

King Of California

by

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1 INT. ASSEMBLY LINE - DAY

1 *

A MAN wears a white sterile suit. Reflected in his glasses, several units of some unknown product roll past on a conveyor belt, in a clean room.

*

Beside the conveyor belt, the Man yawns, his eyes close for a moment, and one unit of the mystery product--its significance signaled by the fact that it is SHINY GOLD, the only color in this otherwise black and white world--passes uninspected.

TILT UP TO REVEAL A SIGN THAT READS--

TROJAN QUALITY CONTROL

2 EXT. A CAR PARKED IN AN ORANGE GROVE -- NIGHT

2 *

In the back seat, a tangle of limbs. On the car's rear deck, in the moonlight, waits a BRIGHT GOLD, foil-wrapped Trojan CONDOM.

*

*

Angle on: Tiny, white-gloved hands grip a man's bare back.

*

MIRANDA (V.O.)

*

Mom was a hand model, a job held by adult women with eerily childlike hands, which you don't come across every day, so they get paid pretty well.

*

*

*

*

*

CUT TO:

*

FLASHBACK: 1997

*

2A INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY (FORMERLY SC 4)

2A *

ANGLE ON: a small, articulated toy plastic horse, probably made by Mattel, galloping through a lush MINIATURE FOREST, guided by a child's hands.

*

*

*

PULL OUT TO SHOW--

*

We're on the set of a commercial for "Whisper, the Life-like Horse." And the hands don't belong to a child, they belong to a petite, buttoned down woman -- RITA, 32.

*

*

*

2B EXT. A CAR PARKED IN AN ORANGE GROVE - CONTINUOUS

2B *

The man's hand grabs the condom and tears open the wrapper, tossing the wrapper out the window and onto the ground, where it gleams in the moonlight.

*

*

*

MIRANDA (V.O.)

*

That's how I got started.

*

3 **EXT. STATE MENTAL INSTITUTION AT VALENCIA -- DAY**

3 *

Miranda drives an old Volvo wagon into the parking lot. She checks her face in the rear view mirror. Fixes her hair, then thinks better of it, messing it up. She gets out and leans against the car, a teenager hiding nervous anticipation behind a scowl.

The front door of the institution opens, and an ORDERLY escorts a man out. He is CHARLIE--46, wry, unruly, genuinely hip.

At the sight of him, Miranda immediately lights up. She's beaming. She waves and starts to speak, but he doesn't see her. He's leaning close to the Orderly, muttering something.

Miranda takes a closer look at Charlie. He's hunched over, his eyes are glazed. The Orderly seems to be humoring him until, suddenly, Charlie says something that makes the Orderly LAUGH.

Charlie's posture straightens and at once he looks vital, younger. He gives the Orderly a high-five, then turns and strides toward Miranda, grinning, with a huge DUFFEL BAG in tow.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

MIRANDA

Hi Dad.

He hugs her. She hugs back. With reservations.

CUT TO:

4 SCENE MOVED TO 2A

4 *

FLASHBACK: 1997

*

5 INT. RUN DOWN VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

5 *

Rita is carrying the "Life-like Horse" in its box. She gives the toy to a LITTLE GIRL--Miranda at age eight. Miranda's Mom douses her hands with lotion, then slips them into white gloves.

*

MIRANDA (VO)

Mom was careful, she had to be. Her hands were the only ostensible income we had for a while.

6 INT. BAR - NIGHT - (2000)

6

ANGLE ON: CHARLIE, ON STAGE

Thumping a huge UPRIGHT BASS along with a COMBO while all three of the bar's PATRONS watch football on TV.

7 INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM - NIGHT (2000)

7

IN HER ROOM

MIRANDA (VO)

After Mom left, the supply of toys dwindled, but we managed.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

Little Miranda plays with a horse made from wine corks and toothpicks.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: A windowsill covered with cork and toothpick TOYS--bears, bunnies, dogs, Martians. Above the toys, little Miranda presses her nose to the window, letting it steam up the glass. The toys' shadows grow longer as it gets later and she leaves her bedroom, walking past--

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (2000)

8

Amidst a smoke-filled forest of wine bottles, her Dad jams on his upright bass with a bunch of JAZZBOS. Little Miranda goes into--

9 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (2000)

9

And finds a sink full of filthy dishes. She climbs up on a stool and starts cleaning up.

MIRANDA (VO)

It would've been easier if we'd just sold the house, because the way the market was, we would've cleaned up. But Dad grew up in our house. He refused to leave. So we managed.

10 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (2000)

10

ANOTHER DAY

Little Miranda watches a manic Charlie talk a mile a minute as he tunes his gigantic upright bass.

MIRANDA (VO)

We had some good times, but I could never exactly get comfortable. There was always something...I don't know, something was always about to happen.

Little Miranda watches as Charlie, ranting and oblivious, tightens a bass string TOO FAR. She nods, pretending to listen, but as the string stretches, beginning to fray, she puts her fingers in her ears, wincing.

MIRANDA (VO)

Charlie was like that string, and I was always waiting.

END FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

THE PRESENT (2006)

11 INT. MIRANDA'S OLD VOLVO - DAY

11

As Miranda merges onto the freeway, Charlie closes his eyes and lets the sun shine on his face. She watches him for a moment. Sees where he missed spots shaving. Sees a bottle of prescription pills sticking out of his coat pocket. Sees his hands in his lap, shaking.

MIRANDA (VO)

I don't know what I expected him to look like but, I mean, don't people go to hospitals to get better?

Charlie's eyes jerk open suddenly.

CHARLIE

...What?

MIRANDA

I didn't say anything.

He sits up, tries to focus. Looks out the window at a passing series of brand new Spanish style HOUSING TRACTS.

CHARLIE

(reads the tract signs)
Cameo Woods...Miraleste...Wavecrest at Talega Gallery...where the hell do they get these names? Were these here before?

MIRANDA

Yeah. No, wait a minute...I'm not sure.

CHARLIE

I don't think they were. How can they build them so fast? I wasn't gone that long.

Charlie turns to Miranda and looks at her as if he hadn't really noticed her before. He studies her closely, up and down.

MIRANDA

What're you looking at?

CHARLIE

Did you...I mean, you grew a little, didn't you?

She quickly pulls her jacket closed, hiding her chest. Embarrassed, Charlie looks out the window.

CUT TO:

Flashback:

12 **INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT - A YEAR AND A HALF AGO (2004)** 12

There's a sort of CHRISTMAS TREE in the living room, a *
forlorn "Charlie Brown" tree with strawberry baskets for *
ornaments and topped with a beer can cut into a star. *

Miranda comes in with a present, nicely wrapped, for her Dad, *
and puts it under the tree. She's a little younger, a lot *
less jaded. She looks around for him. She hears the sound of *
JINGLING CRYSTAL, coming from above. *

She runs, following the sound up the stairs and opens a door. *

13 **INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (2004)** 13

And he's hanging by his neck from the chandelier, his *
sneakers flailing above the floor as he thrashes. Miranda *
runs into--

14 **INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (2004)** 14

Gets a knife and rushes back to him. She climbs up on a chair
and cuts him down. He crashes to the floor.

END FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

THE PRESENT (2006)

15 **INT. MIRANDA'S STATION WAGON - DAY** 15

Charlie LAUGHS suddenly, startling Miranda.

MIRANDA

What?

CHARLIE

It's so weird I'm not sure if I dreamt it
or heard it on the news. Nude Chinese men
are washing ashore by the dozens on
Southern California beaches. At sunrise.
They're boat people, you know. The boats
stop outside the maritime limit and they
put their clothes in plastic bags and
swim for it. Nude Chinese guys. Fucking
amazing.

She looks at him. He's smiling, his eyes are wide and bright.
She can't help but smile too. He just has a way. She hides it
from him though. He reaches across and roughs up her hair.

CHARLIE

It's good to see you.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

THE STATION WAGON EXITS THE FREEWAY

As Miranda drives along the housing tracts thin out, until they reach--

A DIRT ROAD

The Volvo follows it up to the very edge of the new tract developments to--

16 **EXT. OLD VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY**

16

They pull around to the side of the house, park and get out amidst the sound of HAMMERS and CONSTRUCTION. WORKMEN are framing the walls on a model home right next door, so close that the vibrations from their hammer blows cause the Victorian's peeling paint to fall off bit by bit.

Charlie looks out at the surrounding, approaching tracts.

CHARLIE

They're closing in. Gonna be a lot of animals with nowhere to go pretty soon.

MIRANDA

Fuck the animals. What about us?

CHARLIE

(doesn't seem to hear her)
Do you think they'll just roll right over this house, or will they stop long enough to tear it down?

Miranda tries to lift his duffel from the car but it's too heavy.

MIRANDA

God, what's in this?

CHARLIE

Books.

MIRANDA

Books?

CHARLIE

Research.

MIRANDA

For what?

CHARLIE

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 16 *

17 INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS 17

Miranda walks in through the living room, which has shelves covered with thousands of RECORDS. Charlie's upright bass leans against a wall in the hallway. Miranda has to maneuver around it as she carries his bags down the hall into--

18 INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 18

She opens a shade. The room feels dusty, untouched. She glances unwillingly up at the chandelier. She can still see where the rope pulled it out some, from the ceiling. She backs out-- *

19 THROUGH THE DOORWAY 19

And stops, surreptitiously peering down the hall at Charlie. He stares at his upright bass for a long moment, then picks it up, carries it across the room and wrestles it into the closet. The bass's massive, curved silhouette remains, a dark place on the sun-faded wall. *

20 OMITTED 20 *

21 FLASHBACK TO: INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE -- CHRISTMAS DAY (2004) 21 *

Miranda comes home from the hospital. She looks at the Christmas tree, then wanders around the house. It's quiet.

