

PERCEPCIONES

by
Joseph Cahill
And
Teresa Aguilera

A SPANISH SONG ("Rie Payaso") plays a moment before...

FADE IN:

OPENING CREDITS OVER A SERIES OF SCENES

1. Slender WOMAN'S HANDS unzip a black body bag.
2. A MAN'S ARM pulls a long dress sock over his foot.
3. DIEGO MARISCAL(30's), feminine features, strong chin, yanks on DUCT TAPE. Sweat on his brow. Wraps something unseen several times around. Tears the end with his teeth.
4. GABRIEL JASSO(30'S), a bare-chested handsome man, watches himself in a tall mirror. Buttons his dress shirt.
5. The Woman's hand pulls the sides of the corpse's shirt apart revealing a pale breast.
6. Diego scrubs his hands in a sink. His hands red and raw.
7. Gabriel Jasso smiles at himself in the mirror. Opens his mouth, checks his tonsils.
8. The Woman's hands part the corpse's lips, opens its mouth and, with a metal instrument, stuffs it full of cotton.
9. From the trunk of a vehicle, Diego stands looking inside.
10. Gabriel Jasso places a PISTOL next to his side, in a holster. Covers it with a jacket. He gives himself one last look in the mirror, points to his reflection, smiles and leaves.
11. Diego close the trunk of the car.
12. From inside the morgue drawer, The Morgue Worker slides the naked, exposed body inside, shuts the door cutting off the light.

END CREDITS.

BLACK SCREEN

JASSO (V.O.)

Which camera? Just speak into it?
Which way should I look? Do I look
professional?

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

CLOSE UP of Jasso's face beneath artificial lighting. A MAKE-UP ARTIST powders his face.

EXT. AVE. SOR JUANA - GUADALAJARA, MEXICO - NIGHT

A solitary, residential street illuminated by several street lamps in the distance.

SARA OH (V.O.)

Don't worry, honey, you look
gorgeous. The camera loves you.
Just be yourself.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

CLOSE UP of SARA OH (30s), face pulled tight from hours on the operating table with nearly exposed, double D breasts getting a touch up by the Make-up Artist.

A PRODUCER (30s) leans in with his clipboard. Television camera off his right shoulder.

PRODUCER

Ready, everyone? Three. Two.

EXT. AVE. SOR JUANA - GUADALAJARA, MEXICO - NIGHT

JASSO (V.O.)

(clears throat)
Perceptions.

An ALLEY CAT moves from beneath the bushes near the house. A DEAD MOUSE in its mouth.

The bell around its neck JINGLES as it walks.

It arrives at a dark drive sitting behind a metal security gate with Frank Loyd Wright - low set, angles - inspired apartment buildings on each side, goes down it and disappears into the shadows.

Above it, from a second story, a single, house window sits illuminated. The same MUSIC from the open window.

JASSO (V.O.)
Perceptions can trick us...

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA

JASSO (V.O.)
...Perceptions are... tricky. An
illusion of the mind.

An organized mess. Stacks of old gossip magazines litter the floor and every available space.

Expensive, leather sofa and love seat centered within the art-deco accessories. Post modern sculptures in each corner.

JASSO (V.O.)
Whether we believe what is in front
of us is up to us.

Down the short hallway the stacks of magazines continue into

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Where wind blows in through thin curtains outlining the only window.

An old television in the corner plays a TELENOVELA with the sound down.

The tabby cat enters and hops onto the tidy bed. Gets comfortable. Begins devouring its dinner.

JASSO (V.O.)

What if what was in front of us was
an illusion.

On the bed is an open, half-filled suitcase.

Framed photos of Magdalena all over the place... Receiving an award, posing on the red carpet, movie stills

CLOSE ON A PARTICULAR PICTURE

Shows YOUNG MAGDALENA (20s), beautiful for the time (1950s), in an extravagant RED DRESS.

Next to it, a picture of a YOUNG DIEGO (5) holding a toy phone, dressed in dress and make-up.

MAGDALENA DE SAN MARCOS(70's) sits in bra and panties at an ornate makeup table in front of a large mirror. The years have stripped away any resemblance to her old self, the skin on her face lost to gravity many years ago.

Next to her, on the wall, the RED DRESS in a framed shadow box.

JASSO (V.O.)

What if what we see is not always
what we get.

The old woman applies mascara to her already made-up eyes.

She puckers her lips, pushes her falling breasts together. Satisfied with what she sees.

Magdalena hums to the song, smiles at her reflection.

JASSO (V.O.)

What if the perception of what we
see...

Finished, she stands, turns to look at her profile in the table mirror. With a hand, tightens the falling skin at her thighs, belly. Turns to look at her backside.

JASSO (V.O.)
...is what matters.

At the same time looks across the room at another mirror, poses. Smiles at everything she sees. Nothing causes her to pause.

JASSO (V.O.)
We can be easily tricked by our own
logic.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - VIA CAMERA 1

Artificial lighting illuminates the small stage. Two elegant chairs face one another. Sarah Oh shows off her trimmed legs and breasts. Her skin falling out of every edge of the sparkling miniskirt. Not a line on her body that hasn't been touched by surgery.

Opposite her, Detective Jasso sits made up under the artificial light and in front of a paid, STUDIO AUDIENCE.

JASSO
A meow might make you a cat, right?
(beat)
What about a leopard or a cheetah?

Jasso glances at the camera, then the audience.

A GIGGLE from within the studio audience.

Sara Oh sits on the edge of her seat to show her interest.

SARA OH
I'm not sure I understand. Could
you be more specific?

Gabriel takes his time allowing the camera to get a close-up.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Magdalena lies quietly in the lukewarm water. Eyes closed.

A small mirror attached to a holder spans the width of the tub. Connected somehow. Allowing the woman to inspect her face as she wishes.

A PORTABLE RADIO sits on the edge of the sink, next to a filled bathtub. The SPANISH SONG continues.

A still moment then...

Something BANGS in the next room creating a startling noise.

JASSO (V.O.)

We only have a series of so-called realities, not facts. A list of weak figures.

Magdalena immediately opens her heavily mascara'd eyes. Raises her head a little.

Magdalena watches down the hallway towards the

BEDROOM

Where the cat sits on the bed cleaning its paws.

The cat suddenly stops cleaning. Looks up at something. Holds its gaze.

BATHROOM

Magdalena looks on for a moment. Nothing of interest. Lays her head comfortable again.

Gets a look at her reflection in the overhanging mirror before closing her eyes once more.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

A WOMAN'S SCREAM and at the same time

The light just outside the front door of Magdalena's place wanes. A power surge causing it to dim and brighten.

The Tabby cat appears, hustles down the stairs. Something scared it out of there.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - VIA CAMERA 1

JASSO

Above all, we have a mystery.

Sara takes a serious moment to consider her next statement.

SARA OH

What kind of mystery are we talking about here?

The reporter leans in closer. Jasso analyzes her.

SARA OH

Kidnapping? Accident?

(pause)

Murder?

(theatrical pause)

So, in your opinion our Magdalena could be...

With her hand, she makes a cutting motion to her throat.

Jasso directs himself towards the camera. The camera PANS until Jasso's face takes up the entire field.

JASSO

(into camera)

The disappearance of the Mexican Diva, our Diva...

VIA CAMERA 2

We finally get a look at a large, older PHOTO OF MAGDALENA, smiling, elegant appearing hanging behind Sarah Oh.

JASSO (O.S.)

...Magdalena de San Marcos, has moved the entire country, without a doubt.

We move past Sara Oh, and hold on the photo of Magdalena.

JASSO (O.S.)

Her absence leaves a hole not only in Mexican cinema, but also in our hearts, I can assure you, Sara.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

Sarah sits back in her plush, expensive chair as if exhausted by the last statement.

SARA OH

Wow. I feel like I've lost a grandmother. Or great-grandmother.

OFFSTAGE

From the corner, two men, CHIEF ORTEGA (50's) and LT. RIVERA (30's) both with rough faces stand watching the interview. By the look on their faces, they are pleased with what is occurring onstage.

Rivera clips a fingernail with SPARKLY NAIL CLIPPERS, holds it up in the light to inspect it.

SARA OH (O.S.)

What's next, Gabriel? Tell us what's in store for our audience. Tell us what you're thinking.

CHIEF ORTEGA

(to Lt. Rivera)

Where did you get this guy?

LT. RIVERA

Traffic. Great, isn't he?

CHIEF ORTEGA

He carries himself with such poise.
One would imagine a great deal of
effort goes into such a perfect
presence.

Rivera clips another nail, flicks it onto the floor.

LT. RIVERA

She was divine, too, no?

CLOSE ON

The photo of Magdalena on stage

BACK TO SCENE

Both officers look on, in a daydream.

CHIEF ORTEGA

She is the Diva. She's probably
sitting pool side, having some
handsome, dark skinned, cabana boy
rub her feet.

Ortega's mind in some far off place.

Rivera joins the daydreaming for an instance.

Rivera hands the nail clipper back to Ortega.

JASSO (V.O.)

Let's pray that this was not a case
of obsession, an angry lover doing
the unthinkable...

INT. MORGUE - DAY

A bright overhead work lamp illuminates a BLACK BODY BAG lying on a metal table.

JASSO (V.O.)
...let's pray for a simple
disappearance, a misunderstanding.

HANDS slowly move the ZIPPER down on a black body bag. As the bag opens, we get to see

JASSO (V.O.)
Let's pray that we find her in one
piece.

A NEWS PROGRAM plays from an old, black and white television sitting on a far table. A movie from the 50s plays with a young Magdalena as the star.

JASSO (V.O.)
And alive, preferably.

We PULL BACK to show the entire contents of the room. ELIZA CURIEL (20s), plain but pretty features, stands over the body bag. She wears a black, rubber apron and elbow high gloves.

She turns her attention to the television a moment.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The saga of the Diva, Magdalena de
San Marcos continues as we relive
the last thirty years of her life
in film and television...

Eliza stops to watch the television.

The narrator's voice trails off.

She focuses her attention back on the female corpse in front of her.

ELIZA

My name is Eliza Curiel. No, Curiel
with a "C". I'm twenty eight. No,
I've never acted in a movie...

(bats eyelashes)

But I've been acting ever since I
was a child.

Eliza exposes the corpse by pulling the body bag away from
her extremities and torso, though we don't see.

ELIZA

You love it?

(coy smile)

I'd be delighted to play the lead.

Eliza stares at the corpse in front of her. She follows the
curves of the body with her eyes, past the upper torso to the
hips where Eliza takes a moment to stare.

Suddenly, her light demeanor is gone. Replaced by something
more serious.

ELIZA

(to corpse)

The world isn't fair.

PATHOLOGIST (O.S.)

Jesus.

Startled, Eliza breaks her stare. The PORTLY PATHOLOGIST
approaches from behind. Sweat beads on his forehead. He holds
a Styrofoam lunch container in one hand and a note pad in the
other.

The Pathologist hands the lunch container to Eliza, uses his
free hand to take the pencil behind his ear. Makes a notation
on his clipboard.

PATHOLOGIST

Check out the seventies shag
carpet.

ELIZA
Fortune cookies?

The Pathologist lifts an arm on the corpse to get a good look at it. Makes a sour face.

PATHOLOGIST
Wouldn't have been my type. More at the hips, less under the arms. A good Brazilian bikini wax might've saved her life.

The Pathologist stands just over Eliza's shoulder staring down at the dead body. He pokes at a breast just out of sight.

PATHOLOGIST
No fortune cookies. Japanese don't do fortune cookies, only Chinese. My five year old knows that.

ELIZA
I didn't know that.

The Pathologist puts a comforting hand on Eliza's shoulder.

PATHOLOGIST
Not everyone can be smart, sweetheart. Pretty or smart. Not both. You're pretty, I'm smart. See?
(shakes head)
At least you're not her.

Eliza stares at the dead body in front of her.

ELIZA
Remember, the audition on Friday. My big break. I need the day off.

PATHOLOGIST
Since when did you become an actress?

ELIZA

Since I got my first audition. It's
the real deal.

PATHOLOGIST

Hmm-hmm.

The Pathologist takes inventory of the remaining dead bodies.

PATHOLOGIST

Don't bother putting her in the
books. Just tag her.

INT. MORGUE DRAWER

The light from the morgue illuminates the inside. The body bag already loaded. Eliza stands at the end, slides the body inside, closes the door cutting off all light.

After a moment, the drawer opens again. This time, the Pathologist is standing at the end. This time, the body bag (and body) are both gone.

The Pathologist stands there looking in.

INT. POLICE STATION - TRAFFIC DIVISION

Jasso enters the small station. By the looks of the place everyone is either on break or vacation.

In one corner, a TELEVISION plays the same TELENUEVELA.

