

A SHOT TO THE GUT

written by

Eric Dickson

1651 N CR 19-A, #204
(352)-901-1273
EDixsn1@hotmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. STEPHEN'S CONDO - MORNING

The SUN BEAMS through white silk drapes and onto the spacious canvas of a hard wood floor.

No furniture. No TV. Nothing. An empty space void of any living accoutrements.

By the front door and stacked high on a dolly cart is a pile of carefully labeled boxes.

SUPER: AUGUST 5, 2019 MOVING DAY

KITCHEN

A fancy espresso machine. And nothing else.

A man's perfectly manicured hand, branding an expensive Cartier, reaches for a steaming cup.

The hand belongs to --

STEPHEN FITZWALTER, thirties, modestly handsome with a trim beard and slick quaff of hair.

On a marble island countertop rests a framed photo of him and ex girlfriend TANYA. Happy. Content.

Two things Stephen currently is not. With a tired groan, Stephen stuffs the picture in a hat box.

BUZZ-BUZZ. BUZZ-BUZZ.

He flips his phone right side up: TANYA.

STEPHEN

Fuck me.

Answers.

STEPHEN

Hey.

Both at a loss for words. An awkward beat.

TANYA (V.O.)

Hey.

-- and more silence.

TANYA (V.O.)
You there?

STEPHEN
Yeah. I'm here.

TANYA (V.O.)
You still in town?

STEPHEN
Yeah, just packing the last couple
boxes actually. Everything okay?
Something wrong?

TANYA (V.O.)
Everything's fine. Nothing's wrong.

Stephen shuffles into the --

LIVING ROOM

-- as the MORNING SUN strikes his face. He squints, covers
the blast with his hand.

STEPHEN
I guess I just didn't expect to
hear from you again.

TANYA (V.O.)
Did Donna tell you I dropped off my
key?

STEPHEN
Yeah. She did. So I guess it's
official. The end of an era.

Silence.

Stephen paces in a tight circle, waits for some sort of
response from the other end.

STEPHEN
Hello?

TANYA (V.O.)
This doesn't have to be goodbye,
Stephen.

STEPHEN
Yeah, it sort of does.

Tanya sighs.

TANYA (V.O.)
 Sorry you feel that way. And I'm
 sorry about a lot of things. Not
 that it matters now.

Stephen rolls his eyes, checks his watch. Feeling the weight
 of this futile and pointless dialogue.

STEPHEN
 So why are you calling?

TANYA (V.O.)
 No reason. I just wanted to make
 sure we were okay. And to wish you
 a happy birthday.

STEPHEN
 Thanks. Hey, look. I gotta go. I'm
 getting a call on the other line.

TANYA (V.O.)
 Bye, Stee --

He hangs up. A long sigh.

STEPHEN
 Happy birthday.

EXT. APARTMENT PARKING LOT - MORNING

Under a protective carport enclosure sits a rare 1978 Silver
 Anniversary Edition Corvette Stingray. A car collector's
 dream and in perfect condition.

Stephen loads his last box in the passenger seat.

He huffs with irritation, shuts the door and walks out from
 under the canopy. For the last time, he stares up at his
 fancy building in all of its yuppie splendor.

A devilish grin as he firmly gives it the finger.

STEPHEN
 Have a nice life, scumbags!

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DUSK

The Corvette Stingray zooms along the narrow stretch with
 nothing but GREEN SAGEBRUSH and WHITE DESERT SAND dotting
 both sides of the flat terrain.

It zips past a lone road sign: TOLERANCE, NM, 15 MILES

INT. CORVETTE - DUSK

From inside the car, the dark and narrow road seems to grow thinner and blacker by the second.

Stephen flips through nothing but Spanish speaking channels and gets nowhere fast.

STEPHEN

Kidding me.

He finally stops on an eighties station blasting some stadium rock, hair band nonsense.

STEPHEN

Come on! Give me something!

Next.

An old school rapper beat boxing to a record scratch.

STEPHEN

No thanks.

Next.

A cheap and local talk show in progress.

GUEST CALLER (V.O.)

This is nothing more than a desperate marketing ploy. This Pepsi challenge thing is killing them.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

After all, it is the choice of a new generation.

GUEST CALLER (V.O.)

You see, that's the thing. Just look at what Pepsi's been doing in the last couple years. You got Michael Jackson. Michael J. Fox. All the sudden, if you're a young person, it ain't cool to drink Coke no more. They're systematically brainwashing our youth.

STEPHEN

(confused)

Michael Jackson?

RADIO DJ (V.O.)
It's official. Coke drinkers have
spoken and they're not happy. More
when we come back.

A car in the opposite lane SPOTLIGHTS --

A pair of yellow stickers with the number '78 taped to the
outside of Stephen's windshield. As if the car were just
purchased from a used car lot.

Stephen happens to spot it. Startled and shocked, he cuts the
wheel hard, coasting dangerously over the asphalt and ending
on a soft shoulder.

EXT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen steps out, truly dumbfounded, lights the windshield
with his smartphone. Nothing but dusty glass and the
interior dashboard.

The yellow stickers have vanished.

With a trembling hand, Stephen pulls a pack of smokes from
his coat pocket, throws one in.

STEPHEN
Deep breaths. Deep breaths.

He takes inventory of his whereabouts. Darkness. Isolation.

It is truly a hundred miles from nowhere.

STEPHEN
No big deal. It was just a shadow
or something. Stop being a bitch.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen ever so carefully crawls back in with eyes peeled and
on full alert. A bit unnerved. He gently caresses the inside
of the clean windshield.

He sucks in a deep breath.

STEPHEN
Okay. That's the weirdest fuckin
thing that's ever happened to me
before. Time for some fresh air.

He quickly rolls down both windows.

STEPHEN

Get a hold of yourself. Or wake up.
One or the other.

He cranks the engine. Nothing but Spanish gibberish blasting from a staticky radio station.

STEPHEN

Here we go again.

Not having this, he angrily punches the search button looking for his talk show.

Pure static all around.

STEPHEN

So much for the Pepsi challenge.

Stephen gives up and lights his cigarette.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

Within a matter of seconds, the Corvette is nothing but an indistinguishable FLICKER OF WHITE LIGHT on what seems an endless stretch of road.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen grows weary of the Spanish station and switches off the radio all together.

Enough is enough.

STEPHEN

Wake up! Wake up!

On the side of the road, A BLACK CHEVY NOVA sits with the left rear wheel removed.

Stephen checks the rearview mirror: The CAR IS GONE.

STEPHEN

What the hell?

Taking his eyes off the road, he fails to notice...

A MAN in a long sleeve fleece and dirty jeans standing dead center of the highway. He is strangely calm and indifferent.

Stephen faces forward -- mere seconds from running the man down and killing him.

STEPHEN

SHIT!

He cuts a hard right --

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The Corvette careens out of control, spinning in and out of the soft shoulder...

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Stephen's eyes wide and tense as he's about to destroy a road sign: TOLERANCE, 10 MILES

He cuts a hard left --

-- dodges the sign.

-- drifts onto the highway.

AFTER THE DUST CLEARS...

He checks his rearview mirror.

No one there.

He stares ahead. And out of nowhere --

A BRIGHT SET OF HIGH BEAMS barrel toward Stephen's bumper at an unsafe speed.

STEPHEN

Where the hell did you come from?!

The car HONKS. Over and over.

Stephen hits the gas.

He looks ahead and spots the TALL AND BRIGHT LIGHTS of a very large gas station.

And here come the HIGH BEAMS on Stephen's tail.

The car once again HONKS LIKE CRAZY.

And Steven once again punches the gas.

STEPHEN

Who are you?!

But the car doesn't let up and RAMS HIS BUMPER.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Stephen loses control of the wheel, coasts across the asphalt and drifts recklessly into the lot of the multi-pump gas station.

EXT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Stephen comes to a SCREECHING HALT seconds before running over a gas pump and scares the hell out of everyone watching him.

A dog on a leash whimpers.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen checks the road. No sign of a Black Nova.

As if it vanished into thin air.

EXT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT

After a few moments, Stephen plops out of his Vette with all the color gone from his face and looking bitch-slapped by the Devil himself.

Sweat beads soak his forehead. He slowly drags his feet toward the door. All eyes on him.

He checks across the lot and spots --

A BLACK NOVA with smoke pouring from the exhaust.

Stephen comes to a swift stop, glances back at the phantom driver behind the wheel. His face HIDDEN IN DARKNESS.

HONK!

Stephen turns, faces a pair of headlights.

DRIVER
(to Stephen)
Crazy drunk! Get some coffee!

Stephen heads for the door. The car darts off.

INT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT

Without hesitation, the white-faced Stephen rushes toward the beer coolers. He snags a six pack of local canned shit and rips one from the plastic encasing.

CRACK! He chugs it like he's pledging a frat house.

On this same aisle, a couple of YOUNG KIDS picking out candy watch and grin with amusement.

Stephen drops the empty can and cracks another: SWISH!

And in seconds it's gone.

He drops the second can to the floor, shuts his eyes and takes a deep breath. In and out. In and out.

And just when you think he's okay...

He cracks a third can. And sucks it down even faster than the last two. The LOUDEST BELCH EVER!

The two candy kids giggle and run off.

Stephen steps to the front counter with the remaining three cans hanging on for dear life and carelessly tosses his keys next to the register.

This catches the attention of A CLERK named BOSS, twenties, a simple dumb shit, sitting on a roller cart, packing away cartons of cigarettes.

Boss stands.

BOSS

Yeah?

STEPHEN

I haven't had a signal in over three hours. Is there a motel anywhere near here?

BOSS

Yeah. Well. No.

Stephen shuts his eyes to this. More bad news.

BOSS

We're about eight miles outside of Tolerance. Which technically don't have a motel with it being remodeled and all.

BOSS

But there is a place about forty miles West of here. It's real nice. I know the owners.

STEPHEN

No. See. I don't wanna go West. I just came from there.

BOSS

Well. Gee. I couldn't really tell you then. You gotta van or a truck or somethin'?

Stephen rubs his sore temples.

STEPHEN

No, I don't have a truck or a van.

Boss stares out the window and spots his shiny and restored Corvette at the far end of the lot.

BOSS

Whoa. That your Vette, man? Badass.

STEPHEN

Yeah. Listen. What's the next town after Tolerance?

BOSS

You ain't checked Travelocity or nothin like that?

STEPHEN

I can't get a signal. How am I gonna check Travelocity?

Boss gives him a dumb look, nods with understanding.

BOSS

Good point. Well, there's Truth or Consequences. But you're looking at another hundred fifty mile.

Stephen huffs out loud.

STEPHEN

Not that it really matters now. But do you have a men's room I can use?

Boss nods to the back.

Stephen follows his look and duck walks his way toward the restrooms.

Boss spots his keys next to the register. He snags them up just as --

Stephen opens a men's room door and dips inside.

INT. RACETRACK MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stephen walks in. All alone. He heads for an open stall and locks himself inside.

IN THE STALL

Stephen unzips and takes a seat. He pulls out his smart phone and hits the CHROME APP.

He is immediately taken to a webpage where an old newspaper headline fills the screen: TOLERANCE MAN CARJACKED, SHOT AND LEFT FOR DEAD

STEPHEN

A signal. It's a miracle.

The date of the article: August 5, 1985

This throws Stephen off.

Under the headline are various still shots of a BLACK CHEVY NOVA on the side of the highway.

All taken by the police and news media.

Stephen clicks on an image as it blows up FULL SCREEN.

He swipes left and spots the bloody body of JAMES JEBB "JJ" BERRY laying dead and sprawled out on the front seats of the Black Chevy Nova.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

JJ stands in the middle of the road. In a fleece shirt and dirty jeans. The spotlight of two high beams barreling towards him.

INT. RACETRACK MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Stephen sees the same fleece shirt and jeans on the man in the picture. Only this time his clothes and arms are caked with coagulated blood.

He hears the CLACKING OF THICK HEELS hitting the tile floor and turns his attention to a pair of feet stopping in front of the stall door.

STEPHEN

Hello?

No answer. The feet don't move. And then...

BLOOD DRIPS on the tile around his shoes.

STEPHEN

What the hell? Are you okay?

And before he knows what's happening, his smart phone has disappeared from his hand.

STEPHEN

What the hell is this?

Stephen checks around the bowl. Nothing on the immediate floor or anywhere near him.

The feet enter the neighboring stall.

Totally freaked out, Stephen jerks on his trousers with a quickness, zips up and rushes out.

As he opens the stall door...

He TRIPS ON THE BLOOD and face plants. Sucking in his pain, he glances back...

The feet are gone.

INT. JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE - DAY (1985)

Stephen steps out of the bathroom and back onto the main floors of the convenience store. The place is nothing at all like he remembered.

Over his shoulder and hung on a wall...

A bikini calender reads AUGUST 1985. Christie Brinkley in her prime and sporting a one piece.

Stephen holds a protective hand over his eyes as the SUNLIGHT pours through the windows.

He spots what looks like a mobile ice cream cart on the floor near the restrooms.

As he slides open the glass door covering it, a thick white fog hits his face. He reaches inside and pulls out a sixteen ounce long neck soda from a foregone era.

FRED (O.S.)
You fall in, JJ?

Stephen peeks around an endcap and checks the front end counter and register.

A real country boy clerk named FRED peruses Mad magazine and pops some gum from the comfort of his stool.

FRED
You was in there forever.

STEPHEN
Excuse me?

FRED
Excuse me is right. Wanna keep that door closed back there?

Stephen turns, faces the restroom door. It's a single door unisex restroom with one bowl.

He shuts it. As he turns back, he spots some video store quality movie posters hanging near the front end. *Gremlins. Ghostbusters. A Nightmare on Elm Street.*

Below these posters...

A couple of shelves full of old VHS movies with an orange star banner overhead: ALL RENTALS \$1.50

FRED
By the way, we're already three hundred something in the hole on those damn video tapes. Told you it was a bad idea renting tapes to transients.

Fred's attention drawn to the parking lot.

FRED
We got company, JJ. Get back on the clock.

Stephen steps closer to the front windows and spots his CORVETTE STINGRAY near the front and with the engine running and both doors swung open.

The NUMBER 78 on the windshield.

He fails to notice --

THREE PUNK ROCKERS WITH MOHAWKS rushing the front door with sawed off shotguns and pistols.

MOHAWK #1
Heads up! Cash on the counter!

He slaps the countertop -- WHAP!

Fred nervously fumbles with the regisiter and snags up the loose cash. He checks with Stephen.

FRED
(to Stephen)
Thanks for your help, old partner.

The three mohawks turn and face --

Stephen standing next to a sunglass rack.

MOHAWK #2
Oh he can't help you. He's already dead.

MOHAWK #3
Aint that right, JJ?

Stephen slowly backs up. He turns to a small mirror on a sunglass rack and catches a glimpse of a similar looking but different man's face staring back at him.

He turns side to side, rubs his face as the reflection mimics his every move.

The three mohawks laugh.

Stephen looks down. His lower shirt drips blood all over the cracks and crevices of the tile.

He faces a FULL LENGTH MIRROR hanging on a back wall and the image of JAMES JJ BERRY glances back with a fresh gunshot wound to the belly.

FROM INSIDE THE MIRROR

JJ desperately reaches out to Stephen.

JJ
Help...meee...

