

KISS ME, STAY CLOSE

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FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL MEXICAN TOWN - EVENING

Deep in the earth's mysterious weather system, hidden among tempests of the past, a dark, sinister storm looms. The sky crackles with lightning, thunder and periodic cloudbursts.

CHILDREN cry, traffic noises erupt, a radio plays Mexican love songs nearby. Poverty and danger troll the narrow streets. Occasional rivets of color and sound vibrate from above.

This small Mexican border town is peaceful and pretty with its cobblestone streets and beautiful flowers. A TOURIST crosses the border.

With no regard for weather forecasts, TODD ASHFORD, 30, stands in the shadows of a dark, damp side street.

Todd's a ruggedly handsome, cool customer, with money rigged to his soul.

Todd entices JACKLYN LEWIS, 27, with his charm - a style only a rogue bastard can possess. Women of all ages have fallen victim to his long, wavy, dark hair and tight, skinny-ass jeans that ooze both charm and danger.

Jacklyn's an energetic, naive beauty. She shows a hint of intellectual glamour but her conflicted childhood derails into the unhappy train wreck we see today.

Jacklyn's appearance echoes her lifestyle - messed up and scruffy. There ain't no Kardashian bling here.

Skillfully, Todd courts Jacklyn with a slow, gentle, cloak and dagger dance of mystery and romance.

Todd manipulates and controls Jacklyn with his words and actions - she thinks it's love.

JACKLYN LEWIS
(grips Todd's shoulder)
You're amazing! Hug me!

TODD ASHFORD
(rolls a joint)
Hey Babe, take it down a notch.
Yeah, I checked it out - a dusty,
laid-back farm town. No sniffer
dogs.

JACKLYN LEWIS

Hug me again.

Todd gives an absent-minded, unenthusiastic smooch.

A couple of WORKERS return home for supper. Their KIDS come running with cheers and hugs.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)

Jeez, I been deserted all my life,
first Dad, now you. I'm afraid to
lose you!

TODD ASHFORD

(rolls a joint)

It'll be a breeze. C'mon, Jac,
prove it, do this for me.

Todd turns away, yawns. Smokes a joint. The side street is eerily silent, yet there could be others hiding in the shadows. Todd waits, impatiently.

TODD ASHFORD (CONT'D)

Heroin's gonna upgrade our world to
first class, Baby. So - you in or
out?

Suddenly Jacklyn bends down, plunks on her ass and hollers.

JACKLYN LEWIS

Ya know, help me out here. With
plenty of moolah, and all that
money pourin' in, I can search
America - reunite with my Dad.

TODD ASHFORD

We're good?

JACKLYN LEWIS

Course it's all a question of
morals. As in, maybe we don't
have any?

Jacklyn hesitates. Then she speaks in a fairly loud voice, which is uncharacteristic considering the environment they're in.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)

Stay close to me.

But as she says those words, Jacklyn stares past Todd and directs her words and actions to someone or something hidden in the shadows about 30 feet off the street.

It's as though something has grabbed her attention and she's afraid to let go.

Todd hugs Jacklyn.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
Sure, it was a bad situation back in the day, all the cool kids in high school bullied me, and for what? 'Cause I didn't have a Dad. Family's everything - specially when ya don't have one.

TODD ASHFORD
Ancient history.

JACKLYN LEWIS
Is this gig foolproof?

Jacklyn grabs Todd by his shoulders and looks him in the eye.

TODD ASHFORD
Trust me!

JACKLYN LEWIS
Yeah, your lips are movin' when you lie, lie, lie.

It could be space stations, asteroids or perhaps too much marijuana smoke that reflects lightning and thunder onto the barren, deserted, darkened street.

The atmosphere dances with majestic beiges and browns from the evening's smoldering landscape as mysterious, sci-fi sounds echo in the air.

Jacklyn tunes out street noises and distractions. Suddenly she pushes Todd away. She looks toward the shadows as if seeking validation.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
There's that little voice inside me...

Todd's body tenses. His foot stubs out the joint and his hands start to shake.

TODD ASHFORD
Sink or swim, Babe.

Todd reaches in his pocket and counts his money.

TODD ASHFORD (CONT'D)
 Besides, I'll pitch hit and be the
 father figure you never had. I'll
 make you square with the world.

He gives Jacklyn a fake hug.

JACKLYN LEWIS
 (conflicted)
 Can we pull it off?

TODD ASHFORD
 We're winners.

Jacklyn pulls a map from her back pack. Reads it. Todd
 strokes Jacklyn's body.

Without warning, the sky lights up with a brief but blazing,
 vividly, bright trails.

Two young GIRLS, dressed in colorful Mexican dresses, hurry
 home to beat the storm.

Just then Jacklyn's cell phone RINGS, she looks at the number
 and puts it to speaker phone.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)
 Mom, mom, is that you? So the deal
 is, you gotta find some way to
 understand.

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.)
 (speaker phone)
 I got a bad feeling Jacklyn. Who
 knows? Maybe it's a poison. Geez,
 it's tough 'cause the apple doesn't
 fall far from the tree.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)
 Mom we're all friends. Todd's
 looking after me. Ya wanna talk to
 him?