MIRANDA (VO)
The first thing I noticed about having Dad in the mental asylum was that the kitchen was clean. Also, the house was quiet, and I don't want to say exactly normal, but, well normal. *

Miranda tries not to look at Charlie's upright bass as she passes it on the way into the living room. She sits down on the couch and is joined by a DOG-- MILES, a mutt.

A MONTAGE BEGINS UNDER HER VOICE OVER: *

21A INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM 21A *

CLOSE ON: Miranda picks up broken crystal. *

MIRANDA (VO)
I learned something interesting about state government-- if you just send the right paper to the right offices, everyone's happy.

22 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (2004)** 22

CLOSE ON: Miranda practices signing Charlie's name, then turns to a stack of government FORMS and starts signing.

MIRANDA (VO)

Social services thought I was with my mother, Child Welfare thought I was with my father. My father thought I was with my mother, my mother thought I was with a foster family. Somewhere, some foster family thought I was with my father, and so on. It's like, for the most part, we only exist on paper.

23 **EXT. THE HOUSE -- NIGHT (2004)** 23

THROUGH THE WINDOW

*

We see what looks like the silhouette of a FAMILY having dinner.

24 **INT. HOUSE - NIGHT (2004)** 24

We see that Miranda has arranged two homemade dummies around the dining table and cleverly backlit them. She sits between her imaginary parents, eating dinner.

25 **INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY -- DAY (2004)** 25

HOMELESS MEN and WOMEN hunch over the library's free computers, checking their email. Among them, we find Miranda, logging on.

MIRANDA (VO)

By working double shifts and keeping expenses low I was able to buy a car on Ebay. They didn't know who they were selling it to. An unlicensed fifteen year-old looks the same as everyone else on Ebay. It's like the Social services thing. Nobody sees anybody any more.

26 **EXT. OLD LADY'S HOUSE -- DAY (2004)** 26 *

An elderly JAPANESE LADY suspiciously but not reluctantly accepts a stack of hundreds from Miranda. She gets in and sits behind the wheel, pleased with her new car. *

MIRANDA (VO)

I admit, it's a beater. But a safe beater.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

The Old Lady watches as she attempts to drive away. When nothing happens, she reaches into the car and puts it in DRIVE for her. Miranda smiles at her, then gives the car too much gas and careens out into the street.

*
*
*
*

27 **EXT. HOUSE, FRONT YARD - DAY (2004)**

27

Miranda sits in her car and practices moving from park to drive to reverse and back again. She finally puts it in park, puts on the parking break and congratulates herself.

*
*
*

MIRANDA (OUT LOUD)

Nice job. Good girl. I'm proud of you.

28 **INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT (2004)**

28

It's Christmas Eve, one year later. Charlie's upright bass still looms in the corner. Miranda sits on the couch beside the dog, gazing at a real Christmas tree, with real ornaments.

MIRANDA (VO)

Things were a lot different with Charlie out of the picture. Easier. All right, I'll just say it-- things were wonderful.

She smiles and enjoys the peace and quiet, sipping cocoa.

Behind her, a string on the upright bass suddenly snaps with a tremendous BANG! Miranda and the Dog jump out of their seats.

END FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

THE PRESENT (2006)

29 **INT. HOUSE, CHARLIE'S ROOM - DAY**

29

O.S. power tools SCREAM from the tract home that's going up next door.

Now wearing a McDonald's uniform, Miranda walks down the hall and peeks into Charlie's room. He's in bed, fast asleep.

30 **INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

30

She finds the sink full of filthy dishes. She puts on the gloves and starts washing. She hears the approaching sound of

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: 30
a HARLEY. *

31 **EXT. HOUSE - DAY** 31

PEPPER, a middle-aged black man, roars up the drive on his bike. He cuts the engine and its rumble is replaced by deafening CONSTRUCTION NOISE.

Charlie comes out in his pajama bottoms to greet him.

CHARLIE
(yells over construction noise)
You're looking good! Lost some weight?!

PEPPER
It's the chemo!

The construction noise abruptly STOPS.

CHARLIE
Oh.

Embarrassed, Charlie looks away, but Pepper punches his arm.

PEPPER
Welcome back.

Pepper goes to his bike, pulls a trumpet case from his saddle bags.

CHARLIE
Might as well leave it in there. I'm not playing with you.

PEPPER
Some other time.

CHARLIE
Nope, I'm not playing anymore.

Pepper offers him a joint.

CHARLIE
You better put that away too.

Miranda comes out on the front porch.

PEPPER
Oh. Guess you had enough of that on the road.

CHARLIE
What?

MIRANDA
Tour wore him out, right Charlie?

*
*

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

PEPPER

*

Yeah, twenty states, fifty cities will do that to you.

CHARLIE

Huh?

MIRANDA

You were on tour, Charlie, remember?

CHARLIE

Oh...right.

Charlie notices that she's wearing a McDonald's uniform.

CHARLIE

Jesus, what's that?

MIRANDA

My uniform, what's it look like?

CHARLIE

What are you doing going to work?
Shouldn't you be in school? Oh, wait a minute, is it summer?

MIRANDA

It's March.

CHARLIE

Huh.

(looks around himself for a moment)
Well what happened to school then?

MIRANDA

Had to give school up, Charlie. Had to make money, you know, while you were gone for two years?

*

*

She walks around the side of the house, toward her station wagon.

MIRANDA

I'll be back around ten.

CHARLIE

You're working nights?

MIRANDA

Friday's double-shift day.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (2)

31

CHARLIE

So, what-- you're working nights down on Alameda? No way, I don't want you down there. It's not safe.

MIRANDA

School wasn't safe. And this isn't the old McDonald's on Alameda. It's a new one, on Crest Parkway.

CHARLIE

Crest Parkway?

MIRANDA

It's in a new neighborhood. Terra Linda Estates.

CHARLIE

Where the fuck is that?

Miranda gets into her car and turns the ignition. The car doesn't start. She tries again. Nothing. Again and it starts.

CHARLIE

Hey, do you think maybe you could give me a ride tomorrow? I'm supposed to see a man about a job.

MIRANDA

No way.

CHARLIE

Way. I've got an interview.

MIRANDA

Great. Sure, I'll give you a ride.

She pulls out of the driveway. Charlie and Pepper smile and wave as she drives off.

CHARLIE

I wasn't on tour, you know. I was in the nuthouse.

PEPPER

I know.

They keep smiling and waving until Miranda's out of sight.

32 **EXT. NEW SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENTS -- THE NEXT DAY**

32

The battered Volvo drives erratically from a Spanish style tract into a Cape Cod style tract.

33 **INT. MIRANDA'S CAR - DRIVING -DAY**

33

Charlie's driving, trying to read an old, dog-eared map at the same time, obviously lost, coming close to wrecking the car.

CHARLIE

According to this, we're in the middle of an orange grove.

MIRANDA

How old is that map?

CHARLIE

I don't get it. Where'd all these new streets come from? I grew up here and I don't even know where the hell I am.

MIRANDA

Why don't you let me look at that?

He gives the map to her and drives on.

CHARLIE

How can you tell where we are? I mean, Jesus, the houses all look like Taco Bells.

MIRANDA

Take the next left here.

He does, and soon the residential neighborhood gives way to a bevy of chain stores and chain restaurants.

CHARLIE

Thanks. I was just disoriented. None of this was here before, was it?

He suddenly pulls into the parking lot of--

34 **EXT. VOLVO - APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANT -DAY**

34

MIRANDA

You have an interview here?

CHARLIE

Yup.

MIRANDA

I'm having a hard time picturing you working here.

He reaches into the back seat and grabs a large rolled up map.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

MIRANDA

What's that?

He gets out and unrolls the map on the hood of the car. It's a geodetic survey, divided into numbered quadrants.

MIRANDA

What're you doing? I thought you said the interview was at three.

He doesn't answer. With a ruler, he carefully connects two points on the map and makes a notation.

MIRANDA

Charlie, you're more than an hour late already.

CHARLIE

It's cool. They won't mind, once they get a look at me.

MIRANDA

No, of course not.

He rolls up the map, tosses it into the back seat and heads off toward the restaurant. Miranda slumps down in the seat and closes her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

35 INT. VOLVO - DUSK

35

Miranda wakes up. Looks around. The sun is going down. No Charlie. She gets out and walks into--

36 INT. APPLEBEE'S - DUSK

36

CLOSE ON: The MANAGER.

MANAGER

I don't understand. We're not having any interviews. We're not hiring now.

MIRANDA

Okay, sorry. Thanks.

Miranda turns and walks--

37 EXT. APPLEBEE'S - SUNSET

37

She stands in front of the restaurant, watching the sun set.

MIRANDA

Shit.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

She hears JAZZY WHISTLING. She turns and heads toward it. The whistling gets louder as Charlie comes around from the back, walking along, head down, studying a GPS. *

CHARLIE
Oh, hey Miranda.

MIRANDA
Shit, Charlie, where did you go?

CHARLIE
Took a walk. Got to know the area.

MIRANDA
What about the job?

CHARLIE
(ignoring the question)
...Know why people like to eat at this place? Fear of the unknown. Nothing's going to surprise them in there.

MIRANDA
I thought it was because it was cheap.

He slips the compass into his pocket.

38 INT/EXT. VOLVO - NIGHT

38

Miranda drives angry. Beside her, Charlie looks back and forth from his survey map to the scenery, secretly consulting his GPS. *

MIRANDA
How much did that cost? *

Charlie does not reply. *

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
You weren't even looking for a job, were you? *

CHARLIE
Miranda--

MIRANDA
--Why do you feel you have to make stuff up? I mean, so you're not looking for a job, you just want to--I don't know, explore or something.

That's okay, whatever, I mean, it would be great if you got a job, I was barely scraping when it was just me, but damn, why can't you just be honest with me?