He moves immediately behind the intake counter and heads for one of the several desks located near the rear.

His desk neat and organized. In one corner, a framed picture of his mother, ROSA MARIA (60s) who eerily resembles Magdalena.

Gossip magazines, each with a similar headline... DIVA SAN MARCOS MISSING... WHAT HAPPENED TO MAGDALENA? Each with red pen marks showing Jasso has been studying them.

Jasso opens his desk drawer. Shuffles some papers around looking for something.

Jasso takes a quick look in the mirror, fixes an out of place hair.

Jasso finds what he's looking for, A SILVER POLICE BADGE. He takes it and secures it into his wallet. Practices flipping it open, showing it.

Jasso places his wallet with badge in his jacket pocket.

CHIEF ORTEGA (O.S.)

Great presence out there.

Startled, Jasso turns to see Ortega walking towards him. He is now wearing short work out shorts and tank top. He wipes his forehead with a gym towel.

JASSO

Just doing my job, Chief.

Ortega puts one leg on the end of Jasso's desk, stretches. The skin of his testicles peaking out. Jasso notices. Plays it off.

CHIEF ORTEGA

We're counting on you to put a new face on the department.

JASSO

You can count on that, Chief. I have a hunch that the missing Ariel dress will lead me to the perpetrator.

Ortega switches legs.

CHIEF ORTEGA

Dress? Hmmm. How did it feel to be on stage today? I bet the nerves were working on you.

JASSO

Not really. What do you think about
around the clock surveillance?

Ortega throws a sweaty arm around Jasso's neck. They both
walk towards the exit.

CHIEF ORTEGA

You just keep that perfect
television face.

(pinches cheek)

Keep being a presence. The camera
loves you.

INT. DIEGO APARTMENT - DAY

A small but impeccably clean apartment. The same TELENOVELA
plays on a nearby television with the sound down.

A REGGAE SONG plays.

Loud BANGING and THUMPING outside.

Diego enters wearing nothing but tight, white underwear. He
looks like a Calvin Klein model except for the flat butt and
sag. He's got a CELLPHONE to his ear.

WE FOLLOW DIEGO

Into the kitchen where he tapes a magazine cut out with the
headline: "Become independently wealthy with an initial
investment of only 10,000 dollars!"

DIEGO

(yelling into phone)

I'm sorry, what?

Diego goes to the door, opens it, stands just outside.

DIEGO

No, I don't know where she is. Are
you stupid?

DIEGO'S POV

Shows several CONSTRUCTION WORKERS just outside the building working on the road with heavy equipment. One WORKER notices Diego, cat-calls him. The others turn to look.

Frustrated, Diego slams the door shut.

WE FOLLOW DIEGO

Into the apartment. He sits on the couch, turns the volume down on the radio. Sticks a finger in his free ear.

DIEGO

You gotta be kidding me. You guys are in charge of the safety of that fucking place. My aunt might be dead and you worry about the rent. Are you collecting for a brain surgery!?

On the table in front of him, a pile of weed and a cigarette rolling machine.

Diego rolls a joint using the cigarette machine.

DIEGO

Your fucking building sucks. There's never any parking space. She's probably going round and round that fucking place looking for a place to park while we are looking for her.

Diego pulls out a perfectly rolled joint. Licks the edge.

The Construction NOISE outside gets louder.

DIEGO

What do you mean evicted? Why?

Diego places the joint in his mouth, gets up goes to the window to get another look at the construction workers outside.

DIEGO

She always pays in advance you fucking thief! She'd still have until the end of the month, at least. Don't you dare touch her stuff. I swear to God if her garbage is even touched...

(beat)

I dare you!

The NOISE outside picks up.

DIEGO

You couldn't get a case of herpes for that place.

Diego slams the window shut.

DIEGO

I don't know if she's coming back. Are you deaf? She might be dead as we speak.

Diego searches the room for a lighter. Walks past a BLACK BODY BAG sitting on a table within the living room. The zipper down, exposing a WOMAN'S BODY. An arm falls to the side.

DIEGO

(listens)

Fine. I swear to God, if anything in her house is missing...

Diego goes to replace the arm into the bag, zips the bag. As he does, we get a peek at the tuft of BLACK UNDERARM HAIR.

Diego hangs up.

DIEGO

Fuck. I guess we are going back to that place.

He finds a lighter, lights the joint. Takes a long drag, satisfied. Turns the volume up on the television.

DIEGO

(to television)

Oh, c'mon. He isn't right for you!

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - FRONT GATE - DAY

Just outside the closed, security gate sits bouquets of flowers, hand-made signs all dedicated to Magdalena. Each with its own show of support.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE VEHICLE - DAY

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER (V.O.)

(on radio)

One must not be afraid of his or her true potential. Fear of success is the number one reason people fail.

Gabriel Jasso cuts a rectangular piece of thick paper. In his best handwriting, he prints his name and contact info -- homemade business card.

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER (V.O.)

Why limit ourselves to our past?
When the present, the here and now,
is all that matters.

He lays it on an already completed stack in the seat next to him.

He glances across the street to Magdalena's apartment.

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER (V.O.)

The moment you are ready to unlock
your true potential...

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER(cont'd)

the true self, is the moment
success begins to ooze into your
life. It will ooze and ooze and
ooze. They'll be so much ooze
you'll be covered in it.

Jasso makes a sour face to the radio.

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER (V.O.)

I want you, the listener, yes you,
to make the choice, promise
yourself...

He gives his hair a once over in the rear view mirror. Shows
his perfect white teeth.

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER (V.O.)

...Say, I promise this will be the
first day of the rest of my life.
This will be the day I let the ooze
take over. Make yourself that
promise. Right. Now. Promise?

Jasso looks at the radio as if he is directing the next line
to the speaker.

JASSO

Promise.

WOMEN'S VOICES, CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER from behind.

Jasso checks out the side mirror. Turns down the volume on
the radio.

COMING DOWN THE SIDEWALK TOWARDS THE CAR

CHILDREN playing tag run here and there. TIA LOLA(30)
approaches accompanied by several other WOMEN. They each
carry a different bouquet of flowers. All headed towards
Magdalena's place.

The ELDEST CHILD(12) gets close, stops next to Jasso's parked
vehicle and looks directly at him through the driver's side
window.

ELDEST CHILD

Tia Lola! Tele-cop!

Jasso rolls down the passenger window.

ELDEST CHILD

You looked stupid on television.

Jasso turns to see if anyone from across the street notices.
No one has yet.

JASSO

See that building over there?

Jasso motions across the street.

ELDEST CHILD

Yeah, so?

JASSO

I'm spying on that building. Might
be a killer there. You know what a
criminal looks like, right?

Jasso has the kid's undivided attention now.

ELDEST CHILD

Like my Tio.

JASSO

Ever shoot a real gun?

In the side mirror, two women and a YOUNGER CHILD approach
Jasso's car.

ELDEST CHILD

Guns are dangerous in the wrong
hands.

Jasso shows the eldest child his firearm, a long DIRTY HARRY
TYPE PISTOL.

The child's eyes get big. He reaches in to touch the gun.
Jasso pulls it just out of reach, gives a gentle slap to the
kid's hand.

JASSO

If you did, you'd have to lie about it. Make up an alibi otherwise I might be spying on you. How'd you like to be a cop someday?

ELDEST CHILD

You're a fake cop.

JASSO

Only real detectives, smart ones, get to carry a police weapon.

TIA LOLA (30s), the young boy's aunt approaches.

ELDEST CHILD

Why do you get one, then?

JASSO

(plays it off)

Enough chit-chat for today, youngster.

Jasso playfully rubs the boy's hair. The boy retreats, irritated.

Tia Lola now stands at the car window. Her cleavage the focus of Jasso's attention.

TIA LOLA

I think you are amazing.

A YELLOW MUSTANG pulls past Jasso's car, waits at the front entrance to the apartment complex. The electric gate opens and the Mustang pulls inside.

Jasso does his best to remain diplomatic. Smiles politely.

JASSO

I'm on official police business.

TIA LOLA

I would do anything for an autograph.

Tia Lola searches her purse. Finds a marker and hands it to Jasso.

Without hesitation, she leans in and pulls the front of her shirt down to give him room.

TIA LOLA

Here. Do it right here.

Uneasy with the proposition, Jasso obliges. Forces a smile.

Jasso signs the woman's chest.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - DAY

The waning sun casting reds and oranges.

The apartment has the same decor it has always had - old and musty.

RUSTLING of KEYS at the front door. After a moment, the door opens. Diego stands just outside looking in. Makes a sour face at the smell of the place.

Lays two BAGS OF ICE on the ground just inside.

He then turns the old TELEVISION in the corner on, finds the TELENUEVELA.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - DAY

Diego heads back down the steps to his car, the yellow Mustang. Opens the trunk of the yellow Mustang and retrieves two more big BAGS OF ICE, carries them upstairs.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - DAY

He closes the door and surveys the room. Takes a slow walk around the place. Picks up a BEST ACTRESS AWARD. Reads the inscription. Runs a finger along the length of the frame.

DIEGO

At least it's quiet. And a man can
walk around unrestricted.

Diego takes his pants off, stands there in his white
underwear.

On the far wall, the EMPTY GLASS CASE where Magdalena's red
dress used to be displayed. The dress gone.

FLASHBACK

Young Diego standing in Magdalena's living room wearing
smeared make-up and Magdalena's red dress, looking guilty as
ever.

YOUNG MAGDALENA (40s) stands in front of him, hands on her
hips. She looks as elegant as ever.

YOUNG MAGDALENA

I told you not to wear that dress,
Diego!

Young Diego makes a mean face, GROWLS like an animal.

YOUNG MAGDALENA

(easier)

I have things you can wear if you
want to play dress up.

Young Magdalena goes to him, fixes his hair.

YOUNG MAGDALENA

My Dieguito. You are a little
psycho. One in every family.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Diego stares into the tub. He WHISTLES the theme song from
the Telenovela.

The tub is filled with water as though someone forgot to drain it. The radio, plugged into the wall, sits submerged in the tub.

Diego pulls the cord from the wall then lifts the radio out of the water. Holds it over the tub as the water drains from it.

He places the radio on the sink, then pulls the plug to drain the water.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Diego enters, carries two ice bags. Pours them over the already filled bathtub. The faint outline of the BLACK BODYBAG beneath the ice is visible.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DAY

Diego is busy cleaning. Like someone possessed. Wears surgeon's gloves, a swimmer's nose guard to hide the smell.

There is a playfulness to his work.

He stacks the piles of magazines in neat stacks, wipes the furniture, vacuums.

Sprays the apartment with Lysol to clean the air.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Diego peers out the peep hole in the door. Waits for something.

Nothing.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Diego stands at the window looking at the apartment directly across.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A simple room.

On the walls several movie posters of Magdalena's Films and other more modern films.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Eliza relaxes in the bath. Bubbles cover her figure.

Spanning the tub, Magdalena's mirror.

BEGIN DAYDREAM

A WAITRESS from another time and place carries a plate of something across a

CROWDED ROOM

An elegant mansion with WELL-KNOWN GUESTS standing around drinking and talking.

Eliza, dressed in MAGDALENA'S RED DRESS stands by herself sipping a glass of wine. Her attention is across the room of GUESTS watching

MAGDALENA DE SAN MARCOS

Chatting it up with MISSY LIRA (30s), a beautiful Spanish woman with a television presence. Their body language suggests something intimate. All smiles and laughs. Both having a good time.

GUEST #1 (O.S.)

Look at ol' San Marcos. She thinks she's something. I wonder if anyone has reminded her how ugly she is?

Eliza turns towards the voice of the conversation happening a few feet away.

TWO GUESTS, well-dressed men in their thirties, gossip in a corner.

Eliza tries not listening but can't help herself.

GUEST #2

Look at her. Her face needs some starch and an iron. I wouldn't fuck her with your dick.

Both LAUGH.

ELIZA

Because your dicks are in each other.

Furious, Eliza sneers at the two guests before heading across the room towards Magdalena.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Eliza approaches Magdalena and Missy.

ELIZA

(interrupting)

I'm ready to go.

Magdalena turns to see Eliza.

MAGDALENA

Darling. Where have you been? Have you met Miss Lira?

Eliza ignores Missy.

MISSY

Eliza. Always a pleasure. I was just telling Magdalena how lucky you are to have each other.

MAGDALENA

Isn't she precious?

Magdalena smiles at Missy.

Missy returns it. Something there.

ELIZA

Yeah. Precious. Can we go now?

MAGDALENA

(facing Eliza)

Why the rush, darling?

Magdalena turns to Missy, smiles.

MAGDALENA

We were having fun.