JJ's arm reaches through the glass like liquid metal. Stephen grabs his hand.

WHITE FLASH TO:

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DAY (FLASHBACK)

On the side of the road.

All three mohawks stand before a very confused Stephen who has lost all sense of time and place. He spots his prize Corvette behind the three punks.

He looks behind him. A Black Chevy Nova with the left rear wheel removed and on a jack. As he turns back --

MOHAWK #1 grins with evil menace and shoots him in the stomach with his thirty eight special.

Stephen tumbles back...

...drops A CROWBAR in the dirt.

WHITE FLASH TO:

INT. JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE - DAY (1985)

Stephen tumbles and knocks over a postcard rack on his way to the floor. A real mess.

STEPHEN
What the hell?

He struggles to stand.

INT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Still on the floor...

Stephen looks up. He's back to where he started as the busy Racetrack is full of customers. A long line waiting at the front end.

A WOMAN hovers over him.

WOMAN
Are you okay?

Stephen stands, brushes himself off.

STEPHEN
I'm fine, thank you.

EXT. JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE - NIGHT (1985)

As Stephen steps outside, he finds the lot completely void of cars and people. He turns, faces the store.

The building is long abandoned with dirt and mud caking the windows that haven't been shattered and destroyed.

An old sign above a drive-in garage reads: JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE AND DAIRY MARKET.

INT. JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE - NIGHT (1985)

Stephen steps back inside and finds the front counter area abandoned with no register and rows of empty shelves hanging on the back wall.

A FLICKERING WHITE GLOW draws his attention toward the center of the empty room. A WOMAN and her TWO KIDS sit on a beat up couch and watch an older model television.

All three are sad. Uninterested. Lifeless.

STEPHEN

Hello? Can you hear me?

And they don't. Just three blank expressions letting the tv program wash over them.

Stephen cautiously moves closer...

The refrigeration units that used to line these walls with cold beers and sodas now sit empty.

A rat scurries about.

On a mostly desolate wall hang TWO PICTURES.

He walks over to get a closer look but the room is much too dark to make out the images.

Stephen snags both frames and walks them into the BEAMING LIGHT of the television set.

On one of the pictures stands JJ with his wife and kids.

On the other picture is JJ standing next to his other pride and joy: A 1978 Anniversary Edition Corvette Stingray.

The number '78 still taped to the windshield.

EXT. JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE - NIGHT

Stephen steps outside just as JJ comes racing to the front in his Corvette Stingray.

JJ crawls out. All eyes on the front of this dilapidated and abandoned garage. A true hopelessness about him.

STEPHEN

I don't know how this works. If you're supposed to hear me or not. But I know you're hurting. You're having trouble letting go of some things. I get it.

JJ ignores him. He simply walks the lot in front of the old garage and reminisces.

STEPHEN

None of what happened to you makes sense. That's what makes this all the more harder. But like the man says. Life goes on. Even if that life doesn't include us anymore.

JJ shuts his eyes to this. As if he hears Stephen.

STEPHEN

But it's okay to let go now. Because they have.

HONK-HONK!

EXT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Stephen stands dead center of the lot and blocks a line of traffic attempting to leave.

No sign of JJ anywhere. And his Corvette is back where he left it. Near the far end of the lot.

A slew of transients leave their cars at the pump and head for the store. Yawning, stretching their backs.

STEPHEN

Is anyone else seeing this?!

The transients all stare back at Stephen like he's crazy. And he just might be.

Stephen checks his pocket. His smart phone has mysteriously found its way back to him.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen crawls in and takes a moment to himself. Another deep breath. He stares at his phone: 1:44 AM

He speed dials his brother Greg.

GREG (V.O.)

Steve. Are you drunk or something?

STEPHEN

No. No. Of course not. Well, maybe a little. But no. I just wanted to...

A tired sigh.

STEPHEN

I just wanted to let you guys know that I'll see you in a couple days and...

Fights for the words.

STEPHEN

I'm looking forward to coming home.

GREG (V.O.)

Are you okay? You sound weird.

STEPHEN

Weird? Who? Me?

Stephen secretly chokes back his tears.

GREG (V.O.)

Yeah. You sound weird. What did you do now?

STEPHEN

You know what. Sorry I called. Give Benny a hug from his Uncle and I'll see you guys when I see you.

Greg laughs.

GREG (V.O.)

Get some sleep, would ya?

STEPHEN

Yeah.

Stephen hangs up, chucks his phone wherever.

He checks over his shoulder...

The Black Nova long gone.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

The Corvette back on the road. All alone. And the long stretch at its darkest.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen dips in and out. His eyes heavy and bloodshot.

STEPHEN

It's okay. No one's coming after you. No one wants you dead. It's just all in your head. You're just going crazy, Stephen. That's all. You see? You're even talking to yourself. When did that start?

Paranoia taking him over, Stephen checks his rearview mirror: No sign of the Black Nova.

And out of nowhere...

ZOOOOMMMM!

The BLACK NOVA passes him doing well over a hundred.

STEPHEN

Holy shit!

And the Black Nova is gone. As if it entered some sort of worm hole or reached the speed of light.

And OUT OF NOWHERE...

It's parked dead center of the highway. No tail lights. No nothing. About to get slammed into.

STEPHEN

FUCK!

Stephen cuts a hard left --

-- barely missing it.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The Corvette drifts across the slippery soft shoulder and ends up deep in the desert this time. The scorched white sand and rubble kicked into a twisted whirlwind.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Steven checks his rearview mirror. No sign of a Black Nova or any other car for that matter. He checks over his shoulder. Nothing coming over the horizon. And finally --

A set of HEADLIGHTS. An older style four door Cadillac trucks along at a reasonable speed.

Stephen watches it pass.

STEPHEN
What's happening to me?

The sweat now spiking from his forehead. He stares straight ahead. And on the other side of the highway sits a road sign: TOLERANCE, NM, 2 MILES

EXT. AZTEC HOTEL - PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

Stephen's Corvette is parked near the back of the modestly filled lot of overnight travelers.

SUPER: TOLERANCE, NEW MEXICO 6:48 AM

INT. CORVETTE - EARLY MORNING

Stephen asleep behind the wheel. He jerks awake. Panic stricken and unaware.

He spots a tall and almost ancient looking sign on the side of the busy road: AZTEC HOTEL, VACANCY

He looks ahead. On the other side of his windshield sits the hotel itself. A three story, financially strapped castle with forty year old Mexican decor.

Pacing near the front office door is KAT STACEY, twenties, cute but broke redhead with sexy consignment store rags for clothes. She carries a homemade sign:

HOUSTON OR BUST

With little to no effort, Stephen pushes open his door.

Kat spots him. Excited, she darts across the lot.

EXT. AZTEC HOTEL - PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

Stephen grabs his aching, emotionally drained head and squints at the morning sunlight.

Kat, all bubbly and cute and full of high-wired energy, bounces Stephen's direction.

KAT

So you're not dead. Great.
Wonderful. Can't lie. Kind of
worried about you there for a sec.

Stephen still opening his eyes.

STEPHEN

Do I know you?

KAT

I kind of doubt it. But I know you.
You're the guy that almost ran me
over with your car pulling in here
last night. If I had any food in my
stomach I would've shit my pants.

A sore subject.

STEPHEN

God forbid.

KAT

Yeah, no doubt.

Stephen gives her a good once over. She's sporting some knee high cowboy boots and short shorts.

STEPHEN

Well I don't remember that.

KAT

Yeah. I see that. Say. You wouldn't
by any chance be heading East.

STEPHEN

Why?

Kat shoves her HOUSTON OR BUST sign in his face.

KAT

Hello.

STEPHEN

Oh. I see. Where the hell am I?

KAT

Wow. You really did have a night, didn't you?

STEPHEN

A little bit.

KAT

You're at a hotel. Which I'm guessing is why you pulled in here. But I guess you won't be needing a room. But if we still got a room, that would be okay too.

STEPHEN

We?

Stephen stares across the street at an old style diner with a full lot of customers.

He faces Kat.

STEPHEN

Look. What was your name?

KAT

Kat. You know? Like a Kit Kat bar? As in, break me off a piece of that shit. Cute, right?

STEPHEN

Look. Are you some kind of...

KAT

Whore? Oh my God. I sound like a whore don't I? Like a total fuckin whore. I'm so sorry. No.

STEPHEN

Excuse me, Kat.

Stephen shuffles past her, toward the front lobby. Kat hobbles after him.

KAT

So. You didn't answer my question. About where you're headed.

STEPHEN

I'm headed. I'm headed to bed. For at least a few hours.

KAT
And after that?

STEPHEN
I don't know. Maybe a shower and
some dinner.

KAT
Dinner. Great. I love food. As far
as I can remember.

Kat all but drools on the across the street diner.

STEPHEN
Well, I'll be sure to keep you
posted. Excuse me.

Stephen ducks inside.

KAT
Yeah. So. I'll be out here if you
need me. If you wanna go get some
food or something. I'd be okay with
that.

She waves goodbye.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT LOBBY - EARLY MORNING

An aging Mexican-Indian woman wears a ceremonial head dress
while walking the lobby with a burning sage in hand and
mumbling incoherent nonsense.

This is PEPITA, seventies, aged and weather worn skin but the
stern eyes of a battle-scarred warrior who's seen and faced
it all before.

Stephen stands at the front desk and watches the odd ball
performance with true astonishment.

He turns to CARMEN, twenties, Mexican, beautiful, flowing
black hair and close to perfect.

Carmen runs Stephen's credit card through the slot and checks
him in on a thirty year old computer.

Stephen points to Pepita.

STEPHEN
Wild guess. This have anything to
do with you being closed?

CARMEN

Oh, don't mind her. She's a stubborn old woman. Just like her daughter. Thinks if she cleans the air of negative energy we'll all the sudden pull ourselves out of financial ruin. Not that a little upkeep from time to time won't do the trick.

Carmen shoots Pepita a nasty look.

CARMEN

Maybe if the owner wasn't such a cheap ass, we could do that.

Pepita returns her nasty stare and mumbles a string of profanities.

CARMEN

(to Pepita)

BARATA! CHEAP!

Pepita finishes her ritual in the lobby, ducks down a dark hallway, leaves a trail of smoke.

This and the tacky and outdated decor of ancient Aztec folklore leave a creepy impression.

STEPHEN

I heard you guys were closed for renovation.

CARMEN

No. Never. Open twenty four seven. Lucky me, huh?

STEPHEN

Say. You got an ATM?

In a flirty manner, Carmen flips her long black hair and leans in close to Stephen.

CARMEN

Why? You gonna take me to dinner?

Stephen smiles.

EXT. AZTEC HOTEL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Kat drags her sign on the walkway. All crapped out and totally spent.

She spots Stephen coming up the walkway like a glimmering ray of hope and cracks a desperate smile.

KAT

Oh, hey. Couldn't sleep?

STEPHEN

Something like that. So, what's your story?

KAT

My story? My story is that my car is dead.

Kat nods to her red Chevy Malibu parked near the front end.

Stephen follows her look.

KAT

Not dead like I need to take it to a mechanic. Dead like dead. And my asshole parents are out of town on vacation for the week and refuse to come get me.

Stephen shakes his head.

STEPHEN

Tough break.

KAT

Yeah, no kidding. I've been here for three days. Barely scrounged up enough for three lousy cups of coffee. So are you gonna help a girl out or what?

STEPHEN

Here's the deal. I'm gonna give you a ride to Houston.

KAT

Really?

STEPHEN

Yeah, really.

KAT

You some kind of weirdo or something? Fuck it. Whatever. I don't care. I'm in.

STEPHEN

One stipulation.

KAT

Oh God. I knew it. Look. I may have come off a little strong back there but I'm no whore. So whatever it is you're thinking...forget it.

STEPHEN

It's not like that. Really.

KAT

Okay. So what then?

STEPHEN

I don't really wanna get into detail about it. But I don't think I should be behind a wheel of a car right now.

Kat throws a glance at his beautiful Corvette.

KAT

So let me get this straight. You wanna give me a free ride back home to Houston? And I get to drive your gorgeous Corvette?

STEPHEN

I know. I drive a pretty hard bargain. What do you say?

Kat glances back at the diner across the street. Stephen follows her look.

KAT

Buy me some breakfast and you got a deal.

INT. MINNIE'S DINER - DAY

Stephen and Kat sit in a corner booth looking tired and in need of a shower. Their plates scraped clean.

Kat playfully peels the crust from her wheat toast.

A waitress refills their mugs with coffee.

KAT

I left home three years ago. Just dropped everything. Forgot about school. About my parents.

KAT

And I just decided I was gonna go on the road with some friends and see the world before I made any real lifelong decisions.

Kat pours an enormous amount of sugar into her coffee.

Stephen cringes.

KAT

Of course, everyone bailed. One by one. Week after week. Until there was just me. Crashing on couches and working three jobs just to save enough to come home with my tail between my legs.

Kat gulps down her coffee.

STEPHEN

I remember those days. Bright eyed and bushy tailed. The future in front of me. Too young and stupid to know better.

KAT

What is it that you do exactly?

STEPHEN

I was a television director. Sort of. Commercials really. Mostly freelance stuff. Then the girlfriend and I had the brilliant idea we were gonna fund our own feature films.

KAT

No shit? Anything I've seen?

STEPHEN

Never made it that far. Ended up going broke in the process. Maxing out all my credit cards. Getting overextended on other projects. Then the real cherry on top was catching my chief editor bending my girlfriend over his desk while I was out fetching lunch.

KAT

Oh God.

STEPHEN

Yeah. So I decided it was time to head back home and try to remember what life was like before the vultures sunk their teeth into me. Be around people I know I can trust.

Kat puts some grape jelly on her crustless toast.

KAT

So are you gonna tell me the real reason you're taking me on this trip?

STEPHEN

I told you why.

KAT

Yeah. Sort of. But why? You looking to get over on your ex? Maybe some revenge sex with a strange girl you picked up in a hotel parking lot.

Kat winks at him seductively.

STEPHEN

I told you it's not like that.

KAT

I know you did. But I'm in a real vulnerable position here. The kind most guys like to take advantage of.

STEPHEN

The truth?

KAT

The truth.

Stephen checks to see if anyone's watching. He leans in nice and close to Kat.

She also leans in.

STEPHEN

I think I may actually be losing my mind.

Kat is stunned. At a loss for words.

KAT

Okay. Good to know.

STEPHEN

I'm serious. I got off the interstate somewhere near Albuquerque to grab some food and gas. And it's like my mind switched off. I have zero memory of anything that happened between then and now. Including how I ended up out here.

Kat casually wraps a steak knife in a linen napkin and ever so slickly stuffs it in her purse.

STEPHEN

What're you doing with the knife? I can see what you're doing. I'm right in front of you.

KAT

Nothing.

STEPHEN

I saw you stuff it in your purse. You think I'm crazy.

KAT

I didn't say you were crazy. You just said you were crazy.

STEPHEN

I didn't say I was crazy. I said I might be going crazy. Big difference.

KAT

Okay, so you're not crazy. What does any of that have to do with me?

Stephen can't quite spit it out.

STEPHEN

In the last few hours, I've seen some very strange things. Things I don't know how to explain. Everything in me is saying leave. Just get out of here. Get as far away from here as possible.

KAT

So what's the problem? Let's just leave.

STEPHEN
I can't just leave.

KAT
Why not?