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

CHARLIE
Can you pull over here?

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

MIRANDA

No, I can't. I just wasted half my afternoon. I'm not going to waste any more.

CHARLIE

Please pull over.

MIRANDA

No! I'm not letting you out of this car.

*

CHARLIE

Miranda, listen, I really need to go.

MIRANDA

What are you talking about? What's this all about? I mean, can't you just tell me what you're doing?

CHARLIE

It's embarrassing, okay? The medication they put me on...I seem to need a lot of pit stops.

MIRANDA

Oh...sorry.

39 **EXT. SIDE OF ROAD - NIGHT**

39

CHARLIE

Could you back up a little? To those bushes there?

She backs the car up. Charlie orients himself with his GPS, then slips something into his coat pocket and gets out.

*

*

Miranda looks at the steering wheel for a moment, then suddenly BEATS on it with her fists. She stops herself, then sighs.

She waits. And waits. It's getting dark. Worried now, she calls out the window.

MIRANDA

Charlie?

No answer. She gets out and walks down the road's shoulder. She hears a strange SCRAPING sound as she arrives at--

40 **EXT. OVERGROWN LOT - NIGHT**

40

Peering behind the bushes, she sees Charlie. He doesn't see her.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

He's on his hands and knees, a small GARDENING TROWEL in hand. She watches. He's digging carefully in the dirt. He finds something, puts it in his pocket, then stands.

Miranda hurries back to the car before he sees her.

MIRANDA (VO)

I had no idea what he was doing. To tell you the truth, I was afraid to ask. A lot of times Charlie's reasons for doing something could be a lot scarier than just not knowing. And I was used to not knowing. Not knowing was the way for me. Not knowing was it.

41 INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

41

Miranda lies in bed, listening to the RAIN. She can't sleep. She's too worried.

42 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

42

It's dark, eerie. The rain makes loud blips and clinks on the metal trash cans outside.

Charlie walks into the kitchen in his robe, and by the dim glow of a night-light he finds a BOBCAT standing on the kitchen counter, staring him right in the eye.

*
*
*

CLOSE ON: Miles the dog, cowering in the hallway.

*

The rain comes down harder on the trash cans outside, so the blips and clinks sound almost like music. Charlie and the bobcat's eyes are still locked. This encounter seems to be having a profound effect on Charlie. A beatific smile spreads across his face.

MIRANDA (VO)

I blame the bobcat for what happened. Or maybe the rain.

Charlie keeps smiling as the bobcat creeps out the dog door.

43 INT. MIRANDA'S BEDROOM -- THE NEXT MORNING

43

Miranda hears her father in the next room, TALKING TO HIMSELF. Nervously, she heads out--

44 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

44

--And finds maps and arcane diagrams tacked to the walls. *
Stacks of old books and paper. Charlie bops around, manic, *
listening to Spanish lessons through a vintage pair of *
HEADPHONES, making notes, searching through one book after *
another.

MIRANDA

How long have you been up?

He looks at her for a moment. His eyes are wild. He gets back
to unrolling a geodetic survey map.

MIRANDA

What's going on?

CHARLIE

Great things.

MIRANDA

(studying him closely)

Did you eat any dinner?

CHARLIE

I made a list. Wondered if I could use
the car when you get home from school-- I
mean, work. I've got some things I need
to pick up.

He hands her a list.

MIRANDA

(reading list aloud)

Posthole digger, shovel, Astrolabe?
What's an astrolabe?

*

He gives her a wild smile.

45 **INT. MCDONALDS' -- NIGHT**

45

There are no customers. It's closing time. Miranda rolls a
bucket and mop out into the dining area. Her MANAGER calls
out from the back.

MANAGER (OS)

Ten more minutes, Randy.

MIRANDA

(under her breath)

My name is Miranda, nimrod.

*

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

Miranda starts swabbing the floor, unaware that she's being watched from the burger station by a gangly BOY with gel-spiked hair. He eyes Miranda's ass as she bends over the bucket.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (2)

45

She keeps mopping, her face clouded with worry.

MIRANDA (VO)

I looked it up astrolabe: "A medieval
instrument used to determine the altitude
of the sun or other celestial bodies."

She can't help it, she cries. The crying builds to sobbing,
and then--

MIRANDA (OUT LOUD)

What the hell is he going to do with an
astrolabe?

*

BOY

Huh?

Miranda pulls herself together.

46 INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- NIGHT

46

Miranda comes in, turns on the light and finds another
sinkfull of dirty dishes. She turns off the light and heads--

47 INT. HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

47

As she passes Charlie's room, he calls out to her.

CHARLIE (OS)

Miranda?

She looks in. His bed is covered with books and maps. He's
sitting up, reading.

CHARLIE

I was worried about you. Do you always
get home so late?

MIRANDA

It's none of your business, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Can't you call me Dad?

MIRANDA

Somehow it just doesn't seem right.

She turns and walks off down the hall, then stops, goes back
to his door.

MIRANDA

Hey Dad? Sorry.

CHARLIE

It's cool.

48 **INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT**

48

Light from a full moon fills the room. Miranda sleeps fitfully. Suddenly she hears the SOUND of her car's ignition being unsuccessfully started.

She grabs a giant night watchman's flashlight and runs out--

49 **EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT**

49

In time to hear the IGNITION again. It doesn't start.

She steels herself, then creeps around the side of the house, flashlight raised. Suddenly, the engine STARTS.

She reaches the car just as it starts to move. She swings in through the driver's side window, hitting the DRIVER.

DRIVER

Ummph.

He hits the brakes, stops the car. She shines the flashlight into the Driver's eyes.

MIRANDA

Charlie?

(he's rubbing his shoulder)

You okay?

CHARLIE

I'm fine. I'm good.

He starts the car rolling. She steps in front of it.

MIRANDA

Stop!

He hits the brakes. She stands in the headlights, squinting. Neighbors' lights come on. Nearby windows open and NEIGHBORS peer out.

MIRANDA

Where are you going?!

CHARLIE

Back in time, in a way.

MIRANDA

What? Look, why do you have to do this in the middle of the night. Can't it wait?

CHARLIE

Can't wait. The stars are in the perfect position. It'll be a year before the night sky is exactly this way again.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

MIRANDA

I can't stop you, can I?

CHARLIE

Nope.

She shines the flashlight on him, looks at him closely. His hands are shaking on the steering wheel.

MIRANDA (VO)

So. It was time to get back on that old bipolar pony and ride.

Her face softens. She opens the car door.

MIRANDA

Okay. I'm not letting you wreck my car.
Move over.

50 INT. MIRANDA'S CAR -- NIGHT

50

Miranda drives, yawning. Beside her, Charlie uses a penlight to study a map.

MIRANDA

Just so you know, I have to be to work in seven hours.

CHARLIE

Relax, you'll be there.
(looks over at her)
I don't know what I was thinking, going without you. You should be here. This is going to be so cool.

51 EXT. SHOPPING CENTER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

51

ANGLE ON: THE NIGHT SKY

Charlie, sighting at the stars along an antique brass instrument.

MIRANDA (OS)

I'm guessing that's an astrolabe.

CHARLIE

Yup.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL: They're in the parking lot of PETCO. Miranda's in the car, half awake.

CHARLIE

Oh yeah. Yeah, this is it. Right along the Northerly declination from Sirius, the Dog Star. That's my baby.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

He tilts the astrolabe down to the horizon and takes a compass heading.

CHARLIE

That way, nine and-a-quarter degrees shy
of North, nine and-a-half miles.

52 INT. MIRANDA'S STATION WAGON -- MOMENTS LATER

52

Charlie uses his GPS while Miranda drives, shaking her head.

*

CHARLIE

Did you reset the odometer?

MIRANDA

Yeah, yeah.

53 EXT. THE 101 FREEWAY -- NIGHT

53

The Volvo pulls over to the side of the freeway. Charlie gets out and sights along the astrolabe again.

CHARLIE

Okay, this is it.

MIRANDA

This is what?

Miranda watches as he goes around and opens up the back, pulling a large black CANVAS BAG out.

MIRANDA

What is that? What are you doing?

CHARLIE

Come on, let's go.

She watches as Charlie dashes over to the freeway fence, checks to make sure no one's looking, pulls a blanket out of his bag, and then tosses the bag over the fence.

*

*

MIRANDA

Oh come on.

Charlie puts the blanket over the fence, points at her, then links his hands in front of him.

*

CHARLIE

I'll give you a boost.

He helps her over and she drops into the leaves on the other side. Charlie jumps down beside her, picks up the black canvas bag and makes his way down the trash-strewn slope.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

MIRANDA (VO)

Technically, what happened wasn't my fault. I'm a minor. I'm not responsible for my actions. Technically. But these things should be taken on a case by case basis. In our case, I've always been the responsible party. Someone had to look out for him.

From the bushes, Charlie WHISTLES. Crouched down, grinning, he motions for her to come with him.

MIRANDA (VO)

Besides, I hated to ruin it for him. He was having so much fun. He hadn't looked this happy since he got out of the hospital.

She shakes her head and follows him--

54 **EXT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUSHES NEXT TO FREEWAY - NIGHT**

54

where she emerges into a grove of old oak trees sandwiched between the freeway and the edge of a HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Charlie taps her arm and points to a COYOTE running through the brush.

CHARLIE

These oaks would've been saplings then. You can almost picture what it must've been like.

The Coyote turns toward them, a Burger King box in his mouth.

CHARLIE

Almost.

MIRANDA

What the hell are you talking about?

He grins and, in the darkness of the oak grove, as cars speed past at the top of the slope, he opens the oblong bag to reveal a shiny metal CONTRAPTION, gleaming in the moonlight. We see Miranda slowly realize what it is.