Missy returns the smile to show Eliza she's won. Drinks.

MAGDALENA

(without looking)

Why don't you get us a drink,
Darling. We'll leave in a minute.

Eliza stands there, fuming. She looks at Missy.

Missy smiles at Eliza.

MAGDALENA

No more champagne. It makes me
gassy. And horny.

Magdalena smiles at Missy.

A few uncomfortable seconds before Eliza storms off.

As she walks past the two previous guests, they SNICKER.

Eliza walks right past them.

The waitress crosses the field of view again and we are back
at

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The only light within the room comes from the TELEVISION with sound down.

On screen, an infomercial with flashy product advertising appearing and disappearing.

Missy Lira, the hostess, pimps the latest "as seen on TV" phallic resembling product. Her fake smile and breasts highlighted by the studio lighting.

From the window Eliza watches Magdalena's window across from her own.

Within the frame of Magdalena's window, Diego walks into view - Naked except for underwear.

He looks towards Eliza's direction.

Eliza continues to watch knowing she can't be seen within the dark room.

FOUR INSISTENT KNOCKS at the front door.

ELIZA

Shit.

Startled, Eliza stops, covers up and looks at the door without moving from her place as if though expecting something or someone to come through it.

Again, several, INSISTENT KNOCKS.

Eliza opens it the length of the safety chain to find

DETECTIVE JASSO

Standing outside. Flashes a smile. He is taken back by her subtle beauty. Despite having his detective speech planned, he stumbles. He shows his badge.

JASSO

Sorry to bother you. Do you have a few minutes?

Eliza closes the door abruptly. We hear her attempting to get the chain off. There is an unusually long attempt.

Finally the door reopens now with the chain off.

JASSO

Stubborn lock.

Jasso out a medium sized clay pot with flowers.

JASSO

(Smiling)

Perfectly good flowers thrown in the trash. Can you believe it? People have been leaving those all week.

Eliza fidgets, visibly nervous.

She reluctantly takes the flower pot.

ELIZA

How did you get in the gate?

JASSO

A good detective never shares his secrets.

ELIZA

Awful late, Detective.

JASSO

A good detective always does cross referencing, double checking. I have a few questions I need to ask. Routine stuff. I know you have plenty to do, so I'll make it brief. How long have you lived at Magdalen...

ELIZA

This is number six, Detective.

Jasso checks the number on the door. Sure enough, number six.

JASSO

I'll be darn. I'll admit, someone at the office has serious problems with numbers. This is what happens when you rely on foreigners to fill administrative positions.

Jasso gives a charming, child-like smile.

ELIZA

Foreigners, Detective?

JASSO

Foreign born nationals, rather.

ELIZA

Maybe looking across the street will be more helpful, Detective. Good night.

Eliza goes to shut the door.

Jasso sticks his foot out stopping the door.

JASSO

I know the system sucks. I hate paying bills, too.

Jasso motions to

SEVERAL UNOPENED BILLS on the table behind Eliza.

JASSO

Putting money in the pockets of the already wealthy.

Eliza remains quiet. He refocuses.

JASSO

Were you sleeping together?

Jasso pauses to take notes on his note pad. Watches Eliza's reaction.

Nervous, Eliza pulls on her earlobe.

ELIZA

Sleeping? What do you mean?

JASSO

Did you ever have an
(chooses words)
Intimate relationship with her?

Eliza fidgets.

Jasso's posture remains firm, composed.

JASSO

It was well known she had sexual encounters with both men and women.

ELIZA

At the same time? I mean, at that age can you even...

She leans in, whispers.

ELIZA

You know?

JASSO

There is proof that having good sexual relations into your twilight years creates a harmonious balance for all your body systems.

ELIZA

Watch what you read on the internet, Detective. Well, she did appear healthy for her age.

Jasso's eyes catch a hint of cleavage and red linen from beneath the robe. Eliza catches his averted glimpse, pulls the robe tight.

He remains composed.

JASSO

The female body can make the most honest man waver. Guilty as charged.

(nervous laugh)

Beautiful night tonight. Have you seen the moon?

Eliza looks into the sky. The sky covered in clouds. No way anyone is seeing the moon.

ELIZA

Pretty cloudy out there.

Jasso looks at the sky.

JASSO

I'll be darn. It was just there a few minutes ago.

Jasso takes a HANDMADE BUSINESS CARD from his coat pocket.

JASSO

I'll be in the area for a few days. Talking to people. Looking around. Don't be alarmed if you see me. If you have anything that may be helpful.

(charming smile)

Or if you just want to talk

(waits for reaction)

you can reach me at anytime. Day or night.

Eliza takes the card through the door. Looks at it.

CLOSE ON CARD

Shows its ridiculousness.

BACK TO SCENE

JASSO

Waiting on my new ones to arrive.

Jasso takes a couple of steps heading down.

Again, Eliza goes to shut the door.

Jasso stops and turns suddenly.

JASSO

Pasiflora.

Eliza opens the door again.

ELIZA

Excuse me?

Jasso motions to Eliza with his finger as if to emphasize his thought.

JASSO

Having trouble sleeping, right?
Nothing wrong with that. In fact, I
have been hitting the bed at
midnight most weekends. Eleven on
weekdays. Even on nights I have to
work the next day. Don't take
pills. Not a good idea. Exercise, a
bath of warm water and Pasiflora
tea. Does the trick every time.

ELIZA

Thanks for the advice. I'll try it,
Detective.

Jasso turns to leave and continues with

JASSO

Having a clear conscience helps,
too. But that's almost impossible
these days.

Jasso continues down the steps.

ELIZA

Mariscal.

Jasso stops, turns.

JASSO

Come again.

ELIZA

Diego Mariscal. Magdalena's nephew.
I bet he knows something.

Jasso makes a note in his booklet.

JASSO

Mariscal. Diego. I'll look into it.

Jasso tips his imaginary hat. Leaves.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza stands with her back to the door. Breathes a SIGH of relief. Covers her mouth with a hand.

Eliza walks quickly, with intention, into the next room.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eliza enters and quickly begins removing MAGDALENA'S DRESS from her body. Like she's been caught doing something.

Eliza has trouble with the back zipper. Fumbles with it. Checks it in the mirror. No good, the zipper's stuck.

She tries backing out of the dress by removing it over her head. Again, no good. The dress too tight for her frame to be pulled overhead.

She panics, goes after the back zipper again. She pulls for a few seconds...

Again, FOUR INTIMIDATING KNOCKS coming from the front door.

At the same time, the zipper pulls loose. She struggles to get out of the dress.

Another set of INTIMIDATING KNOCKS coming from the living room.

Finally out of the dress, she quickly rolls the dress into a haphazard wad and hides it in a dresser drawer.

SEVERAL MORE KNOCKS

Eliza finds her robe.

LIVING ROOM

Eliza hesitates before she removes the chain and pulls the door open wide revealing

DIEGO

Who stands at the door pleasantly surprised to find Eliza dressed her robe.

He is much better looking up close.

Eliza covers herself.

DIEGO

Ohhh, I like it. Silk?

Diego touches the edge of Eliza's robe.

Eliza playfully slaps Diego's hand away. She eyes the apartment grounds. Makes sure no one is around, especially Jasso.

ELIZA

What do you need, Diego?

DIEGO

Can you come and get your cat before I kill the fucking thing?

ELIZA

It's not my cat, you know that.

DIEGO

Fine. I'll take care of it, then.

Diego acts like he's leaving.

ELIZA

No, no. Wait here.

She closes the door abruptly.

Diego smiles to himself. Checks behind him making sure no one is around.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

Diego climbs the stairs.

Eliza, dressed now, follows. Her hesitancy is obvious.

DIEGO

I appreciate your assistance with this matter, Miss.

Diego stops in front of the door.

DIEGO

Miss, if you could hurry that would be great. I get all sneezy, runny nose, watery eyes.

Finally he opens the door to

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - NIGHT

Where Eliza stands peering inside as though time has suddenly stood still for a moment.

Everything just as Magdalena left it, except clean and tidy now. Spotless, really.

Eliza's eyes immediately go to the empty glass case where the red dress used to be.

Diego enters the apartment.

DIEGO

Nothing like the place all to
yourself.

Eliza hesitates. Stays standing outside.

Diego turns to see Eliza not coming inside. She averts her eyes away from the glass case.

Diego lets out a loud SNEEZE.

DIEGO

The cat?

This breaks Eliza's trance. Visually searches the house.

ELIZA

(calls out)

Max?

Eliza moves around the living room admiring the photos on the wall.

DIEGO

Cold. You are cold. Still cold.

Eliza walks towards the bedroom.

DIEGO
Getting warmer.

BEDROOM

Where Eliza enters and Diego follows.

ELIZA
Max? Here kitty...

Eliza checks the closet.

Diego SNEEZES again.

UNDER THE BED

Max sits waving his tail. Watches Diego. Diego watches him.

DIEGO
Fucking asshole is mocking me. Come
here, little fucker.

Diego sneezes again, wipes his nose. His allergies really
amping up.

Max dares him. Just stares.

Diego raises up, looks directly at Eliza.

DIEGO
All yours.

Eliza get a look under the bed.

Diego notices a dirty spot on the carpet.

DIEGO
(to the floor)
You little spot. I can't believe I
missed you.

Diego leaves Eliza alone in the bedroom.

UNDER THE BED

Max lays uninterested.

Eliza goes for him, hurried.

ELIZA

Come here, you idiot. You're gonna
get killed one of these days, or
cut into little pieces.

As Eliza reaches for him, grabs his tail.

Max lets out a loud MEOW. Takes off from beneath the bed and
runs into the connecting

BATHROOM

Where he jumps on the edge of the sink. Sits and waits.

DIEGO (O.S.)

(from kitchen)

Ever since I came, I have had the
worst allergies. I see fur I get
itchy.

DOWN THE HALL

Eliza looks towards the bathroom. Hesitates before slowly
making her way down it.

BATHROOM

The cat moves to the edge of the tub. Sits as though telling
Eliza something. Cleans a paw.

Eliza approaches slowly. Looks back down the hall to see if
Diego's behind her. No one.

She approaches the closed shower curtain of the tub. From the edge of the curtain, a glimpse of ice filling the tub to its edge.

With her interest on the tub, Eliza approaches it slowly.

The cat remains on the edge of the tub.

As Eliza gets at the edge of the tub she reaches for the shower curtain and slowly pulls it back when

A FLICKER OF THE OVERHEAD LIGHTS

creates a vision of Magdalena's face below the water's surface.

Eliza shudders. Rushes to get the heck out of there away from what she just saw when

AN ANTIQUE PERFUME BOTTLE

Falls from its place breaking it into pieces in the sink. She grabs a piece of glass trying to fix the mess, immediately cuts her hand.

She keeps her momentum going into the

BEDROOM

Where she literally runs right into Diego cleaning a spot on the carpet in the hallway.

ELIZA

I didn't mean... The cat was in the bathroom.

Diego looks towards the tub. Stays composed... until he notices the blood on her hand, dripping on the carpeted floor.

DIEGO

(sour face)

Seriously? Blood? Why not bring red wine and mole poblano next time? See what stains worse.

Diego can't hide his annoyance, searches for something to clean it with. Eliza tries following him.

DIEGO

Don't move. You're staining the carpet!

Diego returns almost immediately with gloved hands (the sterile type) and a towel.

DIEGO

(scolding)

You know how difficult it is to get blood out? It might take hours and specialized product to get this out.

Diego wraps Eliza's hand in the towel.

Diego leaves again for a moment. Returns with a bottle of mineral water and a spoon.

Diego soaks the blood stain with the water, pools it out spoon by spoon. Continues this technique in silence for several moments.

Eliza eyes the empty dress case on the wall.

DIEGO

You don't move.

Eliza does as she's told. Stays put.

DIEGO

(easier)

You'll track blood.

While Diego cleans, Eliza stares at the dress case.

DIEGO
Where the fuck is it?

ELIZA
The dress?

Diego stops, looks up at Eliza.

DIEGO
Dress? The fucking cat.

Diego goes back to cleaning.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Feel of a make-shift operating room. Eliza sits on the couch, her wounded hand covered in a sterile field, under a bright light coming from a head lamp on Diego's head. He has a pair of surgical lenses on, the telescopic kind. He sits hunched over, focused on suturing the wound on her hand.

Eliza stares at Diego's head.

He trims the last suture, cleans the area with a sterile 4X4 and removes the sterile draping.

Diego looks up suddenly. Eliza averts her gaze.

DIEGO
There. Good as new. All those years
of practice put to good use
finally.

Diego stares at Eliza. She finally looks right into his eyes where they stare at each other for what seems like forever.

Diego slides a gloved hand up the length of her leg and into her pant leg of her shorts. Eliza allows it. Diego moves close, their faces now close enough to kiss.