STEPHEN
Because I have to know that I'm not
going crazy.

Kat gives up, slumps her elbows on the table and rubs at her
strained and weary eyes.

KAT
This all sounds pretty crazy to me.

STEPHEN
Look. If I'm seeing these things.
Someone else around here had to
have seen them too. At some point.

KAT
I don't know. It would help if I
knew what the hell you were talking
about.

Stephen picks up his mug, about to chug the rest -- stares
into it and stops himself.

STEPHEN
I need some rest. We can talk about
it later.

Stephen drops a twenty on the table and slides out. Kat grabs
her bag and follows.

KAT
This is already weird.

INT. STEPHEN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Stephen and Kat enter the room -- no luggage. He tosses his
keys on a round table.

Kat all but drools on the hundred dollar bills Stephen slides
out of his wallet.

STEPHEN
Okay. The deal was I get you to
Houston. But I'm gonna need at
least a couple of days.

KAT
You actually wanna stay here?

STEPHEN
I told you I can't leave. Not
without getting some answers.

Kat scoffs in disappointment and slumps down on Stephen's king sized bed.

KAT
Okay. So what's the plan?

STEPHEN
Right now, the plan is get some
sleep. We can go over the rest
when I can think straight.

Stephen shuts the drapes, cutting off the interfering sunlight and filling the room with darkness.

KAT
Sounds good to me. I'm exhausted.

Stephen rests his ass on the bed and sets an alarm clock on a night stand.

KAT
So there's just the one bed, huh?

STEPHEN
Very observant.

Kat rolls her eyes.

KAT
Whatever. I can handle it if you
can.

Stephen immediately rolls over and shuts his eyes.

STEPHEN
Try to sleep for a bit. We have
work to do later.

Kat rolls on her side -- faces away from Stephen.

KAT
You're just gonna leave me hanging
like this? Not even a hint at what
you saw last night?

Stephen opens his eyes. He thinks it over.

STEPHEN
I can't do that.

KAT
Why not?

STEPHEN
Because I'm still processing what I did and didn't see last night. More importantly, you'll just think I'm crazy and won't listen.

KAT
I'm just gonna find out later.

STEPHEN
Get some rest.

Stephen shuts his eyes. Kat gives up and rolls over.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE BACK IN:

Kat is curled up in Stephen's warm embrace. A complete and total accident. She opens her eyes and locks with his -- still shut, out cold and sawing logs.

Kat looks to the foot of the bed and finds --

THE GHOST OF JJ

watching over them. He's still in the long sleeve fleece and dusty blue jeans.

Kat SCREAMS.

JJ snags his car keys from the table and storms out.

Stephen jerks awake.

STEPHEN
JJ!

Stephen jumps out of bed and races to the door. He trips on his shoes and face plants.

He's stopped by the sound of a familiar CAR ALARM coming from downstairs.

He looks up.

STEPHEN
I know that sound.

Kat peels back the heavy drapes and stares down at the parking lot below.

KAT
Your car!

Stephen races to the window -- stares down.

His Corvette leaves some black on the pavement as it spins out and finds its way onto the highway.

STEPHEN
Hey!

Before he can blink, the Corvette is on the road, out of sight and long gone.

KAT
Who was that?

Stephen chases out of the room. Kat throws on her cowboy boots and follows behind.

EXT. AZTEC HOTEL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Stephen and Kat race out of the lobby and into the lot where they find the Corvette exactly where they left it.

Near the back of the lot.

KAT
What the...

STEPHEN
Hell.

Stephen rushes across the lot, checks the driver's side door and opens. Inside the car, a set of keys are rested on the restored leather racing seat.

Stephen picks them up and shows Kat.

KAT
That's impossible. I mean, I watched him take your keys. He was there. And it's like he was down here. How did he do that?

STEPHEN
Because he's dead.

KAT

Excuse me?

STEPHEN

The asshole who just took my Vette for a joyride. He died over thirty five years ago.

KAT

You're saying a ghost did this?

STEPHEN

Yes.

Kat looks confused.

KAT

They can do that?

STEPHEN

Apparently, yes.

Kat laughs, spins in a circle, shakes her head.

KAT

No. There's gotta be another explanation.

STEPHEN

Oh, yeah? Like what?

KAT

I don't know, okay! I'm thinking!

STEPHEN

Yeah. Welcome to my world.

Stephen runs his fingers over his wet seats. Something very thick and slimy covers them.

Kat takes a look for herself.

KAT

What is that?

STEPHEN

It's that ghost crap they always talk about. It's all over the seats.

KAT

Ectoplasm?

STEPHEN

See? You know more about this stuff than I do.

KAT

Just cause I saw Ghostbusters once doesn't mean I believe in ghosts.

Kat rubs her sore temples.

KAT

Okay. So if you're crazy then that means I'm crazy too.

STEPHEN

Right.

KAT

But I'm not crazy! I don't see things that aren't there, but I know what I saw!

STEPHEN

Then stop looking at me like I'm the one who's friggin crazy!

KAT

Fine!

Stephen pulls out his smart phone and dials.

KAT

Who are you calling?

STEPHEN

The cops. I wanna know everything there is about JJ Berry.

Kat nods in agreement.

KAT

Yeah. Right. Good. Good thinking.

A beat.

KAT

Who the hell is JJ Berry?

INT. TOLERANCE POLICE STATION - DAY

CHIEF DELBERT CARR, fifties, sun beaten skin, and a tan as dark as his uniform and neck tie, heads for his corner office with a glass wall partition for a door.

Stephen and Kat trail behind.

CHIEF CARR
We're only an hour out from
Roswell. Do you know how many crazy
stories I hear on a weekly basis
round here?

STEPHEN
I'm guessing a lot.

CHIEF CARR
That's right. Too many.

Chief Carr dips into his office.

Stephen and Kat follow.

INT. CHIEF CARR'S OFFICE - DAY

Chief Carr grabs a cold beer from his fridge, twists off the cap and tosses it in a plastic tub full of them.

Stephen and Kat can hardly believe it.

CHIEF CARR
Word got out quick. UFOs. Little
green men. Unexplained phenomenon.
Whatever you wanna call it. It's
become quite the booming business
around these parts. Brings folks
from all over the country. Folks
that would never blink twice about
staying longer than five minutes if
they didn't have to.

Chief Carr takes a generous pull from his beer, plops down in his beat up recliner.

Kat takes notice of the office walls. They are full of local area maps tacked up and with specific areas circled with red marker.

She squeezes Stephen's leg, nods to the peculiar maps.

He gives them a quick look.

STEPHEN
Chief. I'm not from around here and
I don't have a dog in the fight.

CHIEF CARR

No. You're not from around here.
LA, right?

Stephen checks with Kat. Both of them surprised.

STEPHEN

You know me?

CHIEF CARR

Saw your little show at the
Racetrack last night and ran your
tag. Mister big time tv producer.

Stephen rolls his eyes.

CHIEF CARR

I'm on to you. I know why you're
here. And I'm not interested in
playing one of your little games.

STEPHEN

Games?

CHIEF CARR

I know you got yourself a room over
at the Aztec.

KAT

How did you -- ?

CHIEF CARR

That crazy old Indian's been
filling your head with all kinds of
nonsense. Tell me I'm wrong.

STEPHEN

You following me, Chief?

Chief Carr points his long and boney finger in the direction
of Stephen's mug.

CHIEF CARR

Listen to me. Let me tell you
something about that old witch
doctor. Because I know her. She did
some work for us. Drawing police
sketches and so forth. She did good
work. But she's become a royal pain
in my ass.

STEPHEN

How's that?

CHIEF CARR

A few years back, her and that crazy old man of hers were out in the desert building their little bonfires and smoking peyote. Dancing around, chanting, praying to the Sun God or whatever the hell these people do.

Stephen losing patience now. Kat squeezes his wrist, keeps his temper at bay.

CHIEF CARR

All the sudden they think they're seeing UFOs. Well word got out quick. Next thing you know the whole town is setting up camp. Dancing around campfires like idiots. Banging their little drums, getting high as a kite and trying to summon little green men.

Stephen grows weary, slumps in his chair. Kat notices and takes point.

KAT

Okay, Chief. What about ghosts?

CHIEF CARR

Ghosts. UFOs. It's all the same bullshit if you ask me.

STEPHEN

Well, Chief. Maybe you'd like to share some more of these bullshit stories.

CHIEF CARR

Maybe I got better things to do.

STEPHEN

Like sit around and get drunk?

Chief Carr slams down his beer as suds spit out onto the desktop. He slowly stands up.

KAT

Okay, Steve. Maybe we should get going.

CHIEF CARR

I think that's a great idea.

STEPHEN
We're not done here.
(to Chief Carr)
You remember a mechanic by the name
of JJ Berry?

Chief Carr is stunned by the mere mention of this popular yet infamous name from the past. He carefully studies Stephen's knowing eyes.

CHIEF CARR
Who sent you here, tv boy? One of
those ghost shows? Don't lie to me.

STEPHEN
Nobody sent me, Chief. I'm just a
guy passing through who wants some
answers. Judging by the way you're
looking at right now, I'd say you
have a few.

CHIEF CARR
I think we're done here.

Kat grabs his arm. He tears away.

STEPHEN
Now wait a minute. I got a few
questions first.

CHIEF CARR
Boy, you can leave or I can get
someone to do it for you.

KAT
Come on. He doesn't wanna talk.

Kat grabs Stephen's arm and leads him out.

EXT. TOLERANCE POLICE STATION - DAY

Stephen hurries to his Corvette in the visitor's lot. He's super pissed off and even more focused.

Kat rushes to keep up.

KAT
Why are you hurrying? We don't even
know where we're going.

STEPHEN
He's lying. He knows something
about Berry.

KAT

Yeah, I got that feeling.

STEPHEN

So if he's not willing to talk, we need to make him talk.

KAT

How do we do that?

Stephen stops in his tracks -- thinks it over.

STEPHEN

Did you get a good look at him?

KAT

Who? The Chief? We were sitting right in front of him.

STEPHEN

Not the Chief. JJ. Did you see his face?

KAT

I saw...a face. Yes. Do I remember what he looked like? Not really.

STEPHEN

If you got with a sketch artist, do you think you'd remember?

KAT

I don't know. Maybe. Why?

STEPHEN

I got an idea.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT OFFICE - NIGHT

Carmen sits on a tall bar stool and chomps a messy take-out hamburger with all the fixings.

A beaded curtain with Mexican-Indian colors is all that separates her from the front desk.

She watches Pepita work up a sketch on a large drawing pad.

An all too anxious Stephen and Kat sit before her.

Pepita finishes and shows her work to the others. A dead ringer for James JJ Berry.

PEPITA
How is this?

Stephen is blown away. Kat too.

KAT
Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's him.

Kat faces Stephen.

KAT
Well? Is it the same guy?

STEPHEN
I thought you said you couldn't
remember his face.

KAT
I didn't think I did. But it's like
as soon as we got back here, I
could see him more clearly. I can't
explain it. It's like he's staring
back at me.

PEPITA
He's here. His energy. It's all
around us. It's never left. He's
speaking through you.

STEPHEN
What does he want?

PEPITA
From you? I cannot tell you. But he
is most definitely here with us
today. He says to not give up. To
finish what you've started.

Carmen takes a monster bite as ketchup and a full tomato
slice squirt out from under the bun.

They all turn and stare. Grossed out.

CARMEN
Sorry.

STEPHEN
I need to use your computer. Can
you get online here?

CARMEN
Oh, yeah. We got internet.
Electricity. Running water. All
that white man stuff.

STEPHEN
That was rude. I'm sorry.

CARMEN
I'm just messing with you. I'll get
you set up.

A DINGING BELL from the lobby grabs her attention.

CARMEN
Give me a minute.

Carmen sets her burger down, wipes her hands clean and dips
through the beaded doorway.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Kat looms over Stephen's shoulder as he browses some internet
articles on Carmen's computer.

ON THE SCREEN:

...is the same newspaper headline Stephen saw in his vision
at the gas station: TOLERANCE MAN CARJACKED, SHOT AND LEFT
FOR DEAD

A row of digital still images under the headline.

The Black Chevy Nova on the side of the highway and the dead
and blood soaked body of James JJ Berry.

A DMV PHOTO of JJ also featured on the page.

Stephen DOUBLE CLICKS. It blows up FULL SCREEN.

Kat's jaw drops.

KAT
That's the guy. That's the guy who
was watching us. But I thought you
said this guy had a Corvette.

STEPHEN
He did. It was stolen.

KAT
Stolen?

STEPHEN
That's right. The guys that shot
him took his car and ditched him in
their Nova.

KAT

What was he doing there?

STEPHEN

Well. He was a mechanic. He owned a garage right up the road from where he got killed. Probably called him out there to change a tire. That's when they set him up.

KAT

Who set him up?

STEPHEN

I don't know. These guys. There were three of them.

Stephen minimizes the screen. A search engine now visible.

He types in Tolerance New Mexico, carjacking, suspects arrested.

A new article from PHOENIX GAZETTE fills the screen: MURDER SUSPECTS KILLED IN PHOENIX STANDOFF.

Stephen scrolls the page. The mug shots of our three mohawk sporting killers are center stage.

STEPHEN

It's them. It says they were killed during a bank robbery in Phoenix.

KAT

Phoenix?

STEPHEN

Look at the date of the article. August Seventh, Nineteen Eighty Five. Now check this out.

Stephen minimizes the screen and maximizes the article about JJ's carjacking and murder. He points at the date in the upper right hand.

STEPHEN

August Fifth. Just two days before these guys hit a bank in Phoenix.

KAT

So what?

STEPHEN

So. What were they doing in Tolerance?

KAT

I don't know. Heading home and their car broke down.

STEPHEN

But they weren't heading home. They were heading east.

KAT

You're losing me.

STEPHEN

Hold on a sec. I wanna show you something.

Stephen pulls up the search engine. He types in JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE AND DAIRY MARKET.

An article goes full screen: SUSPECTS SOUGHT IN DOUBLE MURDER

Police cars converged in front of the old auto garage with yellow crime scene tape securing the perimeter:

At the top of the article --

A DMV PHOTO of FRED BARNES. The front end clerk at the dairy market and JJ's partner.

STEPHEN

Let me ask you something. Why would they ditch their car, kill JJ, take his car, drive out of their way to the garage and kill his business partner if they were headed the other direction?

KAT

Maybe they needed money. Or gas. Or both.

STEPHEN

Or maybe it was personal.

KAT

What're you thinking?

STEPHEN

I don't know what I'm thinking. But there's one thing I know for sure.

KAT

What?

STEPHEN

I didn't just witness JJ's death. I saw this Fred Barnes get it too. They rushed the place with shotguns and took the front register.

KAT

Oh my God. You saw this?

STEPHEN

Yes I did. Well. Sort of. All but the actual shooting. And these three guys here...

Stephen blows up the mug shots of the three mohawk sporting criminals.

STEPHEN

That ain't them. I've never seen them before in my life.

KAT

Are you sure?

STEPHEN

Trust me. I'll never forget those faces as long as I live.

KAT

That means...

STEPHEN

JJ and Fred's killers were never caught.

KAT

Explains JJ's interest in you.

Stephen spins in his swivel chair, faces Kat.

STEPHEN

Yeah. This sonofabitch thinks I killed him and took his car.