CHARLIE

Miranda, meet the Excalibur One Thousand.

MIRANDA

A metal detector?

CHARLIE

Right.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

MIRANDA

How much did that cost?

*

CHARLIE

Hey, that's what credit cards are for.

Miranda shakes her head. She sits on a rock amidst trash and leafs through the Excalibur 1000 manual--one page shows a happy middle-aged man with the caption:

"...And my wife loves all the weight I lost!"

Miranda looks up when she hears the metal detector BEEP and BUZZ.

CHARLIE

Hear that? That's probably tin foil. Maybe a nickel. Nickels and tin foil make low tones-- they're the fool's gold of modern prospecting.

MIRANDA

Prospecting?

She watches Charlie scan the area with the detector, moving to the far side of the grove, where there's another fence backed up on a row of tract houses. The detector BEEPS.

CHARLIE

A high tone, probably silver. Silver's a good conductor.

He finds a quarter.

CHARLIE

Must be an older quarter. Newer ones don't have much silver in them.

He hands it to her.

MIRANDA

Great. We're well on our way to paying off the Visa.

(she watches him)

So this is it? You're looking for spare change?

The Excalibur 1000 WHINES and SQUAWKS. A dog BARKS. A light goes on in a house.

MIRANDA

Look, Charlie. It says in the manual you can plug headphones into that thing. Why don't you do that, so we don't get popped?

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

54

CHARLIE

I want you to be able to hear it too.

Suddenly there's a very high-pitched tone. Charlie's eyes widen.

CHARLIE

Get the shovel!

MIRANDA

We have a shovel?

CHARLIE

In the bag!

In a neighboring yard, a screen door OPENS.

MIRANDA

God, I'm outta here. We're gonna get busted.

CHARLIE

For what? This is public land. What law are we breaking?

MIRANDA

I'm sure there's something illegal about this.

CHARLIE

That's pretty lame, Miranda. I can't believe I've raised someone so law-abiding.

MIRANDA

You raised me?

*

He looks at her, then runs to the bag, grabs a folding army shovel, hurries back and starts digging.

CHARLIE

Of course, your highest pitch comes from the best conductor of all.

He digs down about two feet, then reaches down into the hole and holds up a small, shiny piece of metal.

CHARLIE

Eureka!

MIRANDA

Can we go now?

CHARLIE

Don't you want to know what it is?

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (3)

54

MIRANDA

All right. What is it?

CHARLIE

A doubloon.

MIRANDA

A what?

CHARLIE

A doubloon. From the seventeenth century.

MIRANDA

Give me that.

(she studies it)

Oh Jesus Christ, Charlie. It's someone's old piece of jewelry that got smushed. A pendant or something. A car probably ran over it.

CHARLIE

It's a doubloon.

She smacks her head.

55 INT. MIRANDA AND CHARLIE'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

55

Charlie searches through all his maps and books until he finds a small, OLD BOOK. He hands it to Miranda.

CHARLIE

The diary of Father Juan Florismarte Garces. 1775. I came across it in the hospital library. It got me thinking--

MIRANDA

--I thought the whole idea behind the hospital was for you to stop thinking too much--

CHARLIE

--So I sent for some other books.

MIRANDA

That explains the bill from Amazon.

She leafs through the book, looks at an engraving of a Spanish Missionary preaching to a band of Indians.

Under a desk lamp, Charlie scrapes dirt off the "doubloon."

CHARLIE

In addition to a gold crucifix and statue of the Virgin, Father Garces's expedition carried a cache of gold doubloons.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

The doubloons were dated. It's hard to make it out, but the one we found seems to be something, something...probably sixteen twenty-four--

*
*
*

MIRANDA
--Give me that.
(she studies it)
That's twenty-four karats.

CHARLIE
Records I obtained from the Spanish treasury indicate that--

MIRANDA
--How the hell did you obtain records from the Spanish treasury from a mental asylum?

CHARLIE
Internet.

MIRANDA
Perfect.

He digs through papers, searching.

CHARLIE
I'll show them to you.

MIRANDA
Come on. You can't possibly find what you're looking for in this mess.

CHARLIE
It's a highly complex system.
(finds a file, hands it to her)
Here, see for yourself. Garces's doubloons were dated.
(points to the "doubloon")
Now, coins minted in sixteen twenty-four there would've come from the lot allocated to what we'd call petty cash, which Garces lost sooner. No one else was even there back then, so it must be his. Now, based on where we found it, and reports of the underground cave system--

*
*
*
*

MIRANDA
--Cave system?

CHARLIE
Right. All we need to do is follow the journal, and it should lead us to the treasure.

(CONTINUED)

55

CONTINUED: (2)

55

MIRANDA

The treasure?

CHARLIE

It's just waiting to be found.

MIRANDA

Waiting for us?

CHARLIE

Right!

MIRANDA

You're serious.

He nods his head fervently.

MIRANDA

This is so stupid. Lots of people must've read that journal. How come no one ever found this "treasure" before?

CHARLIE

They've tried. Lots of guys've tried. There are numerous documented cases. I've read them all.

He hands her a stack of nitwit off-press books bristling with bookmarks-- FIND THAT GOLD!, A TREASURE HUNTER'S GUIDE, HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE WEST!

MIRANDA

Oh Charlie.

CHARLIE

Check the places I marked.

She opens the books to his bookmarks.

MIRANDA

But Charlie--

CHARLIE

--The thing none of those guys realized was that there was something special about this Father Garces. None of those guys thought to look into his background.

Miranda looks at one photo after another of addled-looking kooks out in the middle of nowhere with shovels.

MIRANDA

But Charlie, these people all look like idiots.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED: (3)

55

His shoulders slump. He looks at the floor.

MIRANDA
I'm going to bed.

CHARLIE
Miranda--

MIRANDA
--Stop. You're freaking me out, okay?

56 INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM -- SECONDS LATER

56

She slams the door, leans against it. Looks across the room at the windowsill covered with cork animals. There's a KNOCK on the door.

MIRANDA
I'm not decent.

CHARLIE
Come on, will you open up?

She opens the door. He looks at her.

CHARLIE
Listen, sometimes I wake up and I'm not sure I'm me.

MIRANDA
That's why you need to take your medication.

CHARLIE
No, that's not it. I'm me, I know that. What I mean is, I'm just not sure I exist.

MIRANDA
Ah.

CHARLIE
Come on, just listen.

MIRANDA
I'm listening. You're not sure you exist, and--

CHARLIE
--And I think, I've done a lot of things in my life, but maybe I haven't done what I need to do yet. And maybe if I do this, I will.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

MIRANDA
Exist?

CHARLIE
Yeah.

MIRANDA
You're shaking. You need to eat something.

He hands her the old JOURNAL.

CHARLIE
Will you just read it?

MIRANDA
This is so stupid.

CHARLIE
Please?

MIRANDA
All right, I'll read it if you eat something.

CHARLIE
Okay, great. Deal.

She closes the door softly. She looks at the book, then tosses it in the corner.

57 INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

57

Miranda is in bed, Miles the dog beside her, staring at the stars outside. She gets up, crosses the room and picks up the old, leather-bound book-- Father Garces's Journal. She takes it back to bed and starts reading, studying engravings that depict Father Garces's early life in Spain.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER,

Miranda's eyes grow heavy. She falls asleep with the book open beside her.

58 CLOSE ON: THE BOOK. A SERIES OF ENGRAVINGS - #1

58

In the first, Garces stands in front of a classroom explaining some geometric calculations. Miranda's eyelids flutter as she dreams, and suddenly CHARLIE appears in the engraving beside Garces, wearing his bathrobe, MOVING and TALKING.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

CHARLIE THE ENGRAVING

As a young man, Garces was a mathematics scholar in Seville. In fact, it looks like he might have been sent to the New World because certain of his ideas were considered heretical.

59 IN THE NEXT ENGRAVING-- #2

59

Garces and Charlie walk past a stone building. Through the windows hooded INQUISITORS can be seen torturing SCREAMING HERETICS. Garces quickens his step. Charlie follows.

CHARLIE THE ENGRAVING

But that's not what's important. The thing that matters here is that he was more accustomed to communicating with numbers than words. It hit me one night, while all the other patients were watching "Jag."

MIRANDA (OS)

They like that in there?

60 INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

60

CHARLIE

They fucking love it.

*

MIRANDA

Huh.

Miranda and Charlie are face to face, eating cereal, the journal open between them.

CHARLIE

Anyway, I noticed that some passages in the journal seemed to repeat themselves. I looked through the book and I found that he did this quite a bit. Now, why would a guy out in the middle of nowhere, presumably with a limited supply of pen and ink, repeat himself like that?

MIRANDA

Senility?

CHARLIE

He was writing in code. It took me a while, but I broke it down.

She looks into his eyes and doesn't like what she sees. Abruptly, she scrapes her chair back and stands.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

MIRANDA
I gotta go.

61 INT. MCDONALDS' -- NIGHT

61

Miranda's on the phone at the back of the restaurant,
listening to CHARLIE.

CHARLIE (ON PHONE)
See, I transposed Padre Garces's
descriptions and found the area he was in
was exactly seven leagues to the north of
where he said it was. It's simple,
really--

Miranda hangs up the phone.

EMPLOYEE (OS)
Hey Miranda, I need some help with the
fryer!

*

CUT TO:

62 INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

62

Miranda enters wearing her McDonald's uniform, reading the
book as she walks over to Charlie's work table. She finds a
large REFERENCE BOOK and leafs through it until she comes to
an etching of a Conquistador...and something else that we
can't see.

*
*

She finds a blank sheet of paper and starts sketching what
she sees, completely absorbed...Until she looks up and sees
Charlie watching her from down the hall, smiling.
Embarrassed, she slams the book shut and stuffs the sheet of
paper into her pocket.