Eliza suddenly stands, gets going leaving Diego kneeling on the carpet.

DIEGO

What? I said I was sorry.

Diego goes after her.

DIEGO

I just got out. Needed to get my
shit together. You understand,
right?

ELIZA

I took care of you while you were
in there. I bought you cheese
whizz!

Eliza avoids him.

DIEGO

You don't know what the food is
like in there!

Eliza sneers at him.

ELIZA

I have to prepare my lines, anyway.
I have a big audition on Friday.
This is the big one. My name is
going to be remembered. Not even
you will forget it.

DIEGO

(laughs)

Oh, come on. You, an actress?

ELIZA

Fuck you, Diego.

Eliza opens the front door.

DIEGO

I didn't mean that...

ELIZA

I'll be everywhere. On every billboard. You'll have to look at me then. And you'll be sorry.

She leaves down the steps without another word. Max the cat follows behind her.

Diego goes to the front door, watches her disappear down the steps.

DIEGO

(looks at watch)

Shit! My novela.

Diego rushes around, finds the TV remote, turns the Television on. "Horrible Betrayals" flashes across the screen. Diego sits to watch.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE VEHICLE - NIGHT

Jasso mends a dress shirt with a thread and needle. Holds the needle in his mouth making an adjustment.

SELF HELP SPEAKER (V.O.)

(on radio)

Each person has a physical tendency when they lie. A furled brow, a squint of the eyes... a touch of the ear.

Jasso looks directly at the radio. Movement across the street causes him to look.

JASSO'S POV

He watches Eliza walk from Diego's house to her own. At the top of Magdalena's steps, Diego scans the area, misses Jasso sitting across the street.

SELF HELP SPEAKER (V.O.)

One must observe, be aware of all
the physical nuances of each
suspect they interview.

JASSO

(to himself)

Wrong guy to be spending the
evening with, love.

SELF HELP SPEAKER (V.O.)

A person's physical demeanor can be
more important than the things they
say. Every person's physical
behavior tells its own story. The
way a person behaves will tell the
investigator much more than looks
alone.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The sun shines in through Eliza's main window giving the
place some life.

The JINGLING of Max's bell coming from

KITCHEN

Where Eliza opens a can of tuna and dumps it into a bowl. Her
hand still bandaged.

She sets down the can and Max begins devouring the contents.

Eliza goes to the fridge, opens it.

ELIZA

Shoot.

Eliza jiggles the fridge light. Nothing. Closes the fridge
and goes to the wall. Flips the light switch. Nothing.

MEN'S VOICES outside.

Eliza goes to her window to see

DIEGO

Working, dressed in rubber bib (the kind butcher's use), goggles, gloves and mask, in the parking lot. He hoses down the inside of the trunk of his yellow Mustang.

Eliza watches Diego.

From the street, Detective Jasso approaches Diego. Diego notices. Stops to greet the Detective.

Eliza stays at the window to watch.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Red stained water runs from the bottom of the yellow Mustang.

Jasso looks directly into the trunk.

Diego stands with the hose in one hand and dirty, red stained sponge in the other.

JASSO

This is a good model. A collector's item. Three fifty engine with headers. Bet this thing runs.

DIEGO

Holds its own.

Diego sprays the inside of the trunk. Water pours from the bottom and collects on the street.

JASSO

Every now and then you'll see one for sale in the newspaper? Every now and then you'll find a real bargain.

Diego continues his cleaning without much hesitation.

DIEGO

An elderly gentleman had to get rid of it to pay for his wife's operation. Practically gave her away. The car, I mean. I almost feel like I stole it.

JASSO

(laughs)

Yeah, well, you probably did.

Diego continues his thorough wash of the trunk.

JASSO

What'd you get all over the trunk?
Paint?

DIEGO

(casual)

No, it's fucking blood, man.

JASSO

(laughs)

Don't tell me! You killed someone?

Diego remains composed. All business.

JASSO

At the station we get cars like this all the time. Blood stains are impossible to remove. Human blood, especially. Something about the proteins in human blood.

Diego watches Jasso. Can't tell whether he is smiling or frowning behind the mask.

DIEGO

We had a cook-out the other day and a those fuckers packaged it all wrong.

DIEGO(cont'd)

That's what happens when you get a bunch of foreigners working the deli. Ten kilos of bleeding carne asada. In my Mustang. Now this shit.

Detective Jasso shakes his head in disbelief.

JASSO

I keep telling everyone that the foreigners are going to ruin this country. One priceless Mustang at a time.

Behind Jasso and Diego, Eliza walks past. By her posture one can tell she's trying to listen without being noticed.

Diego looks over the shoulder of Jasso directly at Eliza. Their eyes meet.

Eliza gets going.

JASSO

We use a special cleaning liquid back at the station, but its probably best to change the carpet. The smell of decaying meat and blood becomes impregnated after awhile. Even with the special cleaner, it won't come out most times.

Diego follows Eliza with his eyes, ignoring the detective.

INTERIOR OF TRUNK

The profiles of Diego and Jasso talking. Diego lowers his mask for the first time, revealing his face.

DIEGO

Who washes the cars? You guys? Or do you have a specialist?

Diego dries the interior with a cloth.

He twists the cloth dry. Water splashes Jasso's shoes.

Jasso notices. Plays it off. Steps back.

Finished, Diego goes to close the trunk.

JASSO

Depends. The truth is that
sometimes ...

The trunk is closed with a BANG! Cutting the light off.

MUFFLED VOICES.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Diego wipes the back bumper of the mustang.

Jasso watches the stream of blood tinged water run down the drive and into the street.

JASSO

Anyway I could have a look around
in your aunt's apartment?

DIEGO

Today's not good. I have a honey-
doo list the size of my head.

Diego walks towards Magdalena's apartment. Takes his cleaning supplies with him. Jasso follows.

DIEGO

You looking to buy or rent?

JASSO

Just following up on an anonymous
tip's all.

DIEGO

Any other day except Monday,
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday or Saturday. Church on
Sunday. You know how it is.

JASSO

Certainly.

(wags finger)

The older one gets, the more one
realizes time is more important
than money.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - ELECTRICAL METERS - DAY

Eliza stands in front of the several meters. Finds the one
labelled "number six". It is the only one not moving. A small
wire lock locks it shut.

Eliza gives up and heads back towards her apartment.

She notices Jasso and Diego still talking at the bottom of
Diego's steps.

Eliza pretends not to be interested. Continues on into

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The cat watches from the window sill.

A KNOCK at the door.

Eliza goes to it, opens and finds Jasso standing.

JASSO

Come on. I want to show you
something.

With that Jasso gets going down the steps.

Curious, Eliza follows the detective to

STREET

Where Jasso goes to his parked car and removes a black carpenter's bag. Returns to the waiting Eliza. Walks past her without saying a word.

Goes to

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - ELECTRICAL METERS - DAY

JASSO

What's it like being an actress?

ELIZA

Actress?

JASSO

(taps temple with finger)

A good detective knows what he's walking into before walking into it.

ELIZA

Exciting things are happening.

JASSO

Always wanted to get into acting. Parents weren't sophisticates like some. Beer in the bottle, paper plate kinda folks. Not much work here for an actress, is there?

Finds the number six meter.

Jasso removes a pair of wire clippers from his bag and clips the wire lock. Removes the glass from the meter, then removes the meter and connects a large gauge wire between the two ends, bypassing the meter.

JASSO

Probably best to go elsewhere for those types of jobs.

JASSO(cont'd)

Though Magdalena did it. Her entire life right here.

ELIZA

(daydreaming)

Yeah. I'm going to do it just like her. Just like Magdalena. Do something that would change everything. That's what this big audition on Friday's about. Big names are involved.

Jasso replaces the glass. Like nothing was ever touched except the meter part gone.

JASSO

Ohhh. Do tell.

(quiet)

Anyone famous I would recognize?

Jasso replaces his tools.

ELIZA

Under wraps for now.

JASSO

Figures. You were friends at least, right? You and Magdalena.

Eliza subconsciously tugs on her earlobe. Jasso notices.

ELIZA

As friendly as neighbors can be.

The detective turns and caresses the cat in the arms of Eliza.

The cat PURRS.

JASSO

(motions to meter)

I don't think its fair they charge what they do. No one should be without electricity.

JASSO(cont'd)

It isn't right. Just hope you'd do the same for me if I needed it.

(smiles)

I feel sorry for the fool that had anything to do with Magdalena being missing. Whoever had anything to do with it is fried. I wouldn't like to be in his shoes.

ELIZA

What if Magdalena is gone because she wants to be gone? Not because she's missing.

JASSO

Disappear to be remembered? I hope you don't mind me saying... That sounds foolish.

An METER READER (20s) approaches the meters. Checks each one, takes notes.

JASSO

Of all the things. You are still alive, you can show yourself, feel the adoration, the admiration, whatever attractive people feel. What do you get if you disappear?

(beat)

Nothing.

(leans in)

Can you keep a secret? I feel she is an unfortunate homicide victim. Maybe kidnapping. Something bad either way.

Eliza gets uneasy. Fidgets.

ELIZA

What matters is people are talking about her. Interested in her story. Her life.

JASSO

Not really. What matters is that
she should still be her.
Interesting angle, though.

The Meter Reader gets to number six. Makes a face realizing
it has been tampered with. Goes to remove the glass case.

JASSO

(clears throat)
Uh, hum.

The Meter Reader stops, looks at Jasso.

Jasso has his badge flipped open.

The Meter Reader moves on, intimidated.

ELIZA

Have you found any leads? What
about the guy staying at her house?

JASSO

Her nephew?

ELIZA

Yeah, that one.

She dramatically averts her gaze.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

JASSO (V.O.)

If something is there, I will find
it.

Diego stands in front of the tub looking in.

Diego leaves. After a moment returns with a new bag of ice.
Empties it in the tub.

Again, Diego watches the ice and the rest of the tub's
contents.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DAY

The television plays the news.

Eliza stands at the window looking down over the parking lot. Watches Jasso take a sample of the red liquid from the back for Diego's Mustang. Places in a clear evidence bag.

EXT. CONTINUING LIFE SANITORIUM - GARDEN - DAY

A peaceful garden. Birds CHIRP in the distance. Green, cut grass. A tempting play area for any child.

Several empty park benches lining concrete walkways. The backs of two people sitting alone.

Detective Jasso and Rosa Maria. Both looking straight ahead at nothing in particular.

JASSO

How're the nurses treating you?

ROSA MARIA

I wish they would keep the heat on at night. It's freezing.

JASSO

Looks like you're eating okay.

ROSA MARIA

The food tastes like rubber.

JASSO

I met someone.

Rosa Maria takes out a small, make-up mirror. Applies powder to her face.

ROSA MARIA

Is she smart?

JASSO

Smart and pretty. She's an actress.

ROSA MARIA

Smart and pretty?

Done. She applies eye shadow.

JASSO

I think she's the one. I think... I think we're gonna be married.

ROSA MARIA

Married? Did you meet someone special?

She looks around for something.

JASSO

Yes, mother.

Jasso hands her red lipstick.

She applies a thick layer of it.

ROSA MARIA

Well, you are a handsome fella. Why waste all that talent on one woman?

JASSO

I'm in love, mother.

An awkward silence.

ROSA MARIA

I had a son who was the talk of the town. Ever since he was little, the girls would swoon over his green eyes. God was generous with the looks but went cheap on the brains. Are you here to take me to church?

JASSO

No.

ROSA MARIA

Oh.

JASSO

You want to go back inside?

Jasso raises his head. Looks over at his mother.

ROSA MARIA

I want to go to mass. How are my
eyelashes? I need my makeup.

Jasso SIGHS. Jasso looks out into the green garden.
Daydreaming.

JASSO

I know looks aren't everything, but
she is beautiful.

ROSA MARIA

I haven't gone this week. I need to
go.

JASSO

Did I tell you she's an actress?

Detective Jasso looks at his mother.

ROSA MARIA

You sound like my son. It would be
nice if he were around. He is the
most handsome fella. Where is my
nurse? He'll know what to do.

JASSO

You don't want to sit?

ROSA MARIA

Take me inside.

The elder Jasso struggles to stand. Her old bones barely holding her up. Shuffles off down the concrete path.

Detective Jasso sits for a moment. Watches his mother. Shakes his head. Disappointed.

Finally, Jasso gets up. Looks after his mother.

JASSO

So how're they treating you here,
mother?

(pause)

How's the food?

Detective Jasso gently puts his arm within his mother's. Helps her along.

JASSO

You know I met someone.

Mother and son walk arm in arm.

ROSA MARIA

Are you on television?

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

From Magdalena's window, Diego stares at Eliza's apartment window across the way.