EXT. PRIVATE DESERT ROAD - DAY

The Corvette cruises along a bumpy dirt road with two man made tracks separated only by a thin trail of sagebrush split up the middle.

Just over a steep hill sits a well kept double wide trailer with a wooden front deck and porch.

It sits right on the brink of a thin trout stream cut through a hillside dotted with giant sequoias.

They park a safe distance from the private residence.

INT. CORVETTE - DAY

Kat behind the wheel. Stephen rides shotgun.

KAT

I'm not sure this is such a great idea. Re opening old wounds.

STEPHEN

If anyone knows the truth about her husband's killers it's her. It's not gonna hurt to talk with her.

KAT

Look, I know this is all new and fresh to you. Maybe a little exciting. But she hasn't seen her husband in thirty five years. You really think she's gonna wanna hear what you have to say?

STEPHEN

If she doesn't. What's the worst that can happen? Let's go.

Stephen swings open his door. Kat too.

POW!

Stephen and Kat hit the dirt.

An ANGRY WOMAN bursts down the front steps of her front porch with a smoking double barrel shotgun.

Still on the ground, Stephen and Kat throw their hands up.

The woman is CAROL BERRY, sixties, frazzled hair down to her butt and sporting a forty year old bathrobe.

CAROL

Hell do you want from me?! Get out of here! Go away!

Stephen very carefully stands up with hands still raised above his head.

KAT

Hell are you doing? You crazy?

STEPHEN

Mrs. Berry. My name is Stephen Fitzwalter. It's very important that I speak with you.

CAROL

What were you doing creeping around here last night?! I saw you!

Stephen checks with Kat -- her face still in the dirt and her hands on her head.

STEPHEN

You saw who? Me?

Carol steps off the deck and walks closer. Her shotgun aimed right at Stephen's face.

CAROL

You some kind of smartass? Don't play stupid with me!

KAT

Gun. Loaded gun.

Kat grabs Stephen's foot. He kicks her hand away.

STEPHEN

You saw my car last night?

CAROL

You bet I did. Is this kind of damn sick joke?

STEPHEN

I need to talk to you about your husband. About JJ.

CAROL

Yeah, I just bet you do. Del said you was coming. Said you were with some kind of tv production.

STEPHEN

No. I'm not.

CAROL

Yeah, I just bet.

Stephen cautiously steps closer.

STEPHEN

And what if I were? Is there something about JJ I'm not supposed to know?

CAROL

If there was, why in the hell would I tell you?

KAT

(to Stephen)

That's a good point actually.

Stephen peeks back at Kat.

STEPHEN

(to Kat)

Shut up.

Kat stays down. Hands behind her head.

CAROL

(to Kat)

Oh, stand up, would you!

KAT

Yes ma'am. You bet.

Kat jumps to her feet, brushes off the dirt and sand.

STEPHEN

I've seen him. I've seen your husband. Now, if I've seen him, something tells me you've seen him too.

Carol slowly lowers the shotgun.

Kat cracks a stupid grin.

KAT

(to Carol)

Another good point.

STEPHEN

If you haven't seen him...

A shrug of his shoulders.

STEPHEN

Well I guess you won't wanna hear anything I have to say about what happened to me last night. With it being total bullshit and all.

Carol thinks it all over. She lowers the shotgun to her side and smiles back at her visitors.

CAROL
Alright you two. Come on inside.

EXT. CAROL'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

Stephen and Kat take a much needed break in a couple of wicker rocking chairs.

Carol walks onto the porch with a serving tray, two glasses and a tall pitcher. She pours them each a cold glass of freshly squeezed lemonade.

After setting down the tray, she walks to the edge of the porch and stares out at the Corvette with a nostalgic gleam in her eye.

CAROL
That car was the last thing my JJ
ever did with Jimmy Junior.

Carol faces the others.

CAROL
They restored it together. In
between school and working. They
spent many a long night at that
garage. It was the only thing they
ever had in common.

KAT
Where is your boy now?

CAROL
Died. Leukemia.

Kat shares a sad look with Stephen.

CAROL
That car, you see, was supposed to
be a gift for Jimmy Junior. His
sixteenth birthday. Only he never
made it that far.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry.

CAROL
That was a long time ago.

KAT

We're still sorry.

CAROL

After he died that car became JJ's obsession. The last little piece of his boy. Memories of all that time they spent together.

STEPHEN

Why was it the cops never found the car?

CAROL

Oh, God. I don't know. My guess, they took it to one of those criminal garages. Chopped it into little pieces. God only knows. Why are you asking?

STEPHEN

Mrs. Berry. Carol. I need to know if your husband has ever...

Kat shuts her eyes in embarrassment.

STEPHEN

Tried reaching out to you.

CAROL

I'm sorry. This was a mistake. I think it's time you left.

KAT

Yeah. No problem.

She reaches for Stephen's arm. He jerks it away.

STEPHEN

Look. I know that was a long time ago and the last thing you wanna do is re live the past.

CAROL

That's right, I don't.

STEPHEN

But you said we were here last night...
And we were nowhere near here. We didn't even know about this place until today.

CAROL
What are you saying?

STEPHEN
I'm saying that...

Stephen checks with Kat who vehemently shakes her head.

STEPHEN
I think JJ's got some unfinished business here. And I think it has to do with those boys who killed him.

CAROL
Those boys are all deader than a doornail. Just like JJ. What other business are you talking about?

STEPHEN
What if they didn't kill him?

Carol laughs.

CAROL
The hell you saying?

KAT
He doesn't know. He may actually be crazy. Jury's not out yet.

STEPHEN
(to Kat)
No. We came all the way out here. I wanna hear what she has to say.

CAROL
You are from one of those shows, aren't you. Should've listened to Del. I want you off my property.

Kat heads for the front steps. Stephen reluctantly follows.

CAROL
Another thing.

Stephen stops in his track.

CAROL
You tell that old witch doctor she's got a lot of nerve sending you out here.

CAROL

If it wasn't bad enough keeping my husbands affairs secret for three years, she's gonna go and bring some ghost hunting asshole sniffing around my property.

STEPHEN

Witch doctor. You talking about Pepita?

CAROL

What I told her was between us. If I see any of it end up on tv or in print, I'm suing her and you.

Stephen secretly smiles back at Kat -- standing on the lawn and waiting.

He faces Carol.

STEPHEN

Yes, ma'am. Sorry we bothered you.

CAROL

I don't want you out here again.

Carol grabs her shotgun from the stoop and dips inside.

On their way to the Corvette, Stephen leans in close to Kat, whispers in her ear.

STEPHEN

Did you catch that last part?

KAT

I sure did.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - SWIMMING POOL DECK - DAY

Pepita floats along the deep end of an unkempt and grimy indoor pool with plastic lawn chairs.

A fed up Stephen and a whipped looking Kat stand at the edge of the pool with Carmen -- once again stuffing her face.

This time with a burrito wrapped in foil.

STEPHEN

Lucy, you got some splaining to do.

KAT

You didn't tell us you were close
to his wife.

Pepita is unusually quiet as she treads water near the center
of the filthy pool.

STEPHEN

Or the fact that her dead husband's
been visiting her on and off for
the last thirty five years. But I
can see how that kind of thing
could easily slip your mind.

CARMEN

(to Pepita)
Abuela. Speak up.

Pepita ignores Kat, floats the other direction and quietly
mumbles something in Spanish.

CARMEN

I hate it when she does this.

STEPHEN

Does what?

CARMEN

Act like she can't speak English
when she's pissed off.

Carmen picks up a children's plastic ball from the pool deck
and throws it at her grandmother.

SMACK!

Right in Pepita's exposed back.

CARMEN

Culo turco anciana! The man is
talking to you!

Pepita floats back around, faces the others.

PEPITA

(to Carmen)
No me tires una mierda!

CARMEN

Then answer the man! Que mierda!
Shit!

KAT

How many women did he bring here?

PEPITA
Too many. All beautiful señoritas
like you, Katherine. And never the
same one twice.

STEPHEN
Sounds like old JJ got around.

PEPITA
He was a good father. A good
provider. But a shit husband. Too
many big appetites.

Kat watches Carmen slowly devour her abnormally large burrito
as remnants speckle the deck.

STEPHEN
Who were these women?

PEPITA
Travelers mostly. Women passing
through. That's how James liked it.
No outside attachments.

STEPHEN
That way his old lady never catches
wind of what's going on.

Pepita smiles.

PEPITA
Yes. Something like this.

KAT
But you told her. You finally told
her. After three years.

PEPITA
More like ten.

Kat scoffs with disgust.

KAT
What a piece of shit.

PEPITA
I stayed out of it as long as I
could.

STEPHEN
After all, old JJ was giving you a
lot of business.

PEPITA

What he does on his own time is none of my concern.

KAT

But it was his wife's business. Wasn't it?

PEPITA

He was unfaithful for many many years.

STEPHEN

Tell me about him.

PEPITA

He would give these women cash for the rooms. We run their card and he keeps his name clean. As if we wouldn't catch on to what he was doing.

KAT

And you told Carol about these girls?

PEPITA

Told her? I showed her. Kept all their credit card receipts. Copies of their driver's licenses. Every one of them.

KAT

Oh God. She probably called all of their husbands.

CARMEN

I'd say that was a safe assumption.

Carmen slaps her chest and BELCHES what may be the deepest and most guttural expulsion of gastric pressure in all of human history.

CARMEN

Mierda santa. Fuck.

And right back to her burrito. Kat waves a swift hand through the poisoned air.

KAT

Holy Christmas.

STEPHEN

You knew he was here yesterday. In our room.

KAT

That's why you've been running around cleansing the building. Because of him.

Kat gets a second whiff of Carmen's leftovers and covers her mouth, fighting the urge to vomit.

With her mouth still full, Carmen chews out her grandma.

CARMEN

(to Pepita)

You been lying to me about this? Que mierda, Abuela? What the hell?

PEPITA

There are two types of people, Stephen and Katherine. There are those that face death head on. And they spend the final moments of their life repenting and asking forgiveness for their sins and transgressions.

STEPHEN

And the other?

PEPITA

And there are those that never face death. They don't see it coming. They've never asked for forgiveness. Because they simply didn't have time.

STEPHEN

What's your point?

PEPITA

Those people are stuck in what Christians call purgatory. Forced to face their sins head on, over and over again.

A realization hits Kat. A sour grimace.

KAT

That's why he was in our room? Because he likes to watch?

Kat squeezes her eyes shut - totally grossed out at the mere thought of being watched.

KAT

That's just nasty.

PEPITA

My child, he's not enjoying himself. He's hurting. For all those times he spent hiding his secret lifestyle from his wife and children. And for what he did to those women.

STEPHEN

So you're saying JJ's spirit lives in this building?

PEPITA

Yes. Here. There. Anywhere and everywhere.

KAT

Glad that's all sorted out.

PEPITA

There were things in this world he's not proud of. And there are things that are his most precious possessions. These are the things that torment his soul.

KAT

Like Carol.

STEPHEN

Like my car.

CARMEN

Okay. I'm lost. I think I'll go now.

Carmen heads for the door. She rips yet another grisly belch as she dips out.

Kat covers her mouth in horror.

PEPITA

His spirit has been particularly unsettled since you came into town, Stephen.

PEPITA

Whether it be your car or not,
you've awoken something inside of
him.

STEPHEN

Yeah, but what?

Pepita shrugs her shoulders.

PEPITA

How the hell do I know?

Stephen shakes his head in frustration. He dips out as Kat follows behind.

EXT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT WALKWAY - DAY

Stephen sparks up a fresh smoke. Kat watches and shakes her head in disapproval.

KAT

That's a bad habit.

STEPHEN

Yeah, so is panhandling.

KAT

Touche.

STEPHEN

I haven't had a smoke in three weeks. Since yesterday, I've smoked an entire pack.

KAT

I'd say you've earned one.

STEPHEN

I spend all my life worrying about what might kill me. I should be more worried about what happens after I die.

KAT

No kidding.

STEPHEN

All of the sudden, I'm getting the urge to get the hell out of here.

Kat all but drools on his Marlboro.

KAT

Can I get one of those?

STEPHEN

I thought it was a nasty habit.

KAT

It is. Those things drain your bank account. I quit six months ago. Got too expensive.

Stephen offers her one, lights it for her.

KAT

So what now?

STEPHEN

I guess you're getting anxious to get out of here, aren't you?

KAT

I should be. I've been here almost five days. Gotta admit, though. I'm sort of having fun. In a weird and twisted kind of way.

Stephen checks out her broken down Malibu, still sitting dead in the same parking space.

STEPHEN

Your car. That's it.

KAT

What's it?

STEPHEN

These women. JJ's assembly line of one night stands. Pepita said they were transients. Just passing through.

KAT

Yeah? So?

STEPHEN

So maybe these girls found themselves in a particularly vulnerable situation.

KAT

Like their car breaking down?

STEPHEN

And no money to pay for it.

Kat's jaw drops as she slowly but surely comes around.

KAT

That nasty sonofabitch.

Getting his second wind, Stephen ditches his cigarette, stomps it out and gets right in Kat's face.

STEPHEN

Pepita said she made copies of all their driver's licenses. And gave them to Carol Berry. You think she's still got them?

KAT

After all these years? What for?

STEPHEN

I don't know. A painful reminder of what he did before he ditched her with two mouths to feed.

Kat looks unconvinced.

KAT

Okay, maybe she did keep them. So what? What's that have to do with you?

STEPHEN

All those women. If what I'm thinking is true, and old Carol Berry called all their husbands, at least one of them might take it personal. Enough to take himself a trip to visit old JJ.

KAT

Yeah, probably. And?

STEPHEN

Come on.

Stephen grabs Kat by the arm, drags her across the parking lot with a sense of urgency.

KAT

Okay, okay. Where are we going?

STEPHEN

Back to see Carol.

Kat stops in her tracks.

KAT

No way! She's gonna shoot us if we go back out there!

STEPHEN

It's the only way we're ever gonna find JJ's killer.

KAT

Well that's not gonna matter if we're both killed in the process! Will it, smart guy?

And before they can take another step --

VVRRROOOOOMMM!

The Corvette CRANKS UP ON ITS OWN.

Stephen and Kat watch with not so shocked faces.

KAT

He's doing it again.

STEPHEN

Yeah, thanks for the update. But where's he going?

The Corvette throws itself in reverse...

...darts out of the lot...

...and onto the open highway.

Stephen chases to the edge of the lot's entrance.

STEPHEN

(to JJ)

Where are you going?!

Kat runs up to him.

KAT

I don't think he's listening.

STEPHEN

Yeah, I got that! Thanks!

Stephen pulls his smart phone, dials 911.

KAT

You calling the cops?

STEPHEN

Yes.

KAT

Think about that a sec.

STEPHEN

SHIT!

He hangs up. So furious, he spins in a circle and pulls at the roots of his hair.

INT. HOMELAND MORTGAGE AND LOAN - DUSK

A room full of scared witless HOSTAGES -- CUSTOMERS AND BANK EMPLOYEES -- lay face first on the carpet with hands on their heads.

TWO MASKED MEN roam the bank's main lobby with long and abnormally powerful pistols in hand.

They are DOBBER and WINCHELL. Tolerance's baddest baddies with a long history of crime.

Some panicked whispers from the floor.

DOBBER

Shut up! And keep those hands on your head! You're making my partner nervous!