*

MIRANDA
Let's say this gold exists. What're you
gonna do with it once you get it? This
sort of thing belongs to museums, doesn't
it?

CHARLIE
Nah, that's no problem. There's lots of
guys'll buy it, if I want to sell it. But
you're missing the point.

MIRANDA
What's that?

CHARLIE
I don't care about money.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

MIRANDA

Easy for you to say. You don't work for
it.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (2)

62

CHARLIE
Define work.
(he looks at her)
Anyhow, it doesn't matter why you're
interested, as long as you're interested.

*

MIRANDA
I never said I was.

He smiles at her, nodding slowly.

MIRANDA
God, stop that. That is so annoying.

MUSIC IN: Some good Mariachi.

63 **EXT. A SMOGGY SUBURBAN FOUR-LANE -- DAY**

63

Miranda's Volvo is parked by the side of the road. Charlie opens the back of the car, takes out an orange Cal Trans road crew vest and hard hat and puts them on. Then he unloads a SURVEYOR'S TRANSIT, rests it on his shoulder, looks both ways and runs across traffic to--

THE MEDIAN STRIP,

Where he sets up the transit and sights through it.

64 **EXT. SURVEYING MONTAGE -- CONTINUOUS**

64

Charlie surveys in front of Dunkin' Donuts, Marriot Suites, Little Caesars, Best Buy and various other suburban settings.

*

65 **EXT. HUGE COMMERCIAL SOD FARM - DAY**

65

Surreal green in the middle of a dusty brown desert, where Charlie wears a gray GARBAGE BAG to keep dry under the downpour of sprinklers. He waits 'till no one's looking, then lifts the sod and starts digging beneath it.

*

MIRANDA (VO)
The problem was, he knew I believed. He
knew he had me. I was his daughter, after
all.

*

PULL OUT TO SHOW:

Miranda's there with him, wearing a slicker, smiling at something he says, then helping him dig.

66 **CLOSE ON: AN OLD MAP IN FATHER GARCES' JOURNAL** 66

An animated red line crosses the map, showing the progress of Garces's expedition, and Charlie and Miranda's.

67 **EXT.HILLSIDE ABOVE 76 STATION - DAY** 67 *

Charlie peers through the transit while Miranda waits nearby, reading the journal.

MIRANDA

(reading from journal)

"As we reached the summit and looked down into the Valley of San Fernando, there unfolded before us as beautiful a rural picture as one ever looked upon."

*

*

67A **EXT. POWER LINES -- DAY** 67A *

Miranda continues in VO as the Volvo drives past a row of high tension power lines.

*

*

MIRANDA

"We saw a large green meadow of thousands of acres, more or less, its north side bounded by low mountains, at the base of which oak trees were plentiful. It was like a grand old park, such as we read of in fairy tales."

*

*

*

MUSIC OUT

69 **EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY** 69

ANGLE ON A GROVE OF OAK TREES, BLOWING---

*

Absurdly beautiful in the pink light of sunset. Crows swirl around crooked, ancient branches, choosing their roosts.

Charlie has climbed up onto a big limb and is looking up through the overhanging branches. Miranda stands nearby, reading to her Dad.

*

*

*

MIRANDA

(reading to Charlie)

"Upon our safe arrival we offered the sacrament at a large rock that seemed almost to have been fashioned for that holy purpose. I bade the ferrier use his cold chisel to carve the three crosses of Golgotha into the stone. We passed that night under some large trees whose branches met over our heads as beautifully as the ceilings in our finest cathedrals--"

*

*

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

The SOUND of an electric motor approaches and a GOLF CART scoots past.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL--

THEY'RE ON A GOLF COURSE,

Looking completely out of place. GOLFERS slow their carts to stare at Charlie, who's still laying in the rough.

A GOLF BALL lands near Charlie, but he takes no notice. A GOLFER walks toward the ball to retrieve it, but when he sees Charlie laying on the grass, thinks better of it. He backs away, pulling out his CELL PHONE.

MIRANDA

Charlie, I think maybe we better go--

Charlie jumps up and starts walking. Miranda follows him to a LARGE STONE.

CHARLIE

This is it.

MIRANDA

It might be.

CHARLIE

It is. Look how old these trees are.

Charlie circumnavigates the stone, searching it with his hands.

CHARLIE

It's to be expected that they'd be worn down quite a bit-- it's been over three hundred years, after all. But you can see where they were.

Miranda looks more closely at the rock.

MIRANDA

...Maybe, I don't know.

Charlie gets down on his hands and knees and starts scraping dirt away.

CHARLIE

See, right here.

MIRANDA

...Wait a minute. I see, they're upside down.

She pulls out the SKETCH she made earlier. It's of three

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2)

69

CROSSES. She spreads it on the rock, then turns it upside down.

MIRANDA

That's the reason I didn't recognize them at first. The rock must've moved.

CHARLIE

An earthquake could've done that.

She gets down beside him and starts scraping dirt away. Her eyes grow wide with excitement at what may or may not be three worn lichen-covered CARVED CROSSES.

Suddenly a siren WAILS. They look up to see a POLICE CAR trundling down the golf cart path even though it's too wide, heading toward them.

Charlie pulls out a disposable camera and takes a PICTURE.

MIRANDA

I think it's time to go.

The Police car pulls onto the side of the fairway, makes one of those obnoxious electronic HONKS, then a FEMALE COP gets out.

FEMALE COP

Can I help you?

CHARLIE

Why do they always ask if they can help you when that's the last thing they want to do?

FEMALE COP

Sir?

CHARLIE

And then they call you "Sir" and "Ma'am," as if they respect you, which couldn't be further from the truth. It's monstrous.

MIRANDA

Charlie--

FEMALE COP

--Sir, are you a member here at La Cresta?

CHARLIE

Are you kidding?

FEMALE COP

Then I'll have to ask you to leave.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (3)

69

Charlie moves a bit too close to the Cop.

CHARLIE
Are you happy?

FEMALE COP
Sir?

MIRANDA
Charlie.

CHARLIE
I asked, are you happy?

FEMALE COP
Back slowly away from me, Sir.

CHARLIE
--Because you sure don't look it.

FEMALE COP
(to Miranda)
Is this man your father?

MIRANDA
Yes.

FEMALE COP
Then get him out of here before I put him
in the car.

MIRANDA
Dad, let's get going, okay?

CHARLIE
How do you sleep at night, officer?

FEMALE COP
I sleep just fine. Why? I have a function
in society. I play a necessary role.

CHARLIE
Fair enough.

FEMALE COP
Thank you. Now move back, please.

He looks closely at the Cop.

CHARLIE
I was just trying to get a look at your
eyes. What color are they? I thought they
were blue at first, but now they're
starting to look green.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (4)

69

Maybe it's all this foliage. God, they're just beautiful.

MIRANDA

Time to go, Dad.

FEMALE COP

They're very light green.

Surprised, Miranda looks from her Dad to the Cop, who is visibly relaxing.

CHARLIE

(to the Cop)

Listen, I'm sorry about all this. No harm done, right?

He takes a note pad from his pocket, writes something on it, tears the page out and hands it to the Female Cop as he and Miranda walk toward the exit.

70 INT. MIRANDA'S STATION WAGON -- MOMENTS LATER - DAY

70

Miranda's car starts on the third try and she pulls out of the Golf Club's parking lot.

MIRANDA

I can't believe you just gave a cop our phone number.

CHARLIE

I hope she calls. She's a peach. Take off that flak vest and I'll bet she's really something.

MIRANDA

A second ago you called her monstrous.

CHARLIE

Slack.

MIRANDA

What?

CHARLIE

Gimme some.

MIRANDA

What? Some more?

71 INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

71

Miranda leafs through Father Garces's journal. She studies the PHOTO Charlie took of the rock with the three crosses. She holds the doubloon up to the light. The gold shines on her face.

*

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

MIRANDA (VO)

Who doesn't want to believe in buried
treasure?

Headlights pass over the window. A horn HONKS outside. She
gets up, parts the curtains and looks--

72 **EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT**

72

Charlie is perched behind the wheel of a PICKUP TRUCK.
Attached to the pickup is a trailer, and on the trailer is a
huge, yellow Caterpillar BACKHOE.

MIRANDA (VO)

Still, maybe I shouldn't have encouraged
him.

73 **EXT. FIELD BETWEEN WENDY'S AND SO CAL MART - NIGHT**

73

UNDER A FULL MOON,

IN A FIELD BESIDE A DRY CONCRETE RIVER CHANNEL BETWEEN BABIES
'R' US, WENDY'S AND SO CAL MART, THE BACKHOE BREAKS GROUND.

Extremely nervous, Miranda stands near the street, dressed as
a flagman, with orange vest and white helmet. She watches
people come and go in neighboring parking lots.

The backhoe ROARS, scooping deep into the earth.

A car pulls up to the Wendy's Drive-thru.

WENDY'S DRIVE-THRU

Welcome to Wendy's. How can I serve you?

Miranda jumps at the sound of the voice. She turns when she
hears footsteps. A SECURITY GUARD is stumping his way across
the Best Buy parking lot toward her. Miranda walks quickly
across the dirt to the backhoe and yells to Charlie over the
sound of the ENGINE.

MIRANDA

What do I say?!

CHARLIE

You don't have to say anything. We have
every right to be doing this.

MIRANDA

Thanks for the tip.

The Security Guard stops at the edge of the dirt lot and
motions for Miranda to come over.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

MIRANDA

Oh shit.

She fakes a smile and walks toward him. She stops when she reaches him.

MIRANDA (VO)

You know that expression, "If you're going to lie, lie big?" Well this obviously came under that heading. I mean, people just figure why the hell would anyone be out with heavy machinery in the middle of the night unless it was for a good reason?

The Security Guard nods to Miranda. She nods back.

Miranda turns to see Charlie climb down off the backhoe and jump into the hole-

*
*

SECURITY GUARD

That got a four-fifty in it?

*

MIRANDA

What?

*

SECURITY GUARD

(nods at backhoe)

The Cat.

*

MIRANDA

Oh, that. Yeah.

SECURITY GUARD

That's a power plant, the four-fifty.

*

MIRANDA

Sure is.

SECURITY GUARD

Sweet.

The Guard just stands there like a little boy, watching the backhoe. Suddenly the backhoe stops and Charlie leaps down into the hole, disappearing from view.

CHARLIE (OS)

Pottery shards! Jesus Christ!

MIRANDA

(to the Guard)

Excuse me. Catch you later.

SECURITY GUARD

Right on.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED: (2)

73

Miranda goes over and looks down into the hole. Charlie holds up some fragments of dirty material.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED: (3)

73

CHARLIE

Broken water jugs! Exactly the kind the expedition would've carried. You can see the curve in some of them.

MIRANDA

Maybe we should take them to someone, I don't know, an archaeologist or something?

CHARLIE

And let them spoil everything?

MIRANDA

They could do that thing, you know, radio--

CHARLIE

Radio Carbon dating? The whole procedure's been discredited numerous times. Besides, what's the point?

MIRANDA

What's the point? We're amateurs. You're just one guy out here.

CHARLIE

"In questions of science the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual."
--Galileo.

MIRANDA

You're no Galileo, Charlie.

CHARLIE

(handing her a shard)
Here, hold this. Feel it. This is old, you can feel that, can't you?

MIRANDA

I guess...they might be.

CHARLIE

Oh they are. We're on the right track, Miranda!

74 **EXT. SKY - NIGHT** 74

IN TIME LAPSE

Clouds race past the moon as it wanes, then waxes.

DISSOLVE TO:

75 **EXT. DIG SITE -- A FEW NIGHTS LATER** 75

Charlie has used stakes and string to lay out a system of quadrants, the kind archaeologists use.

76 **EXT. DIG SITE - NIGHT** 76

AS TIME PASSES,

More and more excavations appear in the field.

Miranda stands guard in her helmet and vest, watching people come and go, buying TV's in Best Buy, baby clothes in Babies 'R' Us and burgers in Wendy's as she reads from Father Garces's journal.

MIRANDA

(VO, reads from journal)

"The natives appear to be a simple, good natured, stupid race of people, and, in most respects, resemble the savages we find in other newly discovered countries. That was the appearance of things, and there was no sign of aggression, at first, until one of the soldiers seconded to our mission was inspired to the act of seduction, the object being a young female--an action unfathomable to me, as the females are uniformly unpleasant of aspect--at which point considerable uproar ensued, and we were forced to retreat inland, following the river upstream..."

77 **EXT. DIG SITE - NIGHT** 77

Time passes, and we see that the excavations are heading inexorably in one direction, toward the So Cal Mart.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

MIRANDA (cont'd, reading from
journal)

"...We arrived at a small outcropping of
rock marked with their childish carvings,
beneath which we had been informed lay a
cavern sometimes used for whatever
variety of pagan ritual, probably
sacrificial in nature, which these lost
people felt compelled to observe."

Charlie gets down from the backhoe and adjusts the surveyor's
transit. Peers through it.

MIRANDA (VO)

Charlie believed that when the county
built the concrete channel, they diverted
the river. If we could locate the river
above the diversion, and follow it, we
would find the entrance to the cavern. It
went okay for a while, we followed where
the old Spanish maps had said there was a
river. There was just one little
obstacle, though.

*
*
*

We see what Charlie sees though the transit--

THE SO CAL MART STORE

78 INT. SO CAL MART -- THE NEXT MORNING -- CONTINUOUS

78

The "CLOSED" sign is turned around, the doors are unlocked,
and Charlie is the first one in through the automatic doors.

He's wearing an overcoat and pushing a shopping cart that
contains a transit, surveying stick, 200' tape measure, and
tripod. He stops, takes out his compass and finds his
bearings. Miranda stays behind him, trying to look like she
doesn't know him.

*
*
*

The official So Cal Mart GREETER approaches.

GREETER

Welcome to So Cal Mart. Can I help you?

CHARLIE

Forty-nine point two degrees North.
That's it!

Charlie pushes the cart past the Greeter. Miranda steps
forward.

*

MIRANDA

We're just browsing.

She follows Charlie as he makes his way to--

79 **INT. SO CAL MART - ELECTRONICS DEPARTMENT - DAY** 79 *

Where he pulls a jumbo TAPE MEASURE from his cart and hustles down the aisle. *

Miranda is distracted by two dozen TELEVISIONS, all tuned to the KCAL 9 news, which is showing tape of a bunch of naked CHINESE MEN struggling ashore on a beach, carrying plastic bags. KCAL has thoughtfully employed digital magic to obscure their genitals.

CHARLIE
(to Miranda)
Come on, hold the end!

79A **INT. SO CAL MART - MIDDLE OF STORE- CONTINUOUS** 79A *

She turns from the news and grabs the end of the tape. She anchors it with her foot, trying to look casual.

CUSTOMERS are starting to fill the So Cal Mart. Some heads turn, watching Charlie speed down the aisle, tape measure whirring. He stops, takes out a calculator and clipboard, makes a note. Producing his compass, he takes a reading.

CUT TO: *

80 **INT. SO CAL MART - CLOTHING DEPARTMENT (END OF ISLE 303/304)** 80 *

He hands Miranda the business end of the 200' tape measure and points. Charlie sights her and directs Miranda's heading with the aid of his compass. *
*
*

CHARLIE *
Let me know when you reach sixty-seven *
feet. *

Mortified, she stretches the tape out, weaving her way around CUSTOMERS. *
*

CHARLIE *
Okay, okay, keep going, a little to the *
left, keep going! *

Miranda nods sheepishly.

Charlie takes more compass readings. Gives more directions. *

CHARLIE
Great! Hold it right there!

Charlie takes more readings, and makes a few calculations. *

CHARLIE
Okay, stand right there! Don't move.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

One more reading, for good measure.

*

MIRANDA

Can we just get this over with?

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (2)

80

CHARLIE

Jesus, we're so close I can practically
smell it.

Charlie sees an EMPLOYEE looking at the other end of the tape
measure.

CHARLIE

(to the Employee)
Don't touch that!

The Employee flinches.

Charlie pulls a SURVEYOR'S TRANSIT from the cart. The
Employee watches, curious, as he balances it on top of a pet
food display.

*

THROUGH THE TRANSIT VIEWFINDER--

We see Miranda, nervously smiling at people.

CHARLIE

Keep it plumb!

The Employee approaches Charlie.

EMPLOYEE

Didn't know we carried those.

CHARLIE

What?

Charlie looks up. The Employee points at the transit.

EMPLOYEE

I didn't know we carried those.

CHARLIE

Oh, you guys have everything.

EMPLOYEE

We sure do. So, is it working for you?

CHARLIE

Oh, it's a beauty. I think the azimuth is
off a little though.

EMPLOYEE

...Right. Well, feel free to let me know
if I can help you with anything.

CHARLIE

I sure will.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (3)

80

The Employee lumbers off.

81 INT. SO CAL MART - HOMEWARE DEPARTMENT (ISLE 105/106)- CONT. 81 *

Miranda watches as Charlie loads his cart and winds the tape to her, following her route. *

He pulls a Sharpie and a plumb bob from his pocket, drops to his mark, shoving stacked product to the side. He bends down and on the linoleum floor draws a big X. *

CHARLIE
X marks the spot, right?

MIRANDA
No way.

CHARLIE
Wow. What're the odds? Doubloons belonging to the King of Spain, lost over three hundred years ago, and they're under a So Cal Mart. *

MIRANDA
I guess that's it then.

CHARLIE
What do you mean?

MIRANDA
Well, you know, it just wasn't meant to be, right?

He takes out his calculator, does a quick equation.

CHARLIE
It's only about six feet down. *

MIRANDA
Only six feet? *

CHARLIE
Probably more like seven. It'd take two highly motivated people less than four hours, with the right tools.

MIRANDA
Are you nuts? Sorry. But, I mean, let's be realistic here.

CHARLIE
I am being realistic. It's completely do-able. Here, let me lay it out for you--

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

MIRANDA

--Forget it, Charlie. It's over.

CHARLIE

(getting riled)

Not a chance.

MIRANDA

You did your best.

CHARLIE

(losing it)

No no no no no! I refuse to be beaten by
a few layers of concrete and linoleum. No
sir, not on my watch!

CUSTOMERS are staring.

MIRANDA

Take it easy.

One of the Customers notices the **X**, bends down to examine it.

CHARLIE

(to the Customer)

Oh no you don't.

Glaring at the Customer, Charlie drags the display back into
place, covering the **X**. He waits until the Customer leaves,
then turns to find that Miranda is gone.

82 **INT. SO CAL MART - BIG TICKET APPLIANCE DEPARTMENT -(ISLE**
101)

82

*

*

Miranda stares at jets of water spraying round and round
inside a plexiglass-paneled demo model of a dishwasher, on an
end display.

*

*

Charlie comes up next to her.

CHARLIE

I don't know why anyone would want one of
those things. It's not like it's that
hard to wash dishes by hand, the old
fashioned way.

She looks at him. He looks away.

*

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

*

(re: customers)

*

Look at them. They've all got a shopping
monkey on their back. They can't stop
buying things. They're hypnotized.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

MIRANDA
Come on, let's go.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED: (2)

82

CHARLIE

Jesus, this Muzak is giving me a
headache. You hear that? That's a
Coltrane tune.

She looks at him. His hands are shaking.

MIRANDA

Let's get you some breakfast.

She puts her hand on his arm and guides him toward the front
door.

MIRANDA

A little breakfast. A little sleep.
Everything'll be okay.

He shakes her arm loose and then he veers away.

*

Miranda follows his gaze to a sign that reads:

*

HELP WANTED

*

MIRANDA

*

Charlie?

*

82A INT. CUSTOMER SERVICE COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

82A

*

He heads to the Customer Service Counter and beckons for the
Customer Service Specialist.

*

*

CHARLIE

*

Excuse me, may I please have a job
application? It's for my daughter.

*

*

83 OMITTED

83

*

84 INT. MIRANDA'S STATION WAGON - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

84

*

She guns the car up the freeway ramp.

MIRANDA

I won't do it.

CHARLIE

But we can't stop now, we're so close.

MIRANDA

We're going to walk into So Cal Mart and
start digging. Do you know how that
sounds?

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

CHARLIE

Even Columbus had his critics. Look, two thirds of this county is under concrete, under structures.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED: (2)

84

I can't say I didn't expect this. It would've been weird if the treasure wasn't under some building.

MIRANDA

All right, okay, but think about it. They had to dig a foundation, right, when they built the store. Wouldn't they have found a treasure then, if there was one?

CHARLIE

No, they wouldn't. It's much deeper than that.

MIRANDA

You're sure of that.

CHARLIE

Completely. It's at the original level of the river bank, before they diverted it. That's about ten feet down.

MIRANDA

Doesn't matter. I won't do it.

85 EXT. TRACT HOME NEXT TO CHARLIE AND MIRANDA'S -- DAY

85

The Mediterranean-style house is finished. The paint is still drying. Commercial LANDSCAPERS roll out a brand new lawn.

A CREW raises some kind of banner over the front door. Cars are pulling up to the curb. There's the MURMUR of anticipation from an as-yet unseen CROWD.

86 INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

86

Miranda is at Charlie's map table, reading the journal. She looks across the desk at the So Cal Mart JOB APPLICATION. She thinks about it for a moment, then reaches for it tentatively. She hears Charlie come in.

MIRANDA

Hey, I was thinking...

She stops. Looks at him. There's a furtive look in his eyes she doesn't like.

MIRANDA

What?

CHARLIE

Um, Miranda...

MIRANDA

What?

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

86

Her eyes widen. She goes to the window, looks out. She hurries to the door, opens it and runs--

87 **EXT. HOUSE - DAY**

87

There's nothing in the driveway. She runs around the side of the house. Nothing. She goes back--

88 **INT. HOUSE - DAY**

88

Charlie waits sheepishly.

MIRANDA

What happened to my car?

CHARLIE

Miranda--

MIRANDA

Did you wreck it?

CHARLIE

I didn't have enough to pay off the backhoe rental.

MIRANDA

No way.

CHARLIE

The Visa card was maxed.

MIRANDA

Jesus.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. I really am sorry. I wasn't thinking.

MIRANDA

You never do.

CHARLIE

I'll get it back.

MIRANDA

How're you going to do that?

CHARLIE

I don't know, but I will.

MIRANDA

Hear that? That's me not holding my breath. I better get a move-on, since I'm going to have to take the bus.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

CHARLIE

Can't you get a ride with friends or something?

MIRANDA

I don't have any friends.

CHARLIE

What about, you know, the skinny one who ate only carrots and--

MIRANDA

--Carrots and Mountain Dew. Julia.

CHARLIE

Right, Julia. Carrots.

MIRANDA

She ate nothing but carrots for so long she finally turned orange and grew coarse hair all over her body.

CHARLIE

Oh come on.

MIRANDA

It's true. She had an eating disorder. She went into the hospital and died.

CHARLIE

Oh.

Miranda goes into her room.

CHARLIE

(calling to her)

Hey, if it's that important, I can go down there right now and get your car back. I'm sure the guy hasn't sold it yet. The thing needed a lot of work. It wasn't much of a car, Miranda, I mean--

She comes out, half-changed into her McDonald's uniform.

MIRANDA

--Stop. I loved that car.

CHARLIE

I know you did.

MIRANDA

No you didn't, because I never told you. Why? Because you never listen.

She goes back into her room.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED: (2)

88

CHARLIE
(calling to her)
I'm an asshole. That has been
established.

MIRANDA
(OS, from her room)
Not to the extent that I am about to
establish it.

She comes back, completely changed into her uniform, brushing
her hair.

MIRANDA
You make fun of everything around you,
including my job--

CHARLIE
--I'm proud of you, working so hard.

MIRANDA
Yeah, right. I'm paying the bills though.

*

CHARLIE
I know. Isn't that wild?

MIRANDA
God, you don't take anything seriously,
do you? You think the world is here for
your amusement.

CHARLIE
Well, look at the world.

MIRANDA
I do. But unlike you, I have to live in
it.

CHARLIE
I wish you could've seen how things were
around here when I was a kid.

MIRANDA
Me too. No, scratch that, because you
would've been around then to make me
miserable. I'm sick of hearing you talk
about how great things used to be. Just
because things have changed and you
haven't doesn't mean you're right.

CHARLIE
Right about what? I never said I was
right about anything.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED: (3)

88

Look, I'm sorry, but if we hadn't gotten that backhoe, we wouldn't have gotten as far as we have. Your car was a necessary sacrifice. We're so close, Miranda. That treasure is so close.

MIRANDA

I don't understand, you're a really smart guy, how can you keep doing this, year after year?

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

MIRANDA

The treasure is the same as all your jazz combos, Charlie. Just like the tour boat that sank, just like the Mexican holistic medical degree, just like your marriage. How come you can't see it? Everybody else can. There's something seriously wrong with you. There's no treasure, you know that, don't you? You're just deluding yourself again.

CHARLIE

You believe in it. You said you did.

MIRANDA

I was humoring you.

She heads for the door, and is about to make the perfect exit, but her uniform shirt gets caught on the screen door. She flails away at it, trying to unsnag it. He goes to her, tries to free her shirt. She slaps his hand.

MIRANDA

I can't believe you sold my fucking car!

With a final jerk she gets loose and steps out--

89 **EXT. HOUSE - PORCH - DAY**

89

At that exact moment, strangely, a crowd CHEERS. Stunned, Miranda and Charlie both turn and look at the nearest tract home where there's--

A CELEBRATION

A CROWD has gathered in the front yard. Now we see what the banner says--

"HILLCREST ESTATES WELCOMES ITS 1000TH RESIDENTS!"

Charlie and Miranda watch, jaws agape as A FAMILY OF FOUR smiles for a camera and accepts a check.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

Snapping out of it, Miranda runs off down the porch steps.
Charlie watches her jog down the driveway and out of sight.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

90 INT. MCDONALDS - NIGHT

90

Miranda cleans the grill.

*

91 INT. HOUSE, MIRANDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

91

Charlie peers into Miranda's bedroom. The bed has not been
slept in. Miles the Dog lies on it alone, staring at Charlie.

92 INT. CHRISTIAN SCIENCE READING ROOM IN A MINI-MALL - NIGHT

92

Miranda is curled fetally in a vast wing chair, crying as she
reads "God's Great Plan for Mankind." In a while, she sleeps.

*

93 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

93

The dirty dishes are stacked high. Charlie places a plate of
food on the floor beside the dog door and watches, holding
perfectly still, as the BOBCAT creeps in and eats. The light
on Charlie and the bobcat is eerie.

94 INT. MCDONALDS - DAY

94

Miranda wears a headset and takes orders in the Drive-thru
booth. She stares into space for a long, lonely moment.

95 EXT./INT. THE BUS TO ENCINO - NIGHT

95

She rides and disembarks on a tree-lined street.

END MONTAGE

96 EXT. ENCINO NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

96

Miranda walks past some nice homes, staring in the windows at
the families there.

MIRANDA (VO)

Early evening is the best time for it,
when people have the lights on but they
haven't closed the curtains yet.

She looks in at a family in their living room, eating dinner
and watching TV.

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

MIRANDA (VO)

It's not like I'm a Peeping Tom or anything, I just like to see how normal people live. I study them, so in case my life becomes normal some day, I'll know what to do.

97 EXT. THE HOUSE -- FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

97

Charlie's on the front porch. He's gotten out binoculars to follow a Dominos Pizza pickup move down the street, to the 1000th house. He looks through windows at the happy brood, watching cops beat someone up on TV. *

ANGLE ON: Charlie's POV, as the 1000th family, along with their brand new home. Gradually it becomes clear that we are in-- *

CHARLIE'S FLASHBACK: 1997

98 EXT. OLD VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY (1997)

98 *

And there's a YOUNGER CHARLIE in the kitchen, holding the front door open for A EIGHT YEAR-OLD MIRANDA, who comes out carrying something large and bulky covered by a bath towel. *

YOUNGER CHARLIE

They're gonna love it.

LITTLE MIRANDA

You think so?

YOUNGER CHARLIE

I know so.

He kisses her, then watches her leave. He turns and goes inside-- *

99 INT. KITCHEN - DAY (1997)

99 *

Where he watches RITA, his hand model wife, finish packing her hand supplies from the kitchen drawer. *

RITA

When're you going to stop deluding yourself, Charlie?

She carries a suitcase out the door. He takes her hand, trying to stop her.

RITA

Watch the hands!

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

He watches, devastated, as she leaves him.

100 **EXT. FRONT PORCH, A LITTLE LATER - DAY (1997)**

100 *

Younger Charlie stands alone with his upright bass and improvises a slow, elegant solo off of "Everything Happens to Me."

END FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

PRESENT: (2006)

101 **EXT. ENCINO NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT**

101

Still looking into windows, Miranda arrives at one house in particular and stops. She watches through the window as a tiny woman--HER MOTHER--takes off a pair of white gloves and rubs lotion into her hands.

Awkwardly, Miranda makes her way up the front walk and rings the doorbell. She waits, then chickens out and runs. She watches from the bushes as Rita opens the door and looks out.

MIRANDA (VO)

After taking one look at Charlie, the judge tried his darnedest to give her custody of me, but she refused it. Repeatedly. Charlie calls her his ex-wife, I call her my ex-Mom.

Miranda wanders the streets, looking into windows. A MAN sees her staring and SNAPS his curtains closed.

CUT TO:

MIRANDA'S FLASHBACK: 1997

102 **INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY (1997)**

102

CLOSE ON: LITTLE MIRANDA, wearing the same clothes she wore when she left the house in Charlie's flashback, setting the same bath towel-covered object down on her desk, watching her fourth grade TEACHER walk around the classroom.

TEACHER

I hope that by making our early California mission projects we've all learned a little about California's colorful past, and that recalling the bygone days of the early missionaries helps us to remember that our state has always been, well, multi-cultural.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

The Teacher stops in front of one student's model. It's carefully made of clay, with lasagna noodles for the roof.

TEACHER

Very nice, Juan.

Another model is really fancy; it's made from styrofoam and has little plastic livestock roaming around it.

TEACHER

Fine.

The Teacher stops in front of Miranda, who lifts the bath towel to reveal her mission building. It was obviously made on the cheap, though nicely. Strangely though, it is surrounded by tiny flesh-colored clay figures, all of them lying down. Around behind the mission there is a pile of these figurines. Beside the pile, a little clay priest appears to be holding a torch.

TEACHER

Who are all the little people, Miranda?

LITTLE MIRANDA

Those are the bodies of the Chumash Indians who died of syphilis and influenza, infected by the Missionaries.

Horrified, some of the Students sniffle, then CRY.

TEACHER

Miranda, go out in the hallway and wait for me.

103 **EXT. DIRT ROAD LEADING TO MIRANDA'S HOUSE - DAY (1997)**

103

AFTER SCHOOL

Little Miranda walks through the orange groves, carrying her mission model, crying. She hears her father's UPRIGHT BASS, then rounds the bend and sees him sitting on the porch.

He's improvising a solo off of "Everything Happens to Me," the same tune he was playing in HIS OWN FLASHBACK, which means Miranda's mother has just left.

Charlie sees her crying. He pulls himself together and pounds out "Hail to the Chief" on the bass. Little Miranda smiles a little.

104 **EXT. PORCH - DAY (1997)**

104

*

Charlie brings out a plate of pancakes to the porch where Little Miranda's feeling blue. Charlie sits down next to her.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

He tries to comfort her, patting her back, but then he breaks
down and sobs. Miranda puts her hand on his shoulder and
looks out at the oranges. *

In time lapse, orange groves slowly fill with TRACT HOMES,
spreading as if by reproductive fission across the hills as
time passes and we reach-- *

END FLASHBACK *

THE PRESENT (2006) *

105 **OMITTED** 105 *

106 **EXT. MIRANDA AND CHARLIE'S FRONT YARD -- NIGHT** 106 *

Miranda walks up the dark dirt drive, now bordered by tract homes, and finds a COP CAR parked in front.

MIRANDA

Oh no...

She starts running toward the house.

MIRANDA

...Charlie!?

The front door opens. Out strides the FEMALE COP from the golf course. She's buttoning up her flak vest, so cheerful she practically skips down the steps.

Miranda shakes her head.

The Female Cop is about to get into her car when she sees Miranda, and is suddenly sheepish.

FEMALE COP

...ma'am.

The Female Cop gets in her car and Miranda watches her drive off.

Charlie comes out on the porch, shirtless, barefoot, wearing a pair of pajama pants stenciled with the words: "VENTURA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH." He and Miranda stare at each other for a moment. *

He smiles and nods toward the side of the house. He switches on the porch light and it fans out across the driveway, across Miranda, and she smiles too.

Her Volvo is back, parked at the side of the house.

Miranda walks past Charlie and goes--

107 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

107

The living room shelves are all bare. His entire record collection is GONE. She opens the closet. The upright bass is gone too. She comes back--

108 **EXT. PORCH - NIGHT**

108

MIRANDA

Have you eaten anything?

CHARLIE

No.

MIRANDA

I'll go make something.

CHARLIE

Nah, it's cool. Sit down.

She sits down and looks out across at the crowded lights of the suburbs with him.

CHARLIE

You used to be able to look out there and see maybe only one or two other lights.

They watch the lights of all the new houses for a moment. In the distance a train blows its HORN.

CHARLIE

Your mother used to constantly complain that she couldn't stand living out here in the middle of nowhere. Now look.

MIRANDA

Dad, this is still the middle of nowhere. There's just a lot of other people in it now.

(looks at him)

You didn't have to sell all your records.

CHARLIE

I couldn't stand to listen to them anyway. They just reminded me how bad I was.

MIRANDA

You weren't that bad.

CHARLIE

I sucked. And I wish I'd figured it out a lot sooner. Would've saved everyone a lot of trouble.

(they sit in silence)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED: 108

It was a hard thing to find out. Giving
up is hard.

MIRANDA
Then don't.

CHARLIE
I told you, I'm finished with music.

MIRANDA
That's not what I'm talking about.

109 INT. SO CAL MART -- DELI DEPARTMENT -- DAY 109

Wearing her new So Cal Mart uniform, Miranda stands, ladle at
the ready, behind a crock pot filled with free samples of
nameless goo.

MIRANDA (VO)
A guy like Charlie will die without a
dream.

*

A CUSTOMER approaches the crock pot. Miranda lifts her ladle.

MIRANDA (to Customer)
Welcome to So Cal Mart. Chowder?

MUSIC IN: A NICE RHUMBA.

MONTAGE -- BEHIND THE SCENES AT SO CAL MART

110 INT. SO CAL MART, STAIRS/ BALCONY - DAY 110 *

At the top of the stairs there is a gate marked "EMPLOYEES
ONLY", where Miranda punches a code into a mechanical lock.
She goes through--

*
*
*

And starts down the balcony, stopping at a closed door to AN
ACCOUNTANT, and then past another door to an office with
several people at desks.

*
*
*

111 OMITTED 111 *

112 INT. SO CAL MART, THE EMPLOYEE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS 112 *

Miranda continues along the balcony and peers in at a half-
dozen EMPLOYEES eating lunch, enjoying some local morning
Television and each others company.

*
*
*

CUT TO: *

112A **INT. SO CAL MART, BALCONY - CONTINUOUS**

112A *

Further down the balcony she pauses at a door marked "NO
ADMITTANCE. ALARM WILL SOUND."

*

 CHARLIE (VO)
So, let's hear it.

(CONTINUED)

112A CONTINUED:

112A

MIRANDA (VO)

Well, all the employees have the code for the Simplex locks, then there are these other doors. A lot of them claim to be alarmed but aren't.

CHARLIE (VO)

How do you know?

Miranda looks around, then pushes the door open.

MIRANDA (VO)

I opened them.

CHARLIE (VO)

That's fine. We'll make a scofflaw of you yet.

113 OMITTED

113 *

114 INT. SO CAL MART, UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

114 *

She continues down the balcony past the janitors closet to another door marked the same way.

*
*

CHARLIE (VO)

What about the security guards?

*
*

MIRANDA (VO)

They have two of them.

*
*

She starts to open it, but stops when she hears a man's strange SCREAMS on the other side of it.

*
*

Cautiously, Miranda pushes the door open about an inch. She leans in and peers through the crack into a utility room, lined with pipes.

*
*
*

SHE SEES REFLECTED IN A MIRROR--

*

A SECURITY GUARD, unaware that he's being watched, letting out SCREAMS while practicing Tae Kwon Do moves. We can read his name tag-- "MIKE."

*

MIRANDA (VO)

That one's named Mike.

115 **INT. SO CAL MART, MIDDLE OF STORE (BETWEEN ISLE 117/312) - DAY** 115 *

A different SECURITY GUARD has Miranda trapped by the boom box display. His lips move a mile a minute. He's talking her ear off.

MIRANDA (VO)
The other one's named Bruce.

BRUCE
We are systematically losing all our freedoms. We're becoming a Nineteen Eighty-four type country. *

Miranda furtively checks out Bruce's KEYS. *

BRUCE (CONT'D) *
What were the last three movies Mel Gibson made? *

MIRANDA
Um...

Bruce suddenly pretends to work, surveying the store, but continues to preach anyway. *

Miranda notices what Bruce did-- DOUG the Manager is lurking nearby. *

BRUCE *
"Conspiracy Theory," "The Patriot," "The Passion," and that new one-- what's it called? I don't know, anyway, see the connection? What do you think Mel's trying to tell us? We have to pay attention to these things. *

He continues to babble as the sound FADES AWAY. *

MIRANDA (VO) *
The manager's name is Doug. *

Miranda catches DOUG checking her out, from behind. *

MIRANDA (VO) *
The Security Guards have master keys. The assistant managers have something they call the grandmaster key... *

CUT TO: *

116 **OMITTED** 116 *

117 INT. SO CAL MART, THE EMPLOYEE LOUNGE - DAY

117 *

Miranda eats a sandwich while sitting across from Doug the Manager and Doug's very tan girlfriend-- KELLY, 46. Doug is talking but we don't yet hear what he is saying.

*
*
*

MIRANDA (V.O.) CONT'D

...But the manager, he's the only one who has the great grandmaster key. It opens every single door. He calls it the God key.

*
*
*
*
*

Miranda leans over to see, on Doug's belt, a retractable key holder burdened with dozens of keys.

*
*

DOUG

...Kelly and I sometimes head out to the beach on Saturdays, play a little volleyball.

*
*

KELLY

You play volleyball. I just put on the Jimmy Buffett and