EXT. WHOLESALE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - DAY

The oldest part of town. Most buildings decrepit and falling apart.

Eliza walks along the broken sidewalk. Checks the addresses on several buildings.

Finally, Eliza arrives at

CHOCOLATE STUDIOS BUILDING, a run-down building with a modern sign.

Eliza hesitates, checks her info before entering.

INT. CHOCOLATE STUDIOS - RECEPTION - DAY

Eliza sits alone in the quiet, almost sterile waiting area. Light intruding from the glass, exterior doors.

The BIMBO RECEPTIONIST(20'S) busy on the phone. Not paying attention to Eliza.

MUSIC plays from somewhere. Sleepy sort of music.

Eliza mumbles under her breath, practicing her lines. She struggles to hold her eyelids open. Dozing off.

Her dark circles and her drooping eyes revealing her lack of sleep.

She closes them for an instant and immediately

MAGDALENA (V.O.)
Maximiliano, is that you?

We are at

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Where Magdalena's SONG plays from the portable radio at the edge of the sink.

Magdalena lies in the warm water enjoying the music with closed eyes.

A MEOW. Max's BELL RINGING from somewhere.

A silent, tense moment when

Magdalena opens her eyes. Smiles.

MAGDALENA

Eliza, darling. What a surprise.

(beat)

Eliza, darling?

Magdalena's voice becomes

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Eliza... Curiel?

And we are back at

INT. CHOCOLATE STUDIOS - WAITING AREA - DAY

Where the bimbo receptionist stands in front of the sleeping Eliza.

RECEPTIONIST

Miss Curiel?

Eliza suddenly opens her eyes. Startled, realizes she fell asleep. Stands to respond to the receptionist.

ELIZA

Yes?

RECEPTIONIST

They'll see you now.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

People coming and going.

Diego stands at a pay phone, cleans the headset and the dial pad with a wet cleaning wipe prior to dialing. Satisfied, inserts a calling card, dials a number.

DIEGO

Yeah, it's me. Yes I got it. Five fucking days ago.

Behind him, a WOMAN PEDESTRIAN(40's) waits to use the phone. Listening to Diego's conversation, while pretending to look over a crumpled piece of paper.

DIEGO (O.S.)

It's already packed and ready to go. As always.

The nosey woman gets interested. Perks up.

DIEGO

(calm)

What do you mean, too old? You can't cancel now? It's not a pizza. What about my money? My ten grand? I need that money.

(listens)

Listen...

(interrupted)

I don't care who says what. It's still good. I don't care.

If you didn't know, you'd think he was discussing the weather.

DIEGO

Of course it is your problem, too.

(listens)

No, I can't fucking return it. This is a non-refundable product. It will go to waste if it isn't used.

(listens)

No, she doesn't stink. One week with me and she smells like fucking roses. I even shaved her armpits.

Diego notices the woman. Smiles to ease her concern.

The woman turns to concentrate on the floor immediately beneath her.

Diego forgets about her. Back to the conversation.

DIEGO

She's been on ice like a six-pack of Dos Equis. Everything is still fresh. Why wouldn't it be? We're like family. It would be a fucking shame that this would jeopardize everything we've built.

(grits teeth)

I'm not the one that killed her.

The woman suddenly has a change of heart. Leaves.

Diego does some quick mental calculating.

DIEGO

Listen, I have another. Give me two days. It'll be the freshest one ever. Two days, I'll have it. Guaranteed. Fine. Two days.

Diego calmly pulls the phone from his ear, then snaps, BANGS the receiver on the telephone box several times showing his frustration. The anger is gone as suddenly as it came. Diego calmly looks around the area making sure no one heard him. Hangs the receiver up, dials another number. Waits for an answer.

DIEGO

(pleasant)

It's Diego. I need a vial. GHB.

(listens)

Jesus fucking Christ. Economic crisis affecting even the drug dealers.

(listens)

No, no. Fine. A hundred then.

Diego hangs the phone up. Stares at the phone for a moment considering.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jasso interviews Missy Lira. She stands with her back to her open car door, ready to leave.

The two speak just out of earshot.

Jasso takes notes on a pad.

INT. CHOCOLATE STUDIOS - AUDITION ROOM - DAY

Another white, sterile room.

The CASTING DIRECTOR(30'S) and GUERO, his assistant(20'S) sit behind a table at the far end. Scattered paperwork and actors' files litter the tabletop.

A small video camera records Eliza's every move.

The door to the room opens. Eliza enters quietly. Goes straight for the chair in the center of the room. Carries a portion of a script in her hands.

CASTING DIRECTOR
Shut the door, please.

The Casting Director doesn't bother looking up from his files.

The Assistant watches Eliza silently.

Eliza stops. Turns around and closes the door to the room.

Eliza sits. Nervous, out of place. Looks at the top of the casting director's head, still not looking at Eliza.

CASTING DIRECTOR
Eliza Curiel?

ELIZA
Yes.

A silent moment. Eliza waits patiently.

Shuffling of paperwork at the casting table.

The casting director glances up at Eliza. Back down at her papers.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Do you have any acting experience?

ELIZA

No, but I...

CASTING DIRECTOR

None?

There is an uncomfortable silence.

ELIZA

I mean, I've always wanted to be an actress. I have been acting, playing roles my whole li...

More paper shuffling. More whispering between them.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You're auditioning for the part of Zombie Princess?

ELIZA

Yes.

CASTING DIRECTOR

What do you think, Guero?

The casting director puts some papers in a manila folder. Interview finished.

GUERO

Great face and tits but we'll have to shoot around that ass.

Eliza looks at her ass in a nearby mirror.

The Casting Director shows no emotion.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Fine. We start shooting Wednesday.
Call your mom, you got the part.

Eliza sits silent. Not sure how to respond.

ELIZA

Excuse me?

CASTING DIRECTOR

I said you got the part.

ELIZA

Wow. But, I'm not... Can I have a
day to think about it?

The Casting Director looks at his assistant as if to ready himself for the next statement.

CASTING DIRECTOR

She's not sure. Get out.

He tosses her file onto a pile on the far end of the table - the "no's".

Eliza stays.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Seriously. And tell my girl to get
me a sparkling water. And a Dr.
Pepper for Guero.

Eliza doesn't move.

CASTING DIRECTOR

You deaf?
(to his assistant)
She must be deaf and dumb, Guero.

ELIZA

What did I do?

CASTING DIRECTOR

You didn't get my water.

Eliza shakes her head. Looks as though she's going to cry.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Jesus Christ. Now you decide you want to act. Listen, sweetheart, if you wanted to act you would have said, "I'd love the part! I'm so grateful for your generosity!" But, no, you stand there, some fucking pueblo girl who woke up today thinking she'd like to be an actress. You think anybody can walk in off the street and act, be a star? Some people were born to shine. Others work their asses off, paying with sweat and tears to get a break. You weren't born to shine. That means you have to work hard to get it. So hard that you'll feel like your spine is going to break. Like you are going to lose your mind. Then one day, after countless hours, months, years of putting in the time, you get your break. You. You come in here on a whim thinking you can do better than the hundred professional actors I have waiting for the chance to become famous. Some were born to shine and some were born to admire those that shine. "Can I think about it?" No. You can't think about it. You don't have the brains to think about it. If you did, you would know already. You don't want it. It is easier to hide and say "I could have been". You are a nobody and you'll always be a nobody because it suits you well.

The Casting Director waves his hand.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Now could you get us those drinks?
We, the sombodies, have work to do.

The Casting Director looks up one last time. Stares at Eliza.
She is barely holding it in. She finally turns and storms
out.

INT. CHOCOLATE STUDIOS - WAITING AREA - DAY

Eliza closes the audition room door behind her. Stops a
moment. Listens.

Silence.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY

A silent moment before she starts the car and gets going out
of there.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - STAIRS - DAY

Eliza goes up the stairs, distracted. Her mind elsewhere. She
wipes the remaining tear with her sleeve.

She searches her pockets for her house key. Not finding it
she goes for the hidden spare beneath the potted plant just
as

DIEGO (O.S.)

I heard from...

ELIZA

(startled)

Diego.

DIEGO

That fucking cat is in the house again. Do you mind coming over again?

No answer from Eliza.

Diego notices her red, teary eyes.

DIEGO

What happened?

ELIZA

Nothing.

DIEGO

Something happened, unless that fucking cat shit in your eyes. I'll skin that thing, if you want me to.

This draws a weak smile from Eliza.

ELIZA

Some idiot. I'm used to it.

DIEGO

Seriously, tell me who did it and I'll rip his fucking balls off.

Eliza suddenly breaks into a sob. She leans on Diego's shoulder. Diego comforts her though you can tell this makes him uncomfortable.

DIEGO

Okay, okay.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Diego pours two mixed drinks. He pulls a VIAL with a clear liquid - GHB - and pours the entire contents into one of the glasses.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Eliza holds Magdalena's red dress in front of her deciding what to do with it. She opens a drawer, goes to the closet, under the bed. No where is good enough.

DIEGO (O.S.)
Where's you soda?

Startled, Eliza throws the dress back on the bed.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DAY

Diego stands with two drinks in his hands.

Eliza enters. She is still trying to hold back tears.

ELIZA
(crying)
I had the audition. It went pretty well. They said I had nice tits.

Diego hands a drink to Eliza.

DIEGO
You do have good tits.

Eliza downs the glass. Her sobs are less frequent now.

ELIZA
Thanks. So, I got the part.

She hands the glass back to Diego. Diego gives a big, shit eating smile.

DIEGO
Great.

ELIZA
So they said come back on Wednesday...

Diego no longer listening. Her voice unintelligible now.

MOMENTS LATER

Eliza is comfortably passed out on the couch.

ELIZA

(slurring)

I'm never going to be
somebody...and you hurt me, too.

Diego touches her lips with a finger.

DIEGO

Shhh. I promise, no one will ever
hurt you again.

She smiles through her stupor.

Diego takes a seat in front of Eliza. Unzips a BLACK SURGEON'S KIT and removes a professional, steel surgical blade.

CLOSE ON ELIZA'S NECK

Diego's hand traces the outline of her neck with the edge of the blade.

The drug has had its effect. Eliza doesn't budge.

A KNOCK from the front door causes Diego to stop suddenly. Diego stays dead still.

Another several KNOCKS.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - STAIRS - DAY

Jasso stands at the front door. KNOCKS again.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Diego stands peering through the peephole. Pulls back, calmly makes a quick mental calculation.

Moves to

ELIZA'S BEDROOM

Diego enters, looking for the window. On the bed, the RED DRESS. Diego stops, stares for a moment.

A persistent KNOCK from the front room causes him to get moving.

Diego opens the window, escapes via the fire escape.

EXT. ELIZA APARTMENT - STAIRS - DAY

Jasso tries peering through the front window. Scratches his head. Gives up, gets going.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT, ELIZA POV - DAY

The last of the sun gets lost behind Magdalena's building. An ominous warning of the approaching night.

INSERT: TELEVISION SCREEN

Jasso stands being interviewed by a REPORTER. The sound is off.

Jasso draws a flirty smile from the reporter. Turns to face the camera. Looks deep into it, as though looking at each viewer.

Hold on Jasso's face for a moment before going to

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eliza rouses from the couch, hold her throbbing, groggy head. Trying to dust the cobwebs.

She looks around the apartment. Notices the two drink glasses sitting on the coffee table. She stumbles to her feet, goes to the

BEDROOM

Where she notices the window open - Diego's escape route.

She closes it and lock it. Pulls the curtains.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Diego stands at the window looking over at Eliza's apartment.

DIEGO'S POV

Below, near the garbage bins, Jasso pokes through the garbage.

BACK TO SCENE

Diego pulls the curtains closed.

Diego leaves for an instant and returns with a roll of plastic. Lays down several rolls across a long table and ground. Tapes the ends together making a giant, plastic covering.

Tacks three other large pieces of clear plastic to the ceiling. Lets them hang to the ground like curtains, forming a clear barrier around his work space.

He then takes a white lab coat from the back of a chair and puts it on. Finds the matching safety goggles and puts them on as well. Up to the elbow, yellow rubber gloves as a final touch.

Again Diego leaves the room for an instant.

The HEAVE of something heavy and the MOVEMENT OF ICE before

Diego enters dragging the BLACK BODY BAG. Heaves it onto the waist high table.

While Diego focuses on his work in front of him, we get a view through the reflection of his clear goggle lenses.

Diego opens a metal, TOOL BOX revealing SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS and other cutting devices.

Diego takes out an ELECTRIC SAW. Sets it to the side. Opens the surgical kit. Takes out one of the SURGICAL BLADES.

From the reflection in his glasses we watch Diego unzip the body bag - The distorted image of a human torso.