WINCHELL

And you don't want me getting nervous!

DOBBER

That's right! You really don't!

From behind the glass wall of the drive-thru teller creeps the face of law enforcement.

Winchell turns and spots him.

WINCHELL

Partner!

The outside cop ducks down just as --

Dobber faces him.

DOBBER

Get away from that window!

Dobber grabs a woman from the floor. Her large bank ID pinned to her blouse.

DOBBER
Get the lights off! All of them!

WOMAN
They can't see in here.

DOBBER
Just shut up and do it!

He shoves her across the floor. She heads for the light controls hanging on a far wall.

All lights turn off at once.

Dobber then grabs a second hostage from the floor, stands him up, shoves him toward the drive-thru window.

He kicks a few other people on the carpet.

DOBBER
All of you! Get up and stand over there! Get in front of that window!

The hostages all stand with hands raised in the air and move single file for the back window.

They block the window itself. Hands on the glass.

EXT. HOMELAND MORTGAGE AND LOAN - DUSK

Standing next to their squad cars and looking totally perplexed by the situation are --

OFFICER ROBERT BOBBIE, thirties, kind of handsome but not particularly tough. It's just a day job.

And...

OFFICER DANNY HOLLER, twenties, still wet behind the ears but earnest in a stupid kind of way.

OFFICER BOBBIE
Where the hell's Richie with that rifle?

OFFICER HOLLER
He's on his way.

OFFICER BOBBIE

This guy Dobber's a tweaker. The way I see it, we got about fifteen, maybe twenty before he slips and shoots someone. If not by accident.

OFFICER HOLLER

I always said I wanted to see some action. I guess I asked for it.

A POLICE ISSUE BRONCO arrives on the scene.

Chief Carr crawls out and takes cover behind one of the cars.

CHIEF CARR

I hearing this right? Ray Dobber's held up in there?

OFFICER BOBBIE

Him and that other bowling alley asshole.

OFFICER HOLLER

You mean the one that --

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yep. Getting drunk and tossing lit cigarettes at teenagers. We're talking a couple of real masterminds.

OFFICER HOLLER

Dumber than shit with a gun to boot. That's a bad combination.

CHIEF CARR

Speaking from experience, Danny?

Officer Holler squints, too confused to be insulted.

OFFICER BOBBIE

They got the hostages lined up against the windows. We got zero visibility inside.

OFFICER HOLLER

Maybe they ain't dumber than shit.

CHIEF CARR

They're still dumber than shit. Damn dumb bastards.

Chief Carr grabs a smart phone from the roof.

CHIEF CARR
Get me Dobber on the horn.

He hands the phone to Officer Bobbie who quickly dials.

OFFICER HOLLER
You got a plan, Chief?

CHIEF CARR
Shut up a second.

Officer Holler rolls his eyes.

OFFICER BOBBIE
Remember. Dobber and that other idiot don't know they've been busted. As far as we know, it's just a couple of guys in there.

Chief Carr nods. Officer Bobbie hands him back the phone.

INT. HOMELAND MORTGAGE AND LOAN - DUSK

The hostages pressed up against the drive-thru window.

Winchell stands somewhere in between the bank teller cubicles and the front lobby.

WINCHELL
Everybody relax and we'll be out of here soon! We're going for a little ride!

A PHONE RINGS from one of the loan officer's desks.

Dobber quickly picks up:

DOBBER
Who the hell is this?

CHIEF CARR (V.O.)
This is Chief Carr, Tolerance PD.
Am I speaking with the man in charge?

DOBBER
Damn right you are. Now you listen good, Chief.

CHIEF CARR (V.O.)
Now wait a second. You know that's not how this works.

CHIEF CARR

You gotta give me something, son.
Then I give you something. You've
seen the movie.

DOBBER

Yeah, I'll give you something! I'll
give you a room full of bodies!

Some of the hostages stare up at Dobber with pleading tears
in their eyes.

He aims his gun.

DOBBER

Stay down!

EXT. HOMELAND MORTGAGE AND LOAN - DUSK

Chief Carr looks sick to his stomach as the out of control
gunman gets the best of him.

Officers Bobbie and Holler watch him with zero confidence on
their nervous faces.

DOBBER (V.O.)

I want a school bus. Parked right
out front. I'm talking the door
pressed right up against the
building.

OFFICER HOLLER

Shit, Chief. We won't be able to
see any of them.

OFFICER BOBBIE

He knows that, Danny.

CHIEF CARR

I'm sorry. Keep talking.

DOBBER (V.O.)

If I even think we're being
followed, I start shooting
hostages. One at a time. Starting
with the prettiest. If you get my
drift.

CHIEF CARR

Okay, fine. Just relax and we'll
have one here as soon as we can.

Chief Carr chucks the phone on the roof.

CHIEF CARR

Shit.

OFFICER HOLLER

You're not gonna follow through with this, are you, Chief?

CHIEF CARR

Just sit tight, Danny.

All three turn and spot RICHIE, twenties, head buzzed marine, crawl out of his camo pick-up with a very large and very deadly rifle in hand.

RICHIE

Whatchu got, Chief?

Chief Carr snags the rifle from Richie's hands.

CHIEF CARR

Give me that damn thing. Why don't you just fuckin announce you're gonna blow his head off.

He loads a shell into the chamber.

OFFICER BOBBIE

What're you doing, Chief? Richie here's the best shot we got in town.

CHIEF CARR

Bobbie, that man asked for a school bus. I best believe you better get him one here right quick.

Officer Bobbie checks with Officer Holler. Neither one of them on board with this idea.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yes, sir.

Officer Bobbie crawls in his squad car, grabs his radio and gets on the horn with dispatch.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Gretta, I need Principal Davidson on the line and I mean now. We got a situation here.

GRETTA (V.O.)

Got it. I'll put you right through.

Chief Carr stares up at the sky -- growing darker and darker by the minute.

CHIEF CARR
(to Officer Bobbie)
It's gonna be night soon. The
sooner the better, Bobbie.

OFFICER BOBBIE
I'm working on it, boss!

INT. HOMELAND MORTGAGE AND LOAN - DUSK

In a private office, away from the others...

Dobber stands before one of the hostages -- a scared young man in a sweatshirt and jeans.

Dobber tears off a piece of duct tape and covers the hostage's mouth with it.

He takes off his mask, exposing his aged and POT MARKED face. And a very familiar face at that. He places his ski mask on the hostage.

DOBBER
You look good.

Dobber then empties the magazine from his hand cannon and hands the hostage his pistol.

DOBBER
Be careful out there, son. Don't go
doing nothing stupid. Like being a
hero. The wrong person might get
killed.

He pats him in the face and shoves him toward the main lobby with the others.

EXT. HOMELAND MORTGAGE AND LOAN - DUSK

The school bus is facing away from the squad cars. The actual door facing the bank's entrance.

Officer Bobbie and Officer Holler hover behind their squad cars with guns aimed and ready.

BEHIND A ROW OF BUSHES

Chief Carr ducks down. The rifle rested on his lap.

RICHIE (V.O.)
Look alive, Chief. Here they come.

Out the door walks about a dozen or so hostages with hands on their heads. A couple of black ski masks lost somewhere in the crowd.

Near the front entrance...

Richie hides behind a large cactus and aims a second sniper's rifle.

RICHIE
Dumb bastards still have their
masks on.

The hostages finish boarding the bus.

IN THE BUSHES

Chief Carr looks through the windshield and spots a ski masked person standing near the front end and holding a gun on a pot marked man at the wheel.

The pot marked man is Dobber. He and Chief Carr catch eyes.

Time stands still.

Chief Carr stands, aims the rifle.

Dobber's jaw hits the floor.

Chief Carr takes the shot: CRRRAACKKK!

The loud and deafening rifle shot fires through the window and almost removes Dobber's head.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DUSK

The blood and brain matter expelled from Dobber's head drench the frightened hostages.

Terrible SCREAMS.

Winchell rushes the front end. He's tackled head on by some of the tougher customers. They beat and kick him to a pulp as the gun goes sliding up the aisle.

INT. CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

The CORONER signs off on some autopsy paperwork as he hovers over the steel drawer holding what's left of Dobber.

Officer Bobbie stands on the other side.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Shit. There's not much left of this
guy, is there?

CORONER

Pretty stupid firing into that bus
if you ask me. Someone could've
been killed.

Officer Bobbie turns and spots Chief Carr watching them from
the comfort of the doorway.

He joins them.

CORONER

Hello, Delbert. We were just
chatting about you.

Chief Carr gives Officer Bobbie a hard stare.

The Coroner notices.

CORONER

I'll give you two a second.

He goes back to work.

CHIEF CARR

What're you doing in here?

OFFICER BOBBIE

I don't know. It's been kind of a
wild day. Guess I'm not ready to
head home yet.

Chief Carr stares down at the grisly corpse.

CHIEF CARR

Ever kill someone before, son?

OFFICER BOBBIE

No, Chief. Can't say that I have.

CHIEF CARR

Ray Dobber wouldn't think twice
about killing you. Or anybody you
love. He's stone cold. Ice water
instead of blood running through
his veins. Like some kind of
animal.

OFFICER BOBBIE

I heard a rumor you two were like high school buddies or something.

CHIEF CARR

Once. A long time ago. I could've gone right down the toilet along with Dobber. I wasn't too unlike him once. Raising all kinds of hell. Bad temper. Then one day he took things too far. That's when I knew what side of the law I really stood on.

Chief Carr studies Officer Bobbie's eyes.

CHIEF CARR

You don't think I should've taken that shot.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Just seemed pretty risky. Some might say damn right stupid.

CHIEF CARR

Yeah, well. It's done. It's over with. I made a decision and I followed through. And the hostages are safe.

OFFICER BOBBIE

It could've gone the other way.

Chief Carr gives him a long, hard stare. An unspoken but harsh disapproval of his insubordination.

CHIEF CARR

Go home, Bobbie. And don't think so much.

Officer Bobbie holds his tongue and shuffles his tired feet toward the door.

Chief Carr gives Dobber one last look, covers him and shuts the steel drawer.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT OFFICE - NIGHT

Carmen eats a wide variety of Chinese takeout and watches the nightly news with Pepita.

A FIELD REPORTER stands in the parking lot of Homeland Mortgage with the school bus parked out front.

FIELD REPORTER

I'm standing in front of Homeland Mortgage and Loan here in Tolerance in what may be one of the most bizarre police-standoffs in the history of the state. Around two PM this afternoon, two masked gunmen entered the lobby of Homeland Mortgage just seconds before local Police Officer Robert Bobbie swung by to deposit a check.

CARMEN

(a mouthful)

What a couple dumbasses, bro. God.

FIELD REPORTER

The two gunmen in question, Ray Dobber and Keith Winchell of Tolerance, have a long and extensive criminal record, dating back almost forty years. Including robbery and assault and have even been linked in connection to several murders here in town.

Both of their images fill the screen.

Pepita quickly sits at attention. She stands and walks closer to the television.

FIELD REPORTER

What they were even doing still on the street is a mystery unto itself...

Pepita stares at Dobber's picture with a look of true regret and sadness.

Carmen notices.

FIELD REPORTER

But after nearly forty years of crime, their long reign of terror came to a most bloody and brutal end today, leaving Ray Dobber dead and Keith Winchell critically wounded and in a coma.

CARMEN

(a mouthful)

Yeah, I heard they beat him within an inch of his life and took his gun. How awesome is that?

Carmen has a good laugh. Pepita angrily shuts off the television.

CARMEN

Damn it, woman. What's your problem now? As stubborn as an old mule. I swear.

Pepita ducks through the beaded doorway.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Pepita comes to a swift stop on the long, narrow hallway and studies a picture hanging on the wall.

It's of a younger version of herself hanging out on the pool deck in her swimsuit and THREE YOUNG MEN with good, strong bodies standing over her.

She removes the photo. Two of the young men look like Dobber and Winchell and the other is a younger version of Chief Delbert Carr.

Pepita's mouth quivers. She chokes back her tears.

EXT. CAROL'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Carol steps out with her shotgun. The Corvette parked on her lawn with the engine running.

CAROL

I told you not to come back here!

Carol steps off the porch and onto the grass. She is slow and cautious as she approaches the Corvette.

Something in her eyes suggest she may be taking Stephen's theory about JJ to heart.

CAROL

Hello? Say something!

Carol moves for the driver's side -- shotgun aimed and ready to fire.

CAROL

Get out of the car!

CRASH!

Her SCREEN DOOR SLAMS SHUT on the porch.

Carol swings around, takes aim at her door: POW!

And it's nearly blown off the hinges. Carol in tears now.

CAROL
Get out of my house!

Carol moves for the trailer, shotgun aimed.

CAROL
Who goes there?!

INT. CAROL'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Carol steps inside. She hears a commotion coming from the direction of her bedroom.

CAROL
Who is it?!

Carol aims her shotgun, walks toward a corner bedroom and cautiously dips inside.

CAROL'S BEDROOM

A photo album has been left on her bed. She walks over, checks behind her shoulder.

No one there.

She opens the album. A single photo drops from the center of the thick book. She picks it up.

A thirty five year old photo of JJ, Dobber, Winchell and Chief Carr in front of the old garage.

All of them in greasy jumpsuits.

CAROL
What is this?

VVRRROOOOMMMM!

And the Corvette crank its engine.

She peeks through some blinds. The Corvette sits on the lawn with LIGHTS ON.

Carol rushes for the front door.

EXT. CAROL'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Carol rushes onto the porch but is too late.

The Corvette spins out and kicks up a mound of dirt and debris that shoot Carol's direction.

She coughs up a fit as the Corvette speeds off. Down the dirt trail and a distant memory.

CAROL

JJ! You bastard! Get back here!

She picks up a rock and chucks it as hard as her brittle old bones can handle.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - PEPITA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Pepita lay in bed. She is restless, tossing and turning, side to side, never still.

Her eyes squinting, squeezing tighter and tighter. Her mouth mumbling incoherencies.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DAY (PEPITA'S DREAM)

On the side of the road...

JJ stands next to the Black Nova. His hands raised, pleading for his life.

A young Dobber aims his thirty eight: POW!

JJ struck in the belly and down he goes.

Dobber walks closer to the Nova, stares back at his own reflection in the driver's window. He loses his cocky smile and puts the gun under his chin.

POW!

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - PEPITA'S ROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Pepita jerks awake -- rises up. She sees the recently dead and unrested spirit of RAY DOBBER standing at the foot of her queen sized bed.

A bullet hole in his forehead leaks blood. The blood has somehow ended up on Dobber's arms. It now runs like an unstoppable red river.

Pepita reaches out to him. Dobber angrily grabs both of her hands as the blood drenches her arms.

PEPITA
No! Vete! Go away!

She jerks away from him. And he's gone. Vanished.

Pepita stares at her hands, covered in Dobber's blood.

PEPITA
Vete. Leave me alone.

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT - NIGHT

Downtown Tolerance isn't much to look at. But it's quiet and quaint in a down home sort of way.

Stephen and Kat trot up the sidewalk looking pissed off and all worn out by the tiresome experience.

KAT
How much farther to the police station? My feet are killing me. These boots aren't made for walking.

STEPHEN
Just another block.

KAT
I don't wanna go back there, Stephen.

STEPHEN
Don't you get it? If he sees us, and my car is somewhere else, he'll know something weird's going on.