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.)
 Maybe this vacation of yours ain't
 a thing...

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)
 Tonight's the last.

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.)
 Who knows?

Fractured pieces of dust soar and dance as a meteoroid enters earth's atmosphere.

Another CRACK of thunder and the phone goes dead.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)

Mom? Mom?

Jacklyn shakes her cell, lifts it to the sky, tries to re-establish contact. No luck, so she wails and complains. A vein in Jacklyn's neck pulsates, her legs twitch and she retches today's lunch with a yelp.

Two young BOYS gather their baseball and bats, and head to safety.

Jacklyn and Todd move into the darkest part of the alley where they can't be detected.

From inside a large gym bag, Todd removes several packets of heroin.

Also there's a massive roll of duct tape and a jack knife which Todd uses to cut strips of duct tape about two feet in length.

Todd packages heroin, stuffs some of it into Jacklyn's bra. Then begins to tape the packaged heroin to her body.

TODD ASHFORD

A frickin' breeze, you'll see.
No worries from the cops. They're
brain dead.

Jacklyn clings to Todd. Grabs his body for support.

Next Todd conceals heroin in Jacklyn's panties - both front and back.

JACKLYN LEWIS

It ain't fair. I coulda been a
somebody.

Jacklyn downloads a movie Ap.

They hold hands, stop in the middle of the street for a check of the heroin.

TODD ASHFORD

Yep, you're gonna make us both
filthy rich! I mean, we're facing
pretty easy odds...

JACKLYN LEWIS
I'm scared shitless.

She shares a desperate hug with Todd.

Jacklyn chews gum, blows massive bubbles, pops 'em. Her level of maturity is deeply suspect.

Jacklyn hesitates, looks up at the angry sky.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
Mom wouldn't talk about Dad. She said it'd be no good for anyone. Just a goddamn mess is all.

Todd picks up a stick, draws in the dirt, shows the train crossing and escape exits.

TODD ASHFORD
And you? Like is this really making a connection? See here - Main Street, train crossing and escape route.

Todd stares at Jacklyn, but she's distracted. He gives Jacklyn a slight nudge, grabs both her arms and hauls her upright.

Jacklyn pulls away, grabs a beer from her backpack. Chugs it.

Jacklyn performs fake martial art moves, badly.

They move into the darkest shadows of the alley where they can't be detected.

Todd tapes several more heroin packets to Jacklyn's body, chest and back.

Tightly.

He winds the duct tape around and around her body.

Like she's some Christmas parcel UPS bound, for shipment on next-days delivery.

JACKLYN LEWIS
It ain't right, all this fuss over drugs.

Jacklyn presses her lips together, runs hands through her hair, bites nails.

Todd re-checks his handiwork. He adds another round of heroin and more duct tape.

He steps back, gives a thumbs up.

The sky lets loose with a huge CRACK of thunder. The atmosphere is unsettled, murky and dangerous.

TODD ASHFORD

First time's the charm! Don't
freak out, maintain your cool.

JACKLYN LEWIS

Like I said, is tonight the last?

TODD ASHFORD

Ummmm.

JACKLYN LEWIS

Well you don't have a flippin' care
in the world, I'm taking all the
risk.

Jacklyn raises her arms, looks to the sky for inspiration.

At that moment, Jacklyn's cell RINGS.

JACKLYN 'S MOM (V.O.)

Bad connection. Just where the
heck are ya? Not waltzing into
trouble?

Jacklyn hesitates, wipes her forehead, lowers herself to the ground and whispers.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)

(shy)

Mom, you never really told me -
Dear God, you musta known!

There's silence. Jacklyn jumps up, paces back and forth.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL) (CONT'D)

I mean... didn't Daddy wanna meet
me? Ya know, a chip off the old
block?

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.)

What can I say?

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)

Mom, Please!!

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O)

He had another wife, another family. Just a sperm donor. I'm tryna' protect you, make sure you don't follow in my footsteps. I'm tryna' fix things, give you a perfect life - ya know, husband, kids.

Jacklyn collapses, wraps her arms around Oreo.

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm tellin' ya...

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)

A sperm ddddddddonr? You can't be serious?

JACKLYN 'S MOM (V.O.)

Baby, listen. I'm sorry. I chose the wrong man. Now it's time for you to brush that ghost from your shoulder. (beat) But everything I taught you is true - nice guys finish first. You gotta be ladylike. Don't raise your voice - never get physical. That's the low down.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CELL)

Hey, we're not just brushing up on small talk here.

Jacklyn's furious. She kicks stones, smacks her cell phone, splays knees first to the ground.

Todd takes off, too much drama.

JACKLYN LEWIS (V.O) (CONT'D)

Don't cha worry, Mom, I'm gonna fix this up right. I know you'd say no dice. But you don't know what's in my heart.

As she shuts down her cell phone, Jacklyn looks around. No Todd. Where'd he go?

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)

Todd? Todd?