Diego runs a finger down the front of the breast bone, down past the abdomen and the hips.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza enters with the rolled up dress in hand. Finds a garbage bag and shoves the dress inside. Removes the smaller trash bag from beneath the sink and places it over the dress to hide it.

Satisfied, Eliza goes into

LIVING ROOM

Where she goes to the window first. Checks the windows across. Watches Diego's shadow move within the window at the Magdalena place.

Finally, Eliza goes to the door. Sticks her ear to it seeing if she can make any unfamiliar noises out. Nothing.

Slowly opens the door and goes

OUTSIDE

Eliza hustles down the steps watching Magdalena's place.

The BUZZING of a SAW from Magdalena's place. This gives her pause for an instant. Keeps moving towards the

PARKING AREA

Where she turns the corner into the garbage bin area. Stops dead in her tracks. Not expecting

DETECTIVE JASSO raising up from behind the container. Looking for something. Analyzing something in his hand.

Eliza crouches behind the edge of the building. Stays to watch.

Jasso removes something from the bin and puts it to one side.

Goes back in. Raises again. This time with something on the end of a pen. Analyzes it. Something dripping with liquid. Jasso notices and attempts to move the object carefully.

No good. More liquid spills from the object causing Jasso to jerk. The object falls directly onto Jasso's shoes.

JASSO

Gosh darn it.

Jasso tosses the object to one side getting it away from him. Bends down to wipe the substance from his Italian shoes.

Takes a tissue. Sniffs it after using it to clean. Tosses the tissue to the side, disgusted at whatever it is.

Finished, Jasso gets moving in the direction of Eliza.

Eliza notices and runs back to her apartment, hoping to not be seen.

She quickly disappears inside, allowing the door to close with a THUD.

Hearing the sound, Jasso stops. Peers into the darkness towards Diego's apartment. Sees nothing. Looks over at Eliza's apartment. Still nothing. Back down cleaning his precious shoes.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Diego wraps a limb in black plastic. Duct tapes it.

Goes back to the corpse with the ELECTRIC SAW. Goes at the left leg, at the thigh. The BUZZING of the saw. It WHINES when it gets to bone.

Blood splashes his goggles.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jasso stands at Eliza's door. KNOCKS.

The faint sound of a saw BUZZING from within Magdalena's apartment across the way.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jasso's KNOCK.

Eliza looks at the door. Doesn't move.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jasso KNOCKS again. Waits a moment. Nothing. Looks around before trying the door knob. Unlocked, he gently pushes it open.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza is frozen in place. The front door creeps open. A sliver of light from the outside penetrates the darkness.

Eliza doesn't move.

The door opens half way.

Jasso peers inside.

JASSO

Hello? Detective Jasso here. Door
was open.

Eliza stays put.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jasso has his head halfway in the door. Suddenly, Max the cat
runs out and down the steps.

JASSO

Shit. Max! Come back here.

Jasso gives up, closes the door, goes after Max.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza watches Jasso below cross the courtyard and head
towards Diego/Magdalena's place.

EXT. PARKING AREA - NIGHT

Jasso searches for Max.

JASSO

Max? Here kitty.

Looks under cars, in the bushes. Nothing. Max is gone.

Jasso suddenly stops, looks towards Magdalena's apartment.

INT. MAGDALENA'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA

A wide shot of the living area shows Diego's cordless power
saw in hand. Blood covers the protective plastic on the
floor. Diego is covered in blood himself. It looks like a
murder scene.

Diego suddenly shuts the saw off. Looks towards the front
door as if someone is about to come through it.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

Jasso holds dead quiet trying to get a listen. The sound of the SAW suddenly stops.

Eerily quiet now.

Jasso creeps up the stairs.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Diego stares at the door. Dead still. Stays composed.

EXT. MAGDALENA'S APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

Jasso continues up a few more steps towards the front door. Suddenly his cellphone rings. He stops to answer it.

JASSO

Hello? This is him. I'll be right there.

Jasso hangs up and leaves down the steps in a hurry. Whatever it is, it's important.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

From the shadows of her apartment, Eliza watches Jasso hurriedly cross the street to his waiting car. The car headlights come on and the car moves off down the street and disappears.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Diego pulls the clear plastic walls down. Begins cleaning in a hurry. Puts everything he can into large, black garbage bags.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - NIGHT

Diego exits, hustles down the steps with a black garbage bag in each hand.

Diego gets in his Mustang, puts the bags in the trunk, gets in the driver side, starts the ENGINE and peels off.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eliza stares at the darkened window of Magdalena's place.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

Eliza stands at the front door. Folded, red dress in hand.

Looks out toward the street for someone approaching.

Nothing but shadows and silence.

Beneath the large pot next to the door, Eliza finds a KEY.

MAGDALENA'S HOUSE KEY

Eliza tries the lock and unlocks it easily.

Hesitant, Eliza enters and disappears within the darkness. Closes the door behind her without a sound.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza moves quietly through the darkened room. Runs her hand along the edge of the table to guide her. Steps on the plastic covering on the floor.

The dark hiding the remaining blood and body parts all over the floor.

Eliza continues on into the next room.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING AREA - NIGHT

The yellow Mustang approaches. Parks.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Outside light from the street provides some illumination for the room.

Eliza enters. Goes immediately to the closet.

Eliza takes a nearby chair and moves it close to the closet. Uses it to step up. Hides the dress in the black garbage bag in the far corner of the closet.

Satisfied, Eliza gets down. Goes to replace the chair when

A DOOR OPENS and BANGS shut.

Eliza stops frozen. Makes a split decision to hide

UNDER THE BED

Where she scoots to the center away from the edges.

LIVING ROOM

Diego walks straight towards the back.

BEDROOM

Where Diego enters and stops in the doorway. His profile barely illuminated. Goes to the closet without turning on the light. As though in too much of a hurry to do so.

UNDER THE BED

Eliza squeezes her eyes shut.

FOOTSTEPS on the wooden floor go here and there. Across the room.

A tiny BELL RINGS. Max crawls under the bed and gets right next to Eliza's face.

Eliza opens her eyes.

The cat MEOWS.

The cat plays with Eliza's hair.

Eliza tries to scare the cat away by making facial and hand gestures.

Diego's feet stop within Eliza's view. Waits for something.

Diego SNEEZES.

Suddenly, Diego's hands reach down for the cat. Picks it up without getting a look under the bed.

Eliza closes her eyes relieved for the moment.

DIEGO (O.S.)
Get out of here, little fucker.

Diego's voice gets further away as he exits the room with the cat.

DIEGO (O.S.)
I should cook you up like bacon.

A DOOR OPENS and closes shutting off Diego's voice.

Eliza waits a few seconds dead still to make sure.

Finally she scoots out from her hiding place.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Eliza crosses the dining room on tiptoe trying not to make a sound.

Suddenly, the light of a passing car - Diego's car pulling out - illuminates the interior of the living room revealing the working area and packaged body parts for an instant.

Eliza stops and allows the lights to go away. Not noticing the bloody mess left by Diego.

Goes to the door, opens it and leaves. The TURN OF THE LOCK from the outside - Eliza locking the door.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza enters and closes the door quickly. Without turning on the light, goes into the

BATHROOM

Eliza wipes her face leaving an unexpected BLOOD STREAK on her cheek.

She cuts the light on.

She stands in front of the sink. Looks at herself in the mirror. Realizes the blood on her face. Checks her hands and the rest of her body realizing the source.

Stands there looking at her face and hands in the mirror, horrified.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Darkness.

Suddenly the front door opens, showing the silhouette of a backlit Diego.

He stays there a moment, looking inside.

Flips the nearby light switch. His eyes grow wide at seeing the scene in front of him: His blood-stained lab coat, hanging on a chair, and a large pool of blood on the ground beneath several wrapped, dripping appendages.

The cat licks the drips from the package. Seeing Diego, the cat stops and runs into the bedroom leaving a red, paw print trail across the floor along with

Diego looks as though he may implode on spot.

He leaves, returns almost immediately with a spray bottle and towel. He attempts to wipe up the bloodied mess. It's no good, he is only making it worse.

Diego stops suddenly, follows the BLOODY SHOE TRACKS - Eliza's tracks - leading into the next room.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A LIGHT switches on revealing more of the same red shoe marks on the floor, on the chair, in front of the closet and beneath the bed.

Diego stands at the door. The cat sits on the paw stained bed. Cleans itself.

Diego goes to the closet. Takes the chair and searches the top, its far corners before finding

MAGDALENA'S RED DRESS

Diego holds it in front of him. Analyzes it. Looks towards the window, towards Eliza's apartment across the way.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Eliza stands in bra and panties cleaning her face and hands. Done, she takes the pile of soiled clothing and goes into

KITCHEN

And throws them into the garbage.

INT. CONTINUING LIFE SANATORIUM - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Jasso sits on a waiting room sofa, head in his hands. A DOCTOR consoles him.

DOCTOR

She died comfortably in her sleep.

JASSO

Can I see her?

DOCTOR

Certainly, Detective.

INT. CONTINUING LIFE SANATORIUM - PATIENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rosa Maria Jasso lies peacefully in her bed. Arms folded across her chest. She does, in fact, look at peace.

Jasso stands over her, gently rubs the top of her head, through her hair. A tear forms in his eyes.

He goes to her dresser, takes a bright red lipstick, begins to gently and carefully apply it to his mother's shriveled lips.

JASSO

You would have been proud of me.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

(clears throat)

Your mother left this for you.

Jasso turns to find the Doctor behind him. The doctor holds a large, rectangular gift box. One made for expensive clothing. Jasso takes it.

JASSO

Thank you.

DOCTOR

She spoke very highly of you.

The Doctor excuses himself.

Jasso turns back to his mother.

JASSO

I love you, mother.

Jasso kisses his dead mother's forehead.

JASSO

I'm going to make you proud.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Diego's work area is just about clean. No sign of blood stained plastic or tools.

Diego leaves to retrieve a mop and bucket. Begins mopping the place free of the blood mess.

LATER

Diego squeezes the dirty red mop into the mop bucket - now filled with red stained water.

Continues cleaning.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING - NIGHT

Diego loads the wrapped body parts into the trunk of his car. Throws the shovel in on top.

Closes the trunk.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Diego washes the last of his cutting tools in the sink. Dries them and puts them away. Cleans the sink. Begins washing his hands, scrubbing them with a scrub brush.

He does this obsessively until his hands are pink, almost bleeding.

LIVING ROOM

Diego goes straight for the door. Leaves.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jasso sits in his car.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE VEHICLE - NIGHT

JASSO'S POV, REARVIEW MIRROR

DIEGO goes to the Mustang and opens the trunk. Loads the metal tool box and other ITEMS in the trunk. Closes it. Disappears back up the steps inside.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The sound of ICE MOVING from the next room.

A KNOCK at the door.

Diego enters and cautiously approaches it. Looks through the peep hole. Steps back to consider whether he should answer it or not.

Another KNOCK.

He finally opens it and we see

Detective Jasso standing holding a plastic bag with portable food containers inside.

DIEGO

Detective. What a surprise.

JASSO

Good evening. Was in the neighborhood.

Diego plays it cool. Stands at the open door not allowing the Detective inside.

JASSO

Can I come in?

DIEGO

A call would have been helpful.
Fine. Come in. Make yourself at home.

Jasso enters past Diego and goes straight for the table where the dead body was. Lays out the containers of food.

JASSO

Sushi. Ready to eat.

(Serving)

I needed to ask a few questions and thought, "He might be hungry"...

Diego watches Jasso work. Closes the door behind him.

Jasso serves himself several California rolls, immediately throws one into his mouth.

JASSO

(mouth full)

My mom, God rest her soul, always told me

(Chewing)

If you show up someplace uninvited, you should bring something to eat.

Jasso attempts to swallow his large bolus of food. Makes a face.

JASSO

Do you have something to drink?
Sorry, I didn't bring anything.

DIEGO

Water okay?

JASSO

Do you have soda?

DIEGO

Let me check.

Diego goes around the corner into

KITCHEN

Where he gets a dirty glass from the sink. Blows in it to get the residue out.

DIEGO

(to himself)

Idiot.

Diego goes to the fridge and finds the soda. Pours a glass.

JASSO (O.S.)

With ice, if you have it.

Diego stops. Looks towards the living room. Continues.

DIEGO

Don't have any, sorry.

JASSO (O.S.)

That's okay. Never know where the ice comes from anyhow. Whether it is contaminated or not.

Diego walks back into

LIVING ROOM

Where Diego hands Jasso his glass.

Jasso takes a drink. Makes a satisfied face.

Diego goes to the food containers. Opens it. Serves himself several sushi rolls.