KAT
I don't think he needs any more help in that department.

Stephen passes a thin alley way cut between two buildings and spots what looks like RED AND BLUE POLICE LIGHTS flashing off the side of the brick.

STEPHEN
Wait. There's something going on.

Stephen ducks into the alley. Kat follows.

KAT
Is that the cops?

STEPHEN
About to find out.

Stephen rushes toward the FLASHING LIGHTS.

EXT. FAST FOOD BURGER PLACE - NIGHT

And there sits Stephen's Corvette. Officer Holler steps out of the way as a TOW TRUCK backs up.

BEEP! BEEP!

The DRIVER steps out and rigs a hooking mechanism under the Corvette's undercarriage.

Running out of the thin alley across the street come Stephen and Kat who spot the flashing lights.

STEPHEN
HEY!

Stephen chases across a busy intersection as CARS HONK and almost run over him and Kat.

They run up to Officer Holler.

STEPHEN
That's my car.

OFFICER HOLLER
Yeah, no shit. And you two just got back from old lady Berry's place like we asked you not to.

KAT
What does that have to do with you towing his Vette?
This happens to be a very expensive piece of machinery.

Chief Carr dips out a side door near the drive-thru.

Stephen and Kat notice.

CHIEF CARR
Because you two are under arrest.
That's why.

KAT
Bummer.

STEPHEN
What's the charge?

CHIEF CARR
Mainly for being a pain in my ass.

KAT
Does that mean we can arrest you,
Chief Carr?

Chief Carr doesn't find her funny. A long, hard stare.

CHIEF CARR
Other than that? Trespassing.

KAT
You don't understand, Chief.

STEPHEN
Forget it. He's not gonna listen.
Whatever we have to say, we have
plenty of time to say it down at
the station.

CHIEF CARR
You took the words out of my mouth.

Chief Carr nods to Officer Holler who quickly cuffs Stephen's hands behind his back.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT LOBBY - MORNING

An ANGRY HUSBAND AND WIFE and their TWO YOUNG KIDS stand at the front desk with luggage and bags in hand while Carmen squares up their tab.

ANGRY WIFE
This is the worst God-awful hotel
we've ever stayed in! Your beds are
hard! The AC blows hot air and your
pool is filthy!

ANGRY HUSBAND
Pure filth.

Carmen chews her bubble gum, reviews their account on the computer and looks bored by it all.

Angry Wife checks with her kids, and then back to the desk.

She leans in nice and close.

ANGRY WIFE

There was a shit floating in the pool. A shit.

Carmen winces.

ANGRY WIFE

But sure. Why should you care, right? You obviously don't. Just look at this place.

ANGRY HUSBAND

Just look at it. A dump.

ANGRY WIFE

A friggin dump.

ANGRY HUSBAND

That's right. It is.

ANGRY WIFE

Why am I wasting my breath?

ANGRY HUSBAND

I don't know.

Carmen leans in close.

CARMEN

Say. In case someone asks, you guys didn't see any ghosts on the second floor, did you?

The younger of the two kids cries.

CARMEN

I'm just teasing, baby. There's no ghosts. No ghosts.

The angry couple scoff with disgust as they roll their luggage out the door.

CARMEN

Thank you. Come again.

ANGRY WIFE

Go to hell!

Carmen rolls her eyes. She reaches for her keys on the back wall but a hook sits empty.

CARMEN

Grandma?! Where are my keys?!

No answer from Pepita. Carmen looks confused.

EXT. AZTEC HOTEL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

Carmen steps outside, looks to her left and her usual parking spot sits empty.

CARMEN
Grandma, where is my coche?! This
isn't cool!

Carmen heads back inside.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - PEPITA'S ROOM - MORNING

Carmen opens the door, quickly finds that the room is empty and quiet. No Pepita.

But there is something on Pepita's bed.

Carmen walks over, picks up the same picture of Pepita in her swimsuit and hanging out with Dobber, Winchell and Chief Carr.

Carmen checks the bathroom. The door is shut.

CARMEN
Grandma! You in there?

No answer.

She gives the young men in the picture a closer look.

She's distracted by something else on the bed. She picks up what looks like a handwritten letter.

CARMEN
What is this?

She flips over a few pages. A long one.

Carmen reads it quietly. A stream of tears shoot from her eyes before she can process the words.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DAY

Pepita has Carmen's truck parked on the side of the road while she walks a personally constructed memorial cross to the site of JJ's death.

She stakes it into the ground, takes a few steps back.

The crucifix around her neck. Pepita grips it, caresses it with her fingers, mumbles a prayer in Spanish.

From under her ceremonial robe, she pulls out a large butcher's knife.

PEPITA

Querido Dios. Dios los perdone. Por favor.

Pepita slowly moves the sharp blade across her wrinkled neck as blood speckles the desert sand.

INT. TOLERANCE POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Stephen is sprawled out on a steel bench. Dead asleep. The shadows of iron bars paint stripes over his body.

But then his eyes and face twitch. A dream perhaps. Another prophetic vision.

INT. STEPHEN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY (1990)

Stephen sits abnormally close to the living room television and watches Saturday morning cartoons.

His parents -- MIKE AND SHELLEY -- sit at a dining room table and watch their son with concern.

Mike picks up just one of several photos young Stephen has scribbled in crayon: THREE PUNK ROCKERS WITH MOHAWKS AND HANDGUNS.

MIKE

He won't tell me who they are. I don't see him telling the doctor any different.

SHELLEY

It's been a year, Mike. He's lost all focus. All of his friends. He doesn't go outside. All he does is draw these pictures.

Shelley grabs one from the stack: A MOHAWK shooting a man (JJ) and blood squirting from his body.

She slams it on the table.

MIKE

It can't be normal for a four year old kid to be dreaming about things he's never even seen before.

SHELLEY

These dreams have to stop. All of it has to stop. Even if that means putting him in bed with us for a few months.

Stephen stares back at them. He's all for it. Mike isn't crazy about the idea.

SHELLEY

Maybe if he feels safer and not so afraid, they'll disappear.

MIKE

Okay. So we stick to the original plan. We take away his crayons. Pencils, paper. All of it. And he sleeps with us for a couple weeks. If things don't turn around, we call Doc Harmon.

Shelley nods in agreement. They turn and stare back at Stephen who eavesdrops.

O/S. The iron gates of a cell slide open.

INT. TOLERANCE POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY (PRESENT)

Stephen jumps up. Out of the dream. Fully alert now.

In walks Chief Carr.

Stephen slumps forward, rubs his tired face.

STEPHEN

How long does it take to post bail?
We've been sitting in here for
hours. Where's Carmen?

Chief Carr looks sick to his stomach. He has trouble finding the right words. He never does.

STEPHEN

What is it?

CHIEF CARR

Your friend at the hotel. I'm afraid she had other business to tend to. I won't get into detail now. You can ask her later.

STEPHEN

Well is she here or not? You can't keep us in here like this.

CHIEF CARR

No, she's not here.

STEPHEN

Well where is she? I don't understand.

Chief Carr stalls. Changes the subject.

CHIEF CARR

Carol Berry is dropping all charges. With the promise you two stay off her property and let this business about her husband go.

Stephen isn't buying it.

STEPHEN

Just like that?

Chief Carr steps aside, giving Stephen some space and waiting for him to step out.

CHIEF CARR

Get on. Before I change my mind.

Stephen heads for the door but stops.

STEPHEN

Something tells me you know more than you're letting on, Chief.

CHIEF CARR

Listen to me. After you pick up your car, I want you and your friend to pack up and get the hell out of my town. You're picking at some old scabs, son. God only knows that poor woman's lost enough.

Stephen hangs his head, nods in agreement.

STEPHEN

Yeah I guess you're right. Sorry I bothered you.

Stephen ducks out of the cell. Once again, he turns and faces Chief Carr.

STEPHEN

By the way, Chief. Who posted our bail?

INT. MINNIE'S DINER - DAY

Carol sits teary eyed in a corner booth.

A cup of coffee and the old photo of JJ, Dobber, Winchell and Chief Carr in their mechanic's overalls.

Through the door walks Stephen and Kat.

Carol raises her hand, catching Kat's attention.

KAT

There she is.

Stephen and Kat head to her booth and take a seat across from her.

Kat checks over her shoulder.

Through the window and casually standing next to his squad car is Officer Bobbie. Shades cover his eyes.

He peers in on them.

KAT

We're being watched.

STEPHEN

Just ignore him.

CAROL

Thanks for coming.

STEPHEN

Sorry we're late. That's a pretty good walk from the police station.

CAROL

He shouldn't have done that. Locked you two up like that. I shouldn't have made trouble.

STEPHEN

He was there, wasn't he? JJ came to see you.

Carol breaks down in tears.

CAROL

I swore I didn't wanna believe it. At first, I thought it was just me not being able to let go. Not being able to face reality.

Carol wipes her tears with a napkin.

CAROL

Seeing him. Hearing him. Even smelling him. But after last night...

Carol shakes her head.

CAROL

I know that what I felt was all too real.

Kat watches Officer Bobbie make for the door.

KAT

We got company.

Stephen watches Officer Bobbie pop through the front door and take a seat at one of the tables.

STEPHEN

Tell me about it. What happened?

CAROL

I heard him coming. In the Corvette. I walked outside thinking I'd run into the two of you. And it's like he walked right through me. I could feel him.

KAT

No shit?

Stephen touches Kat's hand.

KAT

Sorry.

CAROL

I ran back inside thinking I'd find him. Instead I find this.

Carol pushes the photo across the table. Stephen picks it up and gives it a look.

CAROL

It was in a photo album on my bed. Only problem is, I haven't looked through that thing in close to thirty years.

STEPHEN

He left it there.

CAROL

JJ wanted me to find that. I knew right then and there I was supposed to give it to you.

STEPHEN

Who are they?

Carol checks with Officer Bobbie staring back at them from across the diner.

CAROL

I'm sorry. This is as far as I go. Good luck to you. To you both.

Carol dips out and rushes to the door.

KAT

Hey. Wait a sec.

Stephen stares back at a suspicious Officer Bobbie watching Carol rush to her car.

KAT

We can't just let her leave.

Stephen hides the photo in his coat pocket.

STEPHEN

Let her go.

Officer Bobbie gets up, heads over to their booth. Stephen and Kat both frozen with fear.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Relax. It's all good.

He throws in a toothpick -- twirls it around.

KAT

What're you doing here?

OFFICER BOBBIE
I've been ordered to make sure you
two find your way out of town.

Stephen scoffs in protest.

KAT
Well that was awfully nice of
Chief. Going out of his way to give
us an armed escort.

OFFICER BOBBIE
Hey, listen. Just so you two don't
leave here with any hard feelings.
There's some of us that think
you're on the right track when it
comes to JJ Berry.

STEPHEN
Really?

OFFICER BOBBIE
You're not the first one to see
some weird shit out on that
highway. The Aztec's even worse.

KAT
Yeah, so we hear.

OFFICER BOBBIE
But putting all kinds of ideas in
that poor old woman's head. I don't
see how that helps anyone. All
you're doing is bringing up all
kinds of bad memories.

KAT
That's just it. We're not the ones
bringing up anything.

OFFICER BOBBIE
I don't see it that --

STEPHEN
Say no more. We'll be heading back
to the hotel and be out of your
hair shortly.

Stephen pats Kat on the shoulder as they slide out of the
booth and head for the door.

OFFICER BOBBIE
No skin off my back. Just relaying
the message.

From outside the window, Stephen and Kat sneak a peek back at Officer Bobbie as they leave on foot.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Now what the hell are they up to?
Ah, hell. Who cares. I'm getting a sandwich.

He heads for the front counter.

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT LOBBY - DAY

Carmen sits on her stool behind the counter -- her face in the palm of her hands -- bawling quietly to herself.

Through the door walks Stephen and Kat, looking none too pleased with their new friend Carmen.

STEPHEN

I've been calling you for hours.
Doesn't anyone work here?

Carmen wipes her tears, all but ignores Stephen.

Kat notices something's wrong. She nudges Stephen aside.

KAT

What Steve is trying to say is,
it's okay. Carol bailed us out and
they dropped the charges. And, as
great as you've been, we're getting
out of here today.

Carmen grabs a big handful of used snotty tissues and dumps them in a trash bin behind the desk.

STEPHEN

Hey. What's the matter with you?
Chief said you had your hands full
earlier.

Carmen can't bring herself to say the words.

KAT

Where's Pepita?

CARMEN

Crazy old woman. She left me.

STEPHEN

Hell are you talking about?

Carmen hands Stephen the photo of Pepita, Dobber, Winchell and Chief Carr at the pool.

CARMEN

I found this in her room.

Stephen gives it a good look. He immediately hands it over to Kat who's jaw almost hits the floor.

KAT

Isn't that --

STEPHEN

Yes. The same three guys.

Stephen walks to the desk, leans in close to Carmen.

STEPHEN

Who are they?

Carmen can't spit it out. She simply hands Stephen Pepita's long suicide note.

CARMEN

I also found this.

Stephen snags it, walks the lobby while reading over the first couple of pages.

Kat loses patience.

KAT

What does it say?

STEPHEN

Shut up a sec.

Stephen continues, his mouth moving along quietly with the words on the page.

STEPHEN

She lied. About all of it.

KAT

Would someone please tell me what's going on?

STEPHEN

All those women. The affairs. It was all bullshit.

KAT

What is that you're reading?

CARMEN
She's dead.

Stephen and Kat both shocked.

STEPHEN
Where?

CARMEN
Found her out on Route Sixty-Six.
Right where JJ got killed.

Kat loses herself in a stunned trance. Stephen reads the following pages of the letter.

STEPHEN
She wasn't lying completely. JJ had an affair alright. With her. For over three years. Until he broke it off and went back to his wife.

KAT
Is that what it says?

Stephen gives her a dumb look.

STEPHEN
No, Kat, I'm making all this shit up! For fun!

KAT
Okay, okay. I'm sorry.

STEPHEN
Got so pissed off at him for leaving her, she made up a bunch of lies about all these other women.

KAT
Oh my God. But I don't understand. Why did she hurt herself?

Stephen gives the three men in both pictures a nice, long look and tries hard to find the connection.

He shows the photos to Carmen.

STEPHEN
Carol Berry gave us this photo. They worked with JJ. At his garage. Who were they?

Carmen gives them a closer look.

CARMEN

I don't know.

STEPHEN

You have to know. You have to know something.

CARMEN

I tried to ask Grandma once and she didn't wanna talk about it.

STEPHEN

This picture's been hanging in here forever. Am I right? You're not telling me something.

Carmen steps out from behind the desk, paces the floor with hands on her hips -- unable to process it all.

CARMEN

Okay. I heard stories. From my Mom. About when Grandpa left and her not being able to deal with it.

STEPHEN

Go on.

CARMEN

Supposedly, she started having a lot of flings. Mostly with younger guys. Just drifters, passing through. Most of them looking for work and broke as hell.

Kat snags one of the photos from Stephen's hand, gives it a better look.

KAT

With all of these guys?

CARMEN

I told you I don't know!

STEPHEN

JJ wanted us to have this. And Pepita wanted you to have this. Because she knows these men hurt JJ.

CARMEN

How would she know that?

STEPHEN

It could be that she sent them.
Told them she'd set them up here at
the hotel. Give them whatever they
wanted. Free room and board. Sexual
favours. Whatever.