Jacklyn digs in her back pack. Hauls out a massive chocolate bar and chows down. Todd takes off.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - NEXT DAY

Another hug with Todd, then Jacklyn and Todd cross the street on foot as Jacklyn clutches her worldly possessions in a back pack.

JACKLYN LEWIS

We're together, right, when this plays out?

Todd hugs Jacklyn.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)

You're not just tellin' me what I want to hear?

Again Jacklyn looks past Todd and into the alley, then further up the street. She looks back and forth.

TODD ASHFORD

It's gonna be a sweet homecoming. We'll say bye to our checkered past. We're all doin' the best we can here - maybe we're talkin' marriage. Just follow our plan, stay alert. Now go!!

JACKLYN LEWIS

Ahhh, Todd! I admire you just the way you are!

The sky lashes her fury with flashes of lightning that's caught between power surges of thunder. It's a brazen yet challenging night.

By this time a few drops of rain have fallen. Jacklyn pulls a hat from her backpack and puts it on.

The street is quiet, everyone has gone home and taken shelter.

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.)

But with maturity you learn it's not the bad things that happen to 'ya, but how ya' react to them that matters.

There's a few pauses and beeps as Jacklyn holds her cell to the sky, there's terrible interference.

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O.)

And you can't always believe what your eyes are seeing. People play tricks.

At those words, Jacklyn reaches out as though touching someone or something fairly close by. She makes an air kiss with her fingers.

Jacklyn's overcome by grief and fear. She wails in pain, pummels her chest, drops to the ground.

TODD ASHFORD
Hey, hey, don't get hysterical.
We've had enough crap for one day.

Jacklyn blows her nose and composes herself.

TODD ASHFORD (CONT'D)
You gettin' weepy on me?

Jacklyn and Todd exchange more hugs and whisper goodbye.

TODD ASHFORD (CONT'D)
(flings his arms)
Like I told you before, it's time
to get goin'!!

Alone, Jacklyn heads down the street. Todd watches.

She increases her pace.

Suddenly a few blocks along, Jacklyn's halted by a plain clothes POLICE DETECTIVE, 30. Serious but determined, he's handsome in a masculine, athletic way as he flashes a badge.

Todd watches everything unfold.

JACKLYN LEWIS
(yells at Todd)
A set up. They're stealin' from
us. Plain and simple.

Sure enough, there's a smack down on the hidden heroin.

The arrest is fast, furious and humiliating.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
(screams at Todd)
Wait. Wait for me!!

With never a second glance for Jacklyn's safety, Todd hightails it down the street and his chance for freedom.

Jacklyn turn her attention to the Police Detective.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
 (breaks out laughing)
 Now, if you can't trust the cops,
 who can ya trust?

Todd's still running - full speed. We see him disappear
 around the corner.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
 (to the Detective)
 It's all brains, simple as that.

Both Jacklyn and the Detective whisper together.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
 It's a breakdown of morals, I tell
 ya. No respect for women. And
 Todd? (beat) Yeah, likely headin'
 back to his wife.

Jacklyn and the Detective high five. Then laugh.

JACKLYN LEWIS (CONT'D)
 And he thinks I'm some poor schmuck
 who likes to get pushed around...

POLICE DETECTIVE
 Never!

They hug.

JACKLYN LEWIS
 Well maybe we've saved another
 young woman tonight. Those sick
 bastards prey upon innocence and
 trust.

She touches the Detective's cheek in a romantic, sexy manner.

DETECTIVE DETECTIVE
 (into police wire)
 Yeah, he's headin' your way.
 Arrest the bugger.

Jacklyn takes it all in.

JACKLYN'S MOM (V.O)
 Remember, Jacklyn, always be a
 Lady. Don't raise your voice,
 never get physical. Good guys
 finish first.

The Police Detective pulls something from his pocket and
 places it into Jacklyn's palm.

It's a police badge.

POLICE DETECTIVE
Excellent work, Jacklyn. Your
Mom's gonna be proud.

With pride and authority, Jacklyn pins the police badge to her waistband.

JACKLYN LEWIS
My love, never believe everything
you hear.

POLICE DETECTIVE
But I worry about you...

JACKLYN LEWIS
Jealousy?

The Police Detective twists his wedding ring, back and forth, back and forth.

POLICE DETECTIVE
I've got no reason to, but yet...

Jacklyn hugs the Police Detective with enthusiasm and love.

From within her backpack, Jacklyn pulls out something shiny. She holds her hand up, replaces her wedding ring on her finger.

We suddenly realize they are husband and wife.

POLICE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I'm afraid to lose you.

They shower each other with kisses and hugs.

JACKLYN LEWIS
Stay close.

POLICE DETECTIVE
Kiss me!

They embrace and kiss.

Celestial, overpowering hymns of spirituality, goodness and light empower the street with hope and love.

Silently, the storm fades and sunlight breaks the horizon and swathes the street with her morning light as peace and contentment join forces to welcome the new day.

Mexican MUSIC full of romance and love fills the street.

Jacklyn and her husband walk hand in hand and head for home.
They kiss.

FADE OUT.