JASSO

Raw fish. Better than burnt beef.
You know burnt food is
carcinogenic? Cancer-causing for
the layperson. Can you imagine?
Instead of showing us it doesn't
like it, maybe an upset stomach, a
little diarrhea, the body says "F-
you, I'll give you a nice tumor,
something that will grow and kill
you slowly. Block your intestines
until you can't even pass gas".
Imagine the suffering.

Jasso stares into the distance, lost in thought.

DIEGO

(chewing)

We gotta die someday, anyway,
right? At least make it fun.

Jasso breaks his trance, stands, takes a casual look around the apartment. Picks up a trinket, inspects it.

Diego watches. Stays cool, follows the snooping Jasso with his eyes.

DIEGO

Can't live life thinking about
death all the time. Live everyday
like it's your last.

Jasso lifts MAGDALENA'S DRESS from a chair. Turns it over inspecting it. Looks back at Diego.

JASSO

Cause you never know when that day will come. The last day you'll ever speak to someone. Get to see someone you love. Should take everyday as a gift. Be thankful for those loved ones still around. You'll wake up one day with a grapefruit sizes tumor in your rectum.

Jasso gets to where the hallway begins, stops and looks down it toward the bedroom.

JASSO

May I?

DIEGO

I wouldn't go in there. A real mess. Might not find your way back. I can see the headlines now, Detective goes into apartment bedroom and doesn't come out.

Jasso gets the picture.

JASSO

Your aunt liked her gossip magazines. Now I know where most of the rainforest has gone. She wasn't much of a recycler, was she?

Jasso goes back into the living room.

DIEGO

My aunt gives a fuck about most things, really.

JASSO

That dress was missing several days ago.

For the first time, Diego looks uncomfortable.

DIEGO

I guess it's not anymore.

JASSO

When was the last time you saw your aunt? I mean, you guys were close and all, isn't that right?

DIEGO

As close as you can get to a crazy person. She made me feel like I had a mother.

Diego sits.

DIEGO

She always set the example...

FLASHBACK BEGIN

A crowd of WEALTHY GUESTS around a fancy dinner table centered within a large mansion. On the table a extravagant birthday cake.

Young Diego standing within the crowd. He's wearing a witch's costume, broom and all.

All waiting on the guest of honor.

TWO MUSCLED MEN in black leather, collar and leash enter pulling a small stage with young Magdalena sitting atop, guiding the men as if they were horses. She, too is in leather dressed as a dominatrix.

DIEGO (V.O.)

...she had parties that were talked about for days.

Most guests gasp, some lean in to whisper to one another. All are shocked by her entrance.

Young Diego smiles at the sight. He loves it. Claps excitedly.

BACK TO SCENE

DIEGO

People gossiped about it for months, until the next one. Just how she planned. She used to always let me light the candles.

JASSO

She seemed very proud of you. She must have appreciated you more than anyone.

(dramatic pause)

You'd figure she would tell you if she were leaving somewhere, no.

Jasso sits across from him. Clumsily takes a sushi roll with a pair of chopsticks. Finally gets it to his mouth just before losing it on the ground.

DIEGO

Nope.

A small drip of something from Jasso's egg roll falls to the floor. Diego notices. Jasso doesn't.

JASSO

So if she were to leave suddenly, you wouldn't know about it?

Diego notices a fresh blood stain on the floor next to the food dropped by Jasso. Plays it cool.

DIEGO

No. Why all the fuss anyway? You don't tell everyone when you take a shit, do you?

JASSO

(taken back)

Well, as you know she's been missing for the last two weeks and no one has seen or heard from her.

Jasso unknowingly moves his foot over the top of the blood stain, rubbing it into the carpet.

Diego winces.

DIEGO

No one has cared about her for years. What's the urgency now?

JASSO

She's a celebrity. People want to know what happened to her.

DIEGO

People want to run their mouths.

Jasso takes another bite. Again, food drops to the floor. This time on top of his shiny, Italian shoe.

JASSO

Well, some people are worried about her. I'm one of those people.

This time, Jasso notices. Gets a napkin, cleans the spot from his shoe. Diego acts like he doesn't notice. Interested more in the spot beneath Jasso's shoe.

DIEGO

You're worried about how you look to the audience. Embarrassing yourself.

Jasso finishes his egg roll. Places the trash in the bag. Has yet to notice the blood stain beneath his foot.

JASSO

I assure you, the only thing I have to gain is the satisfaction of knowing that your aunt is safe.

DIEGO

I bet. Should never eat sushi to go. No one has ever told you that?

JASSO

Depends on where you go, like anything.

Diego looks through the rest of the food bags.

DIEGO

That's deep. Well...I have some work to do.

JASSO

Oh, right. Certainly.

DIEGO

They didn't give you fortune cookies?

Jasso gets up to leave. Goes to the window.

JASSO

Fortune cookies are Chinese, not Japanese. Everyone knows that.

DIEGO

I didn't know that.

JASSO

Can't know everything.

(turns)

What type of work do you do again?

DIEGO
Parts. Auto parts.

JASSO
Well, something tells me I'm
barking up the wrong tree.

Jasso readies himself to leave.

JASSO
Sorry to interrupt your evening,
Diego.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - DAY

Diego stands at the front door just inside his apartment.

Jasso walks down the steps.

JASSO
You have a safe evening, Diego.

DIEGO
The next time I buy.
(smiles)

JASSO
What did you do to her anyway?

Jasso eyes Diego.

DIEGO
I told you, I don't know where she
is...

Jasso motions towards Eliza's apartment.

JASSO
No, the girl.

Diego stares, confused.

Finally...

DIEGO

Oh that girl. Try being nice to a lonely girl and see where it gets you.

JASSO

I know how that is.

DIEGO

She's the one you should be watching out for.

Diego makes a crazy circle with his finger.

Jasso hesitates. Turns back suddenly.

JASSO

Music.

Diego watches quiet, expecting something more.

DIEGO

What?

JASSO

Music. Something that doesn't cause cancer.

(smiles)

Night.

Diego closes the door.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Diego goes to the window. Watches Jasso cross the street, get into his car and drive off. Looks over at Eliza's blacked out apartment window.

Diego hurriedly disappears into the next room.

ICE MOVING like Diego removing everything from the bathtub.

Diego returns with several WRAPPED BODY PARTS within his arms.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

Diego makes sure no one is around before moving down the steps as fast as he can. He mumbles something.

Drops one of the packages.

It rolls the entire length of the steps to the bottom.

Diego chases it. He cusses under his breath.

At the end of the stairs, Diego stops a moment to check the package's integrity. Picks it up and takes it towards the

PARKING AREA

Diego opens the trunk and stuffs the remaining packages inside. Closes it.

INT. MAGDALENA'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Diego stands at the window watching Eliza's window. Has a sudden realization.

DIEGO

That bitch.

Pulls the curtains to.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Jasso pulls in and parks. Gets out in time to meet LT. Rivera leaving the station

LT. RIVERA (O.S.)

Jasso.

JASSO

Sir?

LT. RIVERA

Fantastic interview the other day.
I'm inclined to think the
interviewer wanted more than an
interview.

JASSO

Probably, Sir.

LT. RIVERA

The good news is we're stopping the
case on Magdalena.

JASSO

But, Sir, I believe...

LT. RIVERA

Don't trouble yourself that,
Officer Jasso. You did a
commendable job. We appreciate
that.

JASSO

But, Sir...

LT. RIVERA

Drug dealers kidnapped the
Governors's wife.

(leans in, whispers)

He most certainly had something to
do with it, if you ask me.

(casual)

We auspicious manpower hole to
fill, officer. And frankly, who
cares about some actress lost on
vacation. My mind is consumed by
those things that matter.

JASSO

But, Sir...

LT. RIVERA

Our task was to show face. Make it appear as though we were interested. You did a wonderful job showing face on TV. You were meaningless sitting in cars, interviewing people on the streets, Officer Jasso. Fine job, nonetheless. You will be commended for your work.

Rivera turns to leave.

JASSO

But, Sir...

Jasso grabs his shoulder causing him to stop.

Rivera looks Jasso up and down.

LT. RIVERA

The investigation is terminated. You are to stand down. You will go back to giving out traffic violations starting now. Speak no more about this. That is all.

LT. Rivera leaves without waiting for an answer. Leaves Jasso standing there alone. Dumbfounded.

INT. POLICE STATION - TRAFFIC DIVISION - NIGHT

Jasso sits at his desk covered in newspaper clippings. Removes and situates all the ones with images of himself. Smiles at one in particular. Shows it to the picture of his mother sitting on the corner of his desk.

You can tell he's barely holding it together.

Jasso unfolds an piece of white, notebook paper.

CLOSE ON PAPER

Shows a handwritten note in 3rd grader's handwriting: "Always remember, you are my beautiful boy. Love, Mom."

Jasso smiles to himself. Wipes a tear that has formed in the corner of his eye.

Jasso turns his attention to the unopened LAB REPORT sitting on his desk.

CLOSE ON PAPER

"Sample confirmed positive for human blood. Female."

BACK TO SCENE

By the look on Jasso's face, he has a sudden realization.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza stands at the window looking at Magdalena's window.

INT. JASSO'S CAR - NIGHT

Jasso drives, frantic.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza sits on the sofa in the dark. The muted Television providing the only light.

A KNOCK at the door. Eliza stays dead still.

ELIZA
(cautiously)
Who is it?

A silent moment.

Eliza stands, takes a couple of hesitant steps towards the door. She has a large, BUTCHER'S KNIFE in her hand.

ELIZA

(louder)

Who is it?

Again, silence.

Eliza gets to the door, peers through the peephole.

ELIZA'S POV

No one there. She waits for a moment in the darkened silence.

Suddenly, Diego's face takes over the field of view. He appears crazed.

DIEGO

(feigning begging)

Please open the door, Eliza!

A loud THUMP against the door as if it is about to be broken down.

Eliza takes a couple of steps back. She has the knife in front of her, defensively.

The THUMPS continue against the door. Now rhythmically.

ELIZA

Diego? What do you want?

THUMP.

Eliza backs into the coffee table, almost trips.

DIEGO (O.S.)

Don't be scared. Just open the door.

ELIZA

I don't care what you did. I won't say anything.

THUMP.

DIEGO (O.S.)
That cat...

THUMP.

DIEGO (O.S.)
Funny what a cat looks like without
fur. Like a fucking rat. Can you
help me with it? Please?

THUMP.

ELIZA
Go away, Diego. I'm warning you.

THUMP.

DIEGO
Open...

THUMP.

DIEGO
...The fucking...

THUMP.

DIEGO
...Door...

THUMP.

DIEGO
...Eliza!

The thumping stops suddenly. A long quiet pause. Eliza
watches and waits.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE VEHICLE - NIGHT

Jasso drives like a madman. Swerves to miss several cars.

He dials a number on his phone.

INT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eliza waits, watches the door a moment before quickly moving into the

BEDROOM

Where she immediately goes to the window. She fumbles with the lock, finally gets it open.

A CELLPHONE RINGS O.S.

OUTSIDE - ELIZA'S POV

Diego is three quarters of the way up the fire escape, nearing Eliza's window.

BEDROOM

Eliza pulls back, closes and locks the window. She runs back into

LIVING ROOM

A CELLPHONE RINGS from somewhere. Eliza searches for it, goes to the couch. Lifts the pillows, runs her hand along the cushions.

A WINDOW BREAKS in the other room.

CLOSE ON CELLPHONE DISPLAY

Shows "tele-cop" and a phone number.

Eliza forgets it, runs to the door. Fumbles with the stubborn chain. Before she can get it open

DIEGO

Enters feigning a ballerina's routine. Dances toward Eliza, does a twirl.

ELIZA

Are you fucking crazy!? Get out of here!

She holds the knife in front of her to show Diego she's serious.

DIEGO

Ohhh. That's a big knife you have. Can I touch it?

Eliza backs up defensively.

Diego walks Eliza backwards all the way to the couch.

Eliza falls into it. Sits. She looks up at Diego terrified. She moves the knife in a stabbing motion towards Diego.

Diego feigns a move towards her. Eliza over reacts.

Diego grabs the knife by the blade. It immediately cuts into his skin. He doesn't notice or doesn't care. Easily pulls the knife from Eliza's hand.

DIEGO

I can't believe the fucking mess you left at my aunt's place. Talk about bad manners. Blood doesn't come out easy, you know?

ELIZA

I didn't...

DIEGO

The dress. You tried to hide it. What about the person inside the dress? Where the fuck is she?

ELIZA

I didn't do anything! You said
yourself she wasn't very tidy...

Diego waves the knife at Eliza.

DIEGO

(smiles)

You were going to set me up,
weren't you?