Carmen breaks down in tears. She throws a finger in Stephen's
face, hopping mad.

CARMEN

I don't want you talking about her
like that!

STEPHEN

The cat's out of the bag! Now who
are they?! As in names?!

CARMEN

How the hell do I know?! I wasn't
even born yet for fuck sakes!

Kat holds the photo closer to her eyes. She looks to the wall
where a news report plays on a flatscreen.

The two black and white mug shots of a much younger RAY
DOBBER AND KEITH WINCHELL fill the screen as the reporter
recaps the bank robbery.

The volume turned down.

KAT

Hey. Look at this.

Stephen and Carmen turn their attention to the report.

All of their mouths drop.

Stephen refers to the picture.

STEPHEN

Turn this up!

Carmen races to find the tv remote on the front counter.

She snags it and CRANKS THE VOLUME.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Once again, Keith Winchell of
Tolerance has died after sustaining
multiple internal injuries.
Injuries, ironically caused by
those same residents of Tolerance
he held at gunpoint.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Winchell was a part of a two man
job, led by lifelong friend and
criminal associate Ray Dobber...

STEPHEN
Dobber.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DAY (FLASHBACK)

On the side of the road...

Dobber, early twenties, grins back at Stephen as he aims his
thirty eight special and laughs.

Stephen spots a young KEITH WINCHELL and, of course, a young
CHIEF DELBERT CARR behind Dobber. All sport mohawks.

The Corvette behind all three.

Dobber squeezes the trigger: POW!

INT. AZTEC HOTEL - FRONT LOBBY - DAY (PRESENT)

Stephen snaps out of it. Kat and Carmen watch him.

KAT
Is it them? Are they the ones,
Stephen?

STEPHEN
Take another look at that picture.
A real close look.

KAT
No, I get it. It's them. But are
they the ones you saw in your
vision?

STEPHEN
Not them. The other one. The third
guy.

Carmen squints, confused. Kat gives the photo another look
and takes her time.

Stephen awaits her reaction.

Kat's jaw drops.

KAT
Is that who I think it is?

STEPHEN
I've gotta be sure.

CARMEN
What the hell are you two talking
about? Who is he?

Stephen and Kat share a quick look.

STEPHEN
We're gonna need to borrow your
car.

CARMEN
For what?

STEPHEN
It's time for a trip down memory
lane.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DUSK

Carmen's jeep parked on the side of the road. The once grisly
scene of JJ's slow demise.

The memorial staked into the dirt.

From the jeep steps Stephen and Kat. They walk with reverence
toward the cross.

KAT
So what's the plan again?

STEPHEN
I'm hoping all this witch doctor
talk wasn't just talk. And Pepita's
still out there somewhere. Ready to
lead us to the finish line.

KAT
She could've done that before.
Instead, she took the easy way out.

STEPHEN
I don't call practically cutting
off your own head the easy way out.

They stop before the cross. The dirt around their feet still
stained red with Pepita's blood.

KAT
What do you think she's gonna do?
Show you JJ's murder or something?

STEPHEN
You're forgetting something.

KAT
What?

STEPHEN
She's crossed over. With JJ. With
Ray Dobber. She knows all their
darkest secrets.

KAT
I kind of doubt she's up there
reminiscing about the good old days
when they committed a double
murder.

STEPHEN
Don't you get it?

No, she doesn't. Kat looks clueless.

STEPHEN
Dobber. Pepita. They got nothing to
hide anymore. If we wanna know what
happened, why don't we just ask?

Kat slowly comes around. An assured nod.

KAT
Maybe we should've brought Carmen.

STEPHEN
What for?

KAT
I don't know. Do some kind of chant
or something. Try to contact her
grandma.

STEPHEN
I guess we'll just have to wing it.

Stephen takes a deep breath, steps closer, gently presses his
hand against the center of the homemade memorial.

He squeezes his eyes shut.

STEPHEN
Come on. Talk to me, Pepita. Talk
to me.

Stephen waits. And waits. Nothing.

Kat grows anxious.

KAT

So what do I do? Just stand back here?

Stephen pops open his eyes. Unamused, he turns and faces Kat with a put-off look.

STEPHEN

Do you mind?

KAT

Oh. My bad. Carry on. I'll just stay back here and be quiet.

STEPHEN

Good idea.

Stephen turns and tries again. His eyes squeezed shut.

Breathing in and out. In and out.

INT. BLACK NOVA - ROUTE 66 - DAY (1985)

Stephen jerks awake in the backseat. Unaware of time and place and his heart racing a mile a minute.

Behind the wheel sits a much younger Dobber. And in the passenger seat sits partner Winchell.

Both sport MOHAWKS.

To Stephen's left sits the baby-faced, still wet behind the ears Delbert Carr. No mohawk.

DOBBER

Alright. We do this and we're home free. We're set.

WINCHELL

That's right. No more chopping cars. No more taking registers. Just taking it easy, my man.

DOBBER

Fuckin A.

Dobber and Winchell firmly cuff their hands together.

Stephen watches quietly from the backseat.

Delbert not as enthused.

DELBERT

Yeah, that's just what she wants you to think. We'll all be in prison and she'll get off, scott free.

Winchell turns, faces Delbert.

WINCHELL

Hey, man. She's taking just as big a risk as us. If we go down, she goes down along with us.

DOBBER

He's right. You say you love this woman. You want her, then you know what you gotta do. Nothing's free in this world. Isn't that what you always tell me, Del?

Delbert huffs with reluctance. His knees bounce. A nervous train wreck full of emotion.

DOBBER

Remember. We got a full proof alibi. We were all with her. At work. It's solid.

Winchell hands Delbert his Mohawk skull cap.

Stephen stares at the fake hair.

WINCHELL

And they won't be looking for us anyway. They'll be looking for those other assholes.

Stephen finds a newspaper stuffed in the rear pocket of the passenger seat. He pulls it out.

THE PHOENIX GAZETTE: PUNK ROCK BANDITS HIT THIRD BANK

WINCHELL

So stop being a pussy and get ready to rock and roll.

Stephen stares back at Delbert fitting the bald skull cap with a fake mohawk over his head.

Winchell laughs, hands Delbert a pair of black shades that complete his disguise.

WINCHELL

That's what I'm talking about.

Once again, Stephen stares at the newspaper.

INT. JJ'S AUTO WRECKAGE AND DAIRY MARKET - DAY (1985)

Stephen stands over a newspaper rack. The same copy of The Phoenix Gazette in hand.

Through the front window, he spots his Corvette come to a screeching stop near the door.

Out jump Dobber, Winchell and Delbert. All sporting their fake mohawks and black shades.

Dobber and Winchell with shotguns. Delbert carries a forty five automatic.

They rush the door.

Stephen drops the paper on the tile and watches as the three gunmen catch Fred by surprise.

DOBBER

Head's up! Cash on the counter!
Let's move!

WHAP! Dobber slaps the counter.

Winchell does a quick sweep of the aisles, checking for customers and unwanted witnesses.

Delbert stands not too far behind Dobber and stares up at a surveillance camera near the door.

WINCHELL

(to Delbert)

Hey! Make sure you smile for the eye in the sky! Can't disappoint our fans!

Delbert stares at the camera, sticks out his tongue, and, with his right hand, throws up some devil's horns.

WINCHELL

Rock and roll, baby!

Fred quickly empties the cash from the drawer and dumps it in an old grocery bag held by Dobber.

Stephen watches Winchell check the rear stockroom and then the single unisex restroom.

Delbert shimmies his feet on the tile. Nervous. Unsure of himself. His gun aimed at Fred's face.

DOBBER
(to Winchell)
Let's go back there!

WINCHELL
All clear!

Winchell races to the front.

Fred holds his hands in the air but squints as he pays close attention to Delbert.

FRED
Del? That you under those shades?
The hell are you doing, son?

DELBERT
Shut up, old man! Eyes down!

Fred doesn't listen. He just stares back at Delbert, studies his face.

Winchell joins Dobber by the door.

WINCHELL
Come on, man. Let's book.

DOBBER
(to Delbert)
Let's go!

Delbert isn't sure as he stares between his co-horts and the all too curious Fred.

FRED
It is you.

DELBERT
(to Dobber)
Shit, man. What do I do?

WINCHELL
(to Delbert)
Yo. I thought you said this dude
was new. Why's he calling you out?

DOBBER
(to Winchell)
Shut up, man!

WINCHELL
We don't have time for this!

DOBBER
(to Delbert)
He's right. We don't need this,
man. Fuckin smoke him.

WINCHELL
Yeah, do it!

Delbert isn't so sure but steps to Fred just the same.

Fred gulps as he stares down the forty five.

FRED
You don't wanna do this.

Meanwhile --

Stephen watches the action from behind an endcap. A safe
enough distance away.

DOBBER
Do it, man. If you don't, I will.
He'll take us all down.

Winchell spots a car pull up front.

WINCHELL
We got company!

Delbert takes his eyes off the prize, checks the front lot as
a woman swings open her door.

Fred reaches for a gun under the register.

DOBBER
Watch out!

Stephen watches in horror as --

Delbert squeezes one off: POW!

Fred drops to the tile. Dead.

Delbert's gun hand trembles. A tear in his eye. Dobber grabs
him, rushes him out the door.

DOBBER
Snap out of it!

As the gunmen rush out --

The car in the lot makes tracks. She wants nothing of it.

Stephen runs to the window, watches as the Corvette tears ass out of the lot.

FOOTSTEPS behind him.

A WOMAN'S ARM grabs his shoulder.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DAY (PRESENT)

Stephen snaps out of his vision. He spins around to find a worried Kat with her hand on his shoulder.

STEPHEN

Did you see that?

KAT

See what? You were freaking out.
Must've been some dream considering
all that sweat pouring off your
face.

STEPHEN

Come on. We got work to do.

Stephen grabs her wrist, forcefully jerks her toward the jeep still parked on the roadside.

KAT

Am I still driving?

STEPHEN

No.

Stephen snags the keys from her hands, crawls in the jeep.

Kat scurries around the other side.

HONK-HONK!

KAT

Okay, okay! I'm coming!

And before she can close her door, they are gone like a bolt of lightning.

KAT (O.S.)

Wild guess. You saw something?

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DUSK

Officer Bobbie steps through the electric door with a bag loaded with groceries. His patrol cruiser parked in the fire zone at the curb.

He pops his trunk, loads the bag, shuts and heads for the driver's side. He spots what looks like an eight by ten photo tucked under a windshield wiper.

Snags it up, takes a look: It's the shot of JJ, Dobber, Winchell and DELBERT in front of the old garage.

Delbert's face circled with red marker.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Chief.

Officer Bobbie surveys the parking lot. On the lookout and on his toes. He comes across --

CARMEN'S JEEP

in one of the front end spots. Stephen behind the wheel.

Kat next to him, bites her fingernails.

Stephen FLASHES THE HIGH BEAMS.

OFFICER BOBBIE

I don't believe this. They just won't leave.

Stephen steps out. Kat follows.

Officer Bobbie holds out a hand at passing traffic as he trots over a crosswalk.

Stephen and Kat meet him halfway.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Alright. No more guessing games. No more ghost stories. No more bullshit. Where did you get this picture?

KAT

JJ's widow. And that's not the only one we have of your boss.

OFFICER BOBBIE

What is she babbling on about?

STEPHEN

Fred Barnes was killed with a forty five automatic. Tell me I'm wrong.

OFFICER BOBBIE

You been snooping around our files or something?

KAT

Ah hah! He was, wasn't he?

OFFICER BOBBIE

(to Kat)

How the hell would I know? That was forty years ago.

STEPHEN

I've read all the reports on the Fred Barnes shooting. There were three men inside that store when he bought it. Three. Not two.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yes, I know. I heard the stories. Three thrill killers from Phoenix. Cruising the southwest hitting registers.

KAT

Or maybe that's exactly what they wanted you to think.

Officer Bobbie smiles, points at Kat while addressing Stephen.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Why is she speaking?

STEPHEN

How long until you can get your hands on those ballistic reports?

OFFICER BOBBIE

Why would I do a stupid thing like that? No, let me guess. You had another one of your visions.

KAT

You told us you believed JJ was still around. Now you're acting like we're crazy again.

OFFICER BOBBIE

I was telling you what you wanted to hear so you'd get the hell out of my town. Which I see worked really well.

Kat scoffs with disgust. Stephen nudges her back.

STEPHEN

Look. I'd be willing to stake my life on that forty five slug.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yeah, and you want me to put my job on the line. Real convenient.

Kat loses patience, tosses her hands in the air.

STEPHEN

I need that report. You do that for us and we're out of here this time. This time I mean it.

Officer Bobbie stares back at Carmen's jeep. Stephen and Kat follow his look.

OFFICER BOBBIE

I'll get your report. But if you're wrong, I want something for my troubles.

STEPHEN

Like what?

OFFICER BOBBIE

I can't help but notice you haven't picked up your Corvette from the pound.

KAT

We haven't had time. What does that matter now?

Stephen sighs, shakes his head.

STEPHEN

(to Kat)

Because if he pulls that report and we're wrong, he wants my car.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Ding-ding-ding! We have a winner!

KAT

Why you sneaky, slick sonofa --

OFFICER BOBBIE

The Racetrack on Sixty-Six. Two hours. If I'm wrong, I'll have your Corvette ready. Nice and polished and a full tank.

KAT

If we're wrong?

OFFICER BOBBIE

I'd start checking the bus routes to Houston.

Stephen thinks it all over. He checks with Kat who is far from convinced. And finally nods in agreement.

STEPHEN

Do it.

Kat chokes on her words.

EXT. CHIEF CARR'S FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

A real nice two-story country home with decorative cactus and other local vegetation. A few lights on inside draw attention to Chief Carr's wife DEBBIE -- taking it easy and watching a program on tv.

A patrol car drifts to a slow and quiet stop near Chief Carr's double decker barn.

Out steps Officer Bobbie who leaves his door swung open and walks quietly toward the barn. A manila file in hand.

INT. CHIEF CARR'S BARN - NIGHT

And in the barn sits Stephen's Corvette. The passenger door panel removed and rested on a work bench.

Chief Carr stands with a forty-five automatic in hand. He ejects the magazine, full of bullets.

OFFICER BOBBIE

What you got there, Chief?

Chief Carr spins around, startled. He tosses the gun on the passenger seat.

CHIEF CARR

I didn't hear you coming in. Guess I'm going deaf in my old age.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yeah, I guess so.

Officer Bobbie takes a good long look at the Corvette. With special attention on the gutted passenger door.

CHIEF CARR

Guess you're wondering what this is all about.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Nah. I think I've got this one figured, Chief.

Officer Bobbie cautiously steps closer and hands him the manila police file. Chief Carr puts on his best poker face as he thumbs through it.

OFFICER BOBBIE

This guy doesn't just have a car like JJ Berry's.

Chief Carr stops reading, looks up.

OFFICER BOBBIE

This is JJ's.

Chief Carr snickers with amusement.

CHIEF CARR

Oh, really?

OFFICER BOBBIE

And that forty five you just tossed on the seat there is the same one that killed Fred Barnes.

CHIEF CARR

You've lost it. Just like those other two kooks.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Oh, I don't think so. I think when we get the ballistic reports back on your gun there, it'll come up a perfect match.

