues to scream for her to jump. The bag filled with a half a million dollars is now totally immersed in flames. The bills are blowing away as they turn to ashes.

Christian suddenly hears a crunching sound. The concrete under his feet begins to crack and shift beneath him. He steps backward from the crumbling pier.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Jill!

The whole back of the pier begins to collapse. Christian leaps backward as the structure that Jill is standing on begins to fall. The building, the ruined Cadillac, and Harold's body crash downward towards the sea.

Christian watches as Jill passes before his eyes and falls into the churning ocean below. He watches as she disappears beneath the waves. The white tail fins of the car stand out from the water, then slowly sink like a dying shark into the black depths. He falls to his knees and screams.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Jill!

He stumbles backward, and collapses next to Sheryl, as the sirens wail in the background.

EXT. CHURCH IN HADDONFIELD, NJ - 2 WEEKS LATER - DAY

Christian stands outside the church. The rain falls on him like a million tears. He finishes his cigarette, flicks it in the street, and goes inside.

INT. CHURCH IN HADDONFIELD, NJ

The church is warm and somber. The organist plays a soft sad song. Christian takes a deep breath and sits in one of the pews in the back. He looks at a small group of people huddled together in the front rows. The door opens behind him and he turns to see who it is.

Sheryl struggles to hang her coat on one of the hooks in the foyer. Her arm is in a cast. She still walks with a slight limp. She sits down beside him.

SHERYL How you holding up?

Not so good.

SHERYL

I'm sorry.

CHRISTIAN

Me too. Look at you. I feel responsible for the whole thing.

SHERYL

It's not your fault.

CHRISTIAN

It is my fault. I should have gone to the police right at the very beginning.

SHERYL

Stop blaming yourself. Everyone was a willing participant.

CHRISTIAN

I know, but I thought my life would be great when I got that money and met Jill. But the whole thing turned into a nightmare. I fucked everything up. I lost it all. Jill, The half a mil, the car, everything. I thought all that loot and the car was going to make me happy, but I know now it all means nothing without her.

SHERYL

Is this service for her giving you any sense of closure?

CHRISTIAN

No. There's no closure here. They never found any remains in all that wreckage.

Tears run down his face. Sheryl pulls him to her as he weeps.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I've got to get out of here.

EXT. CHURCH IN HADDONFIELD, NJ - PARKING LOT

Sheryl walks him to his car. It is an average looking sedan that appears to be a few years old.

I could have saved her.

SHERYL

Chris...She's gone. You can't bring her back.

CHRISTIAN

I know.

SHERYL

You look like shit. Let's get something to eat. You'll feel better. That's what my mom always says.

CHRISTIAN

I don't know if I'll ever feel better.

SHERYL

You will. In time. It's going to take some time. Look, you've still got me. I'll help you.

CHRISTIAN

Thanks Sher...I don't know what I did to deserve a friend like you.

SHERYL

Me either. Let's go.

EXT. NATL. BANK - PHILA., PA - THE NEXT MORNING

Christian is now working for a large bank in Philadelphia. He pulls into the parking lot of the bank in his old car and goes inside.

INT. NATL. BANK - PHILA., PA

He walks through the bustling branch. He greets a few customers, and then goes to his office. He sits down at his desk, looks at his calendar, flipping the page to the present date. He looks past the calendar at something on the credenza that catches his eye.

It is the tiny angel statue. He stares at the figurine for some time. The glue lines are clearly visible where he has tried to fix the object. Tears sting his eyes. He blinks them away, and begins to speak to the statue.

I'm not afraid to say I miss you, Jill. You're still in my heart, but you're not here. I'm nothing without you. Nothing, but and angel with a broken wing.

The phone rings, breaking his trance, and he turns around to answer it. The door to his office opens but he is too wrapped up in the call to hear it. He is facing away from the door, and digging through some files in a cabinet behind him.

He finishes his call and turns around to see who it is. The person standing before him speaks.

JILL

I'd like to open a safe deposit box.

CHRISTIAN

I....

JILL

I want you to open my account. I'm sorry I don't have an appointment with you, Mr. Blackmore. I know how busy you are.

CHRISTIAN

Jill! Oh my God! How did you...?

 $\mathsf{JILL}$ 

I'd like it to be a joint safe deposit box, with Christian Blackmore as the other signer on the account.

CHRISTIAN

Jill! I thought you were...

JILL

And, I'd like to put this in our safe deposit box today.

She reaches in her purse and pulls out a small black leather satchel. It is the one she found behind the hubcap of the Cadillac.

CHRISTIAN

Jill! I can't believe you're alive!

He gets up from his desk, never taking his eyes off her. Jill opens the black bag and dumps its contents on to his desk.

JILL

Check these out.

The desk top is littered with hundreds of large glistening diamonds.

CHRISTIAN

Holy shit!

JILL

Yes. And the best part is...they're all real, and worth a million bucks.

CHRISTIAN

I can't believe you're real!

JILL

Maybe you could pick out a nice big one for a ring for me.

He grabs her and kisses her deeply. He holds her tightly and she kisses him back. They weep together in each others arms.

CHRISTIAN

Jill! It's really you! I can't believe it's really you! I love you, Jill.

JILL

I love you too, Chris.

CHRISTIAN

I don't believe this is happening. How did you...?

JILL

I'll tell you later, Chris. Let's just say I'm a good swimmer.

He takes her in his arms again and holds her tightly.

CHRISTIAN

Oh my God...you're alive! Alive!

He opens the door to his office and hollers out to the bank lobby full of customers.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Hey everybody! Jill is alive! She's alive!

Everyone looks at him like he's crazy, before going back to their bank business. He goes back in his office to Jill. He takes her in his arms and kisses her again.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I've missed you so much. I love you, Jill.

JILL

You better. Because you're going to be a father.

A grey sedan slowly drives past the window.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

(CONT'D)