Diego takes a seat right next to Eliza.

ELIZA

He was getting close to you. I
tried to...

DIEGO

That was it! You tried to steal a
little spark from her. Couldn't
stand to see her enjoying life.
Being better than you.

Diego takes some of his own blood, wipes a blood streak
across Eliza's cheek.

ELIZA

Please, Diego.

He does the other cheek.

DIEGO

(dramatic)

Got tired of being the little piece
of shit you are. Nobody looking at
you. I bet sometimes, even you
forget your own name. What the fuck
is it?

He does a line on her forehead.

DIEGO

You came into this world for no reason. Nobody will miss you either. Should I cry now? Hey, who am I to judge? I'm not interested in the whole, only the parts of you.

ELIZA

You're wrong.

DIEGO

We're like...

(touches his chin)

...like, Blood sisters. Yeah, blood sisters. We both have secrets. That we'll keep until we're dead. Right?

A BEEP from Eliza's phone, letting us know she has a message. Diego finds the phone, reads it.

DIEGO

(calm)

Now why would you do that ruining our secret? You know I hate the cops. Getting that retarded cop involved will ruin everything.

Diego goes to the living room window. Looks towards the street. Nothing yet.

DIEGO

He couldn't find his way out of a paper bag.

Turns to Eliza, waves the knife in her direction.

DIEGO

But you have to admit, he's got an amazing television presence.

Diego's attention is taken by the television suddenly - the Telenovela. Excited he turns up the volume.

DIEGO

That bitch cheated on him and he's
looking to take her back.

Diego shakes his head. He suddenly sneezes.

Max MEOWS.

DIEGO

Where's that fucking cat. I'm going
to make a pair of socks out of it.

Max stands in the kitchen watching Diego. He MEOWS. Diego
sees him, makes a move towards him. He hides the knife behind
his back.

DIEGO

Come here, kitty. I have something
for you.

Max stays put, MEOWS again, teasing him.

Diego gets several feet away from him, bends down towards
him. As he does, Max takes off between his legs. Diego takes
a swing with the knife, turns to go after him.

As he turns, Eliza hits him in the face with the FLOWER POT,
shattering it into pieces.

Diego goes down.

Eliza makes her escape. This time, she easily gets the front
door chain off, escapes down the stairs. Max follows.

Diego MOANS in pain, struggles to his feet. Blood pours from
his face.

He gathers his senses, moves to the open door.

DIEGO

Eliza! Bring me that cat!

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - GARBAGE AREA - NIGHT

Eliza cowers behind the garbage bins. Max moves in and out of her legs.

DIEGO (O.S.)

Here, Eliza. Kitty, kitty, kitty.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING AREA - NIGHT

Diego stands surveying the area.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - GARBAGE AREA - NIGHT

Eliza stays put. Not a sound. Closes her eyes as if expecting the worst.

The faint sound of POLICE SIRENS approaching.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - PARKING AREA - NIGHT

Diego looks in the direction of the police sirens.

DIEGO

(singing)

I'll be back, Eliza. You'll miss me
when I'm gone.

Diego gets in his car and peels out of the parking lot, moves out of the front gate and disappears down the street.

Eliza puts her head between her legs. CRIES.

BEGIN DAYDREAM

CROWDED ROOM

An elegant mansion with WELL-KNOWN GUESTS standing around drinking and talking.

CLOSE UP

Eliza's face. Her attention is across the room of GUESTS watching

MAGDALENA DE SAN MARCOS

Chatting it up with Missy Lara. All smiles and laughs. Both having a good time.

GUEST #1 (O.S.)

Look at ol' San Marcos. She thinks she's something. I wonder if anyone has reminded her how ugly she is?

Eliza turns towards the voice of the conversation happening a few feet away.

TWO GUESTS, well-dressed men in their thirties, gossip in a corner.

Eliza tries not listening but can't help herself.

GUEST #2

Look at her. Her face needs some starch and an iron. I wouldn't fuck her with your dick.

Both LAUGH.

Furious, Eliza sneers at the two guests before heading across the room towards Magdalena. This time, she doesn't say anything.

WE PAN OUT

And for the first time, we see that Eliza is actually in a WAITRESS UNIFORM. She is part of the staff serving drinks. She carries a tray of hors d'oeuvres

Eliza approaches Magdalena and Missy.

MAGDALENA

(without looking)

Why don't you get us a drink,
Darling.

Missy smiles at Eliza.

MAGDALENA

No more champagne. It makes me
gassy. And horny.

Magdalena smiles at Missy.

A few uncomfortable seconds before Eliza moves on.

As she walks past the two previous guests, they SNICKER.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - GARBAGE AREA - NIGHT

Jasso finds her hiding still. He goes to comfort Eliza. Takes her into his arms. She allows it.

ELIZA

All this trouble... For nothing.
I'm nothing, I know. That's exactly
who I will always be.

JASSO

There's nothing wrong with being
who you are. Sometimes we want to
be one thing, it just happens we're
something else.

Magdalena's SONG (Rie Payaso) begins.

INT. JASSO APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Detective Jasso HUMS Magdalena's SONG. He faces the mirror,
shaves the gobs of shaving cream from his face.

He stands in a towel. Behind him, in the next room, an
ELEGANT SUIT AND SHOES sits waiting to be worn.

The opened GIFT BOX from his mother, sitting opened on the bed next to the suit.

Jasso looks into the mirror at them. Smiles.

EXT. DESOLATE HIGHWAY - DAY

A YOUNG BOY on a bicycle rides alongside the dirt road. He stops at a bent road sign, throws his bike down to get a look. He peers down into the small ravine.

BOY'S POV

We see Diego's yellow mustang off the road in the high grass upside down. It's mangled.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - TALK SHOW - DAY

CAMERA CREW and OTHERS prepare the set. A hurried feeling.

THE AUDIENCE TALKS in a low murmur.

PRODUCER (O.S.)

Ready, everyone?

Everyone gets to their places. Ready to begin rolling.

JASSO (O.S.)

Just make sure I look good.

VIA CAMERA 2

Jasso is now in the place of Sarah Oh who is no longer on stage.

The MAKE-UP person finishes touching up Jasso's face. Scampers off-stage.

PRODUCER (O.S.)

And three, two...

The excited AUDIENCE answers with a rapturous applause and SHOUTING.

JASSO

Thank you, and welcome to the
"Detective Hour". I'm your host,
Gabriel Jasso. Let's begin with our
headline story, the newest twist in
the saga of Magdalena de San
Marcos.

(consults paper)

The AUDIENCE GASPS.

JASSO

A story of incestual love.

More GASPING from the audience.

Jasso gives his best consoling face to her audience.

Within the audience, a few members hold signs that read
things like: "Telecop we love you" and "Take me into custody,
Telecop"

JASSO

It was the joint effort of several
officers, I must admit. Our suspect
trafficked in human corpses.
Conspiring with a local
pathologist...

EXT. MORGUE - DAY

POLICE OFFICERS lead the portly Pathologist out in handcuffs.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - TALK SHOW - VIA CAMERA 2

JASSO

(straightens)

...Selling cadavers to practicing
surgeons, scientists. Not only a
crime of law but one of morality.

JASSO(cont'd)

We have sufficient evidence implicating Diego Mariscal, a young playboy from the north with, we think, ties to organized crime.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - STAIRS - DAY

Detective Jasso sits on the stairs, flowers and a bottle of champagne in his hands. Checks the time on his watch.

JASSO (V.O.)

We anticipate within the next few days they will be presenting his statement to the ministry. They are actively searching for him. They expect to find him very soon.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - GARBAGE AREA - DAY

A YOUNG GIRL holds MAGDALENA'S discarded dress.

The girl takes the dress and gets going on her bike out of there.

EXT. ELIZA CURIEL APARTMENT - STAIRS - DAY

Jasso watches the young girl on the bike pass, and disappear out of the complex and down the road.

He takes one last look at his watch before getting up and walking, across the street to his parked vehicle across the street. He hesitates before getting in, looks at Eliza's apartment one last time as though expecting her to come out.

She doesn't.

He gets going.

INT. HOUSE- BASEMENT - DAY

Diego's corpse lies on a wooden table. Yellow overhead lighting making his flesh look decomposed.

TWO CHINESE MIGRANTS (30s) stand over him.

MIGRANT 1 eats a Cup-o-Noodles with chopsticks. MIGRANT 2 practices suturing a wound on Diego's arm. A MEDICAL BOOK sits open in front of him.

MIGRANT 1

(Chinese)

Where did you find him?

Without lifting his head from his work.

MIGRANT 2

(Chinese)

Down the road. Car crash. Drunk driving.

Migrant 1 watches for a moment. SLURPS his noodles.

MIGRANT 2

You get fortune cookies?

Migrant 1 slaps Migrant 2 on the back of the head.

MIGRANT 1

Japanese don't do fortune cookies.
Everyone knows that.

Migrant 2 looks up from his work.

MIGRANT 2

I didn't know that.

INT. MAGDALENA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Magdalena's SONG continues.

Magdalena lies quietly in the lukewarm water. Eyes closed. Sleeping, perhaps.

Something BANGS in the next room creating a startling noise.

Magdalena immediately opens her heavily mascara'd eyes. Raises her head a little. Looks towards the source of the noise.

MAGDALENA

That you, Maxamiliano?

Magdalena watches down the hallway towards the

BEDROOM

The cat suddenly stops cleaning. Looks up at something. Holds its gaze.

BATHROOM

Magdalena looks on for a moment. Nothing of interest. Lays her head comfortably again.

Gets a look at her reflection in the overhanging mirror before closing her eyes once more.

Magdalena opens her eyes again, looks towards the hallway. She pushes the mirror out of the way and steps out of the tub, grabs the nearby hanging towel.

As she does, she bumps the radio into the tub.

EXT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - STAIRS - NIGHT

A WOMAN'S SCREAM and at the same time

The light just outside the front door of Magdalena's place wanes. A power surge causing it to dim and brighten.

The Tabby cat appears, hustles down the stairs. Something scared it out of there.

WE PAN and find Eliza passing by. She stops when she hears the screams, climbs the stairs to investigate.

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Magdalena stands looking into the bathtub. Hand over her mouth.

ELIZA (O.S.)

Are you okay?

Startled, Eliza turns to find Eliza standing in the bathroom doorway.

MAGDALENA

Who the hell are you?

ELIZA

I'm your neighbor.

MAGDALENA

Oh, yes, the waitress. I need your help, Darling

INT. MAGDALENA APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Magdalena packs her suitcase in a rush.

MAGDALENA

After you drop me off, call every news outlet, television station you can and give them the news.

She stops, looks directly at Eliza.

MAGDALENA

Anonymously, of course.

ELIZA

What about the police?

MAGDALENA

(laughs)

Yeah. Call them too. Morons.

Eliza's posture shows she isn't sure.

Magdalena stops, takes Eliza's face in her hands.

MAGDALENA

Darling, look what happened. Nearly killed by music. Only when you are dead and gone will people adore you once more. I want the pleasure of seeing that one last time. Before I die. You understand, Darling.

Magdalena smiles. Gently kisses Eliza on the lips. Eliza smiles, a great big smile.

Magdalena finishes packing.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - TALK SHOW - VIA CAMERA 2

Jasso looks directly into the camera.

JASSO

Like my mentor used to say, one must trust his instincts. Regardless of what is in front of him.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Eliza's VW BUG pulls to the curb. Magdalena, now disguised in blonde wig and glasses, gets out.

INT. VW BUG - NIGHT

Magdalena leans in the passenger window. She finds a business card and hands it to Eliza.

MAGDALENA

Here. Call my agent. He'll set you up with an audition.

ELIZA

How do you know I want to be an actress?

MAGDALENA

Doesn't everyone?

She blows a kiss to Eliza.

JASSO (V.O.)

Regardless of what people think.
Even if it goes against everything
you've believed until that point.
Even if it means giving up
everything.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - TALK SHOW - VIA CAMERA 2

The camera PANS for a close-up

JASSO

The truth isn't what matters in the
end.

EXT. HOTEL - HAVANA, CUBA - DAY

Magdalena lies on a deck chair pool side.

A POOL BOY (19) rubs lotion on her back.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - TALK SHOW - VIA CAMERA 2

Jasso's face takes up the entire field of view.

JASSO

It's the perception of it.

Jasso gives his biggest smile, showing off all of his
perfect, white teeth.

We HOLD for a moment until

The image cuts off suddenly and we PAN OUT to show

Eliza standing in front of her television, cutting it off for
the last time.

She sits on the couch, ties her running shoes.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

We follow Eliza as she jogs through the most beautiful day with city around her going about its business.

(The song, "Me Siento Vivo" plays over the closing credits.)

FADE OUT.

FIN