Chief Carr stares down at the forty-five. And back at Officer Bobbie. Nowhere to run.

CHIEF CARR

Well, I guess there's nothing else to say then.

Officer Bobbie strolls around to the driver's side and rests his arms on the roof. Chief Carr across from him.

OFFICER BOBBIE

That was a long time ago, boss. I know you're a changed man.

CHIEF CARR

And?

OFFICER BOBBIE

And I know you did the right thing putting Ray Dobber in the ground. It was a long time coming. Especially for what he did to JJ Berry. I'm sure his wife would be obliged.

CHIEF CARR

Then why are we still talking about this?

OFFICER BOBBIE

This isn't about what I want. Or even what Carol Berry wants. Fred Barnes still has folks around here that need answers.

CHIEF CARR

They got their answer. Three punks from out of town. Leave it alone.

OFFICER BOBBIE

And I'm supposed to live with this? Just like you?

Chief Carr eyeballs a double-barrel shotgun leaning against the barn wall.

Officer Bobbie also spots the shotgun. He casually unlocks his gun holster.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Tell you what. Let's talk about it down at the station.

The Corvette CRANKS ITS OWN ENGINE.

A startled Officer Bobbie backs away.

OFFICER BOBBIE

What the...

The driver's door SWINGS OPEN. HONK-HONK!

Chief Carr quickly snags the shotgun.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Shit!

Officer Bobbie leaps in the Corvette -- taking cover just before --

Chief Carr takes aim. But then --

The passenger door SWINGS OPEN.

POW!

The shotgun blast hits the ceiling as Chief Carr is swiftly knocked on his ass.

The driver's door SLAMS SHUT and LOCKS.

The Corvette THROWS ITSELF IN REVERSE and bolts out of the barn and onto --

THE FRONT LAWN

...where it spins in an impressive three-sixty and KICKS UP DIRT AND GRASS on its way to the road.

Chief Carr runs onto the lawn with his shotgun in tow. He takes aim but gives up as --

The Corvette disappears into the darkness. Nothing but the dim glow of distant taillights.

EXT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT

Carmen's jeep parked near the front door. Carmen and Kat lean on the trunk and watch a nervous Stephen pace the asphalt and pack some smokes on his palm.

KAT

It's gonna be another twenty minutes or so, Stephen. You're gonna wear a hole in the ground.

STEPHEN

Oh, yeah. No reason for me to be on edge. None at all.

Stephen rubs circles on his sore belly. A sour grimace grabs Carmen's attention.

CARMEN

What's wrong?

STEPHEN

Besides seeing dead people? My ulcer.

KAT

Ulcer?

STEPHEN

Yeah, I've had it all my life. Since I was a baby. Stress only makes it worse.

Stephen hands Carmen a five dollar bill.

STEPHEN

You think you could snag me some pepto or something? Maybe a yoo-hoo?

Stephen winces from the unbearable pain. Both hands on his stomach this time. It's getting worse by the second.

CARMEN

Yeah, sure. Just don't die on us. I don't wanna be the one stuck explaining all of this.

Carmen dips inside.

STEPHEN

Yeah, I'll try not to.

KAT

I didn't know you had stomach issues.

STEPHEN

For as long as I can remember. When I was about five or six, the pain got so bad I slipped off the monkey bars at school and broke my arm. It was just like someone shot me in the gut.

KAT

What is it? Like some hereditary thing or something?

STEPHEN

It's weird. My parents took me to must've been a hundred doctors. They never found anything. Even started accusing me of faking it.

KAT

So weird.

STEPHEN

Ran all kinds of tests. X rays. They said I was a completely healthy, normal little boy. Meanwhile, it's only gotten worse with age. But what am I supposed to do about it? The doctors say it's all in my head.

Stephen pops a fresh smoke in his mouth. He digs for his lighter but suddenly stops. His face turns to stone as the cigarette drops from his lip.

KAT

What's the matter, Stephen? What is it?

STEPHEN

All in my head. What's all in my head?

KAT

Stephen, what are you thinking? You're white as a ghost.

STEPHEN

My birthday. JJ and Fred were killed on my birthday.

KAT

A strange coincidence.

STEPHEN

No, I don't mean August Fifth. I mean my actual birthday. August Fifth, Nineteen Eighty-Five. JJ dies and I'm born. It explains everything.

KAT

Oh, yeah. Of course it does. Explains what, Stephen?

Carmen pops back out with the bottle of pepto. Stephen jerks it from her hand, twists the cap and chug-a-lugs.

CARMEN

You're welcome.

Stephen finishes the bottle, hands the empty container to Carmen.

CARMEN

Gee, thanks. I'll be a good little Mexican and dump this out for you.

Carmen rolls her eyes, walks to a trash bin.

STEPHEN

The visions. The stomach ulcer. The Corvette. I've been obsessed with that same car my whole life. Since I was a baby still playing with matchbox cars. It all makes sense now.

KAT

I'm glad it does for somebody.

STEPHEN

Remember when we talked about wishing our lives had some deeper meaning? That we all had some specific purpose for being here?

KAT

Yeah? So?

STEPHEN

So maybe my purpose was to find JJ. To bring us together again.

KAT

Again? You're losing me.

Carmen rejoins them.

CARMEN

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

STEPHEN

I think so. I mean, it makes sense.

Kat snaps her fingers and jumps up and down with excitement. Stephen and Carmen watch her.

KAT

Oh, I think I get it now. You're saying you were reincarnated.

STEPHEN

Yes.

Carmen's jaw drops.

CARMEN

That wasn't where I was going with that at all.

STEPHEN

Everything I've ever been through. Every job. Every relationship. Every success and failure. It's all led me here. To this place. To this exact place. Thirty Four years to the day.

KAT

You're really serious about this?

STEPHEN

I know it.

KAT

But I saw him. I saw JJ. When you were sleeping.

STEPHEN

It could've been me. I mean a subconscious alternate version of myself. JJ's spirit coming out of me at my most vulnerable point.

CARMEN

No. Wait a minute. What about Carol Berry? What about JJ stealing your car all those times? You were still here. With us.

KAT

She's got a point, Stephen.

Stephen spots his Corvette barreling up the road like a bat out of hell.

Kat and Carmen follow his look.

STEPHEN

Maybe it wasn't JJ.

The Corvette hurries into the station, barely avoids colliding with a car on its way out.

KAT

Here he comes!

The Corvette spins out and drifts to a swift halt in front of Stephen and the others.

Officer Bobbie pops out of the passenger door. The engine still running.

CARMEN

What in the world?

KAT

Oh my God.

Officer Bobbie hands Stephen the forty-five.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Okay, so I was wrong.

Stephen ejects the clip, checks for bullets.

Officer Bobbie digs a plastic baggie from his pocket, shows a pancaked forty-five slug to Stephen.

OFFICER BOBBIE

That's the gun that killed Fred and this is the slug we pulled from his chest. But there's some bad news.

STEPHEN

What is it?

OFFICER BOBBIE

Chief still has the official report on the Fred Barnes shooting. Unfortunately, without that, that gun and bullet don't mean a hill of beans to anyone.

KAT

So what do we do?

OFFICER BOBBIE

I'll tell you what you do. You get up on out of here, head to the nearest police station and get a match with that forty-five slug.

STEPHEN

And the report?

OFFICER BOBBIE

You let me worry about the report.
I'll get it. You just worry about
getting out of here.

Carmen spots Chief Carr's Bronco barreling down the road and
headed for the gas station.

CARMEN

Yeah. Right now might be a good
time.

Stephen and the others turn and watch the Bronco speed into
the lot and stop in between the pumps.

STEPHEN

It's too late.

Officer Bobbie grips his gun with both hands -- aimed at the
Bronco just as --

Chief Carr ducks out with a twelve gauge. He pumps one in
the chamber and hides himself behind the truck.

CHIEF CARR

Drop that gun, Bobbie! You may be
able to scratch me from there but
I'll sure as shit blow you all over
the asphalt, son!

All the customers run for their cars. People quickly finish
pumping and storm out of the lot.

Everyone gone.

Officer Bobbie doesn't let up. Stephen stares back at The
Corvette and sees FRED BARNES behind the wheel. He gives
a quick nod to Stephen.

Stephen smiles.

STEPHEN

Go on. Do it.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Are you crazy?

CARMEN

Yeah, are you crazy?

KAT

I think we've already established
that.

STEPHEN

I'm not crazy. Fred's got our back.

Officer Bobbie takes a quick peek at the Corvette. Nobody behind the wheel.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Well, hell. If you're crazy, then I'm crazy too. Cos I sure as shit didn't drive here on my own.

He drops his piece on the asphalt.

OFFICER BOBBIE

(to Chief Carr)

Alright, boss! You win! Now why don't you let these nice people get on out of here! We can pretend none of this ever happened!

CHIEF CARR

Yeah, we could do that! Right after you hand me back that forty-five and that slug you took from the evidence locker!

OFFICER BOBBIE

Shit. I knew he was gonna say that.

STEPHEN

Don't worry. Fred's got this.

The Corvette SPINS OUT, leaves some tire on the asphalt as it parks itself in between the Bronco and the store.

The driver's door SWINGS OPEN.

Officer Bobbie crawls in. Stephen follows.

POW!

Chief Carr blows out the passenger window.

STEPHEN

(to Carmen and Kat)

Get the hell out of here!

Carmen and Kat duck down, out of the line of fire and run for the parked jeep. In a matter of seconds, they are out of the lot and back on the road.

Chief Carr steps out from behind the protection of his Bronco and pumps another shell into the chamber.

He takes aim --

But the Corvette bolts his direction.

POW!

Another blast of a shotgun slug strikes the windshield.

Officer Bobbie and Stephen duck down as --

Chief Carr is struck head on and TUMBLES OVER THE ROOF of the Corvette.

On the asphalt, he stares up Officer Bobbie, still safely behind the wheel.

The engine REVVING. And all of the sudden --

Random GAS PUMPS unhook themselves and drop to the asphalt. All of them pouring rivers of gasoline.

One by one, they all fall. Every one of them spraying and covering the ground with the flammable liquid.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

Stephen and Officer Bobbie watch in awe. The rivers of gas coming their direction.

STEPHEN

Something tells me we should get out of here.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yeah. Good idea.

He throws the car in reverse but it won't budge. It simply revs its engine as if stuck in neutral.

Stephen watches as the wounded Chief Carr tries to crawl away from the incoming lake of gasoline.

CHIEF CARR

Help me!

OFFICER BOBBIE

Shit. Get out of here.

Stephen and Officer Bobbie swing open their doors and make a run for it.

EXT. RACETRACK GAS STATION - NIGHT

Stephen and Officer Bobbie run like hell from the gas pump area and toward the surrounding desert.

OFFICER BOBBIE
Run! Go, go, go!

Chief Carr reaches out to them.

CHIEF CARR
Hey! Get back here!

Chief Carr stares up at the Corvette. He spots the spirit of Fred Barnes behind the wheel. A sly grin.

CHIEF CARR
I'm sorry! Okay?! You dead asshole! Are you happy?!

Fred dangles a cigarette lighter out the window. All the color drops from Chief Carr's face.

CHIEF CARR
(to himself)
Oh, shit.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - DESERT - NIGHT

Stephen and Officer Bobbie stop somewhere deep in the desert sand and stare back at the station.

KABOOM!

The entire place is engulfed in flames. A real Fourth of July fireworks display that doesn't end.

CARMEN'S JEEP

arrives at the scene. Carmen and Kat step out, join the guys in enjoying the show.

CARMEN
Wow.

After a good thirty seconds of non stop fireworks and destruction --

Kat tugs at Officer Bobbie's sleeve.

KAT
Is Chief dead?

They all turn and give her a dumb look.

And out of nowhere --

The Corvette barrels down the road toward them.

KAT

I don't believe this.

CARMEN

How much more proof do you need?

The Corvette drifts into the desert sand and stops mere feet in front of the others.

Kat and Carmen back up.

STEPHEN

Don't be afraid. He saved our lives.

Fred opens the driver's side and steps out. He stares back at the ghostly spirit of JJ -- standing right next to Stephen as if a second version of himself.

They all watch in awe as JJ steps inside Stephen's frame and Stephen's face morphs into JJ.

JJ gives them all a warm smile as he walks to the passenger side door of the Corvette. He opens as --

A handcuffed and coughing Chief Carr falls out and drops onto the desert sand.

KAT

Okay, so he's not dead. Now who's the dumb one?

Fred and JJ share a long overdue smile. They give each other a giant bear hug.

Officer Bobbie, Kat and Carmen all watch the reunion with tears in their eyes. An awesome sight.

All of the sudden, Fred disappears before our eyes. And JJ has returned to Stephen.

Stephen's eyes welled with tears. He turns and smiles back at the others.

STEPHEN

What's happening? Why's everyone looking at me.

KAT

It's a long story.

Some not so distant COUGHING grabs the group's attention.

BOSS walks in from out of the desert, covered in smoke and soot, and joins them all.

BOSS

Alright now. Someone wanna tell me
what the hell's goin on around
here?

Kat belts out laughing. As do Stephen and Carmen. It's out of control.

BOSS

What's so funny?

Officer Bobbie smiles as he loads Chief Carr in the back of Carmen's jeep.

KAT

(to Stephen)

I think I'm ready to go home now.

Officer Bobbie shuts the door in a defeated Chief Carr's face and rejoins the others.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Yes. Please do. Not that it
hasn't been fun and all.

Stephen is all smiles as the two men shake hands.

STEPHEN

Thanks for your help.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Sure. And thank you for...

He thinks about it.

OFFICER BOBBIE

I don't know what. But thanks.
And good luck to you.

CARMEN

What am I? A soggy burrito?

Stephen smiles and gives Carmen a giant hug.

CARMEN

Welcome home, JJ. Steve. Whatever your name is.

Stephen gives her a wink and turns to his Corvette.

STEPHEN

(to Officer Bobbie)

You two fill her up like you promised?

OFFICER BOBBIE

About a quarter tank. You might stop and get some --

Officer Bobbie stops himself, turns to the burning fire just over the horizon.

OFFICER BOBBIE

Well. You might wanna stop somewhere.

Officer Bobbie turns to a flirty Carmen giving him a very seductive smile.

CARMEN

So. Do you have any dinner plans?

OFFICER BOBBIE

Oh, I think we can work something out.

The two of them head for the jeep and crawl in.

Stephen and Kat head for the Corvette.

Boss watches them all.

BOSS

I'm good. I got a ride coming in a few minutes. No worries.

Stephen about to crawl in the driver's side.

Kat snags the keys from his hand.

KAT

A deal's a deal. Get your ass in the child seat.

Stephen stares down at the driver's seat. An ear to ear grin as he stares back at Kat.

STEPHEN

Whatever you say, boss.

He walks to the passenger side. Kat watches him closely. A look of distrust.

KAT

Okay. That was way too easy.

Stephen chokes back a growing smile as he crawls in. Kat reluctantly follows.

A squishing sound followed by a crank of the engine.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

...and they are back on the road and finally headed home. The SQUEALING HOWL of the classic car echoes the quiet night air.

STEPHEN (V.O.)

Sorry. I guess I should've warned you.

KAT (V.O.)

Yes, you should have.

A pause.

KAT (V.O.)

It's like sitting in warm snot.

Stephen bursts out laughing.

FADE OUT.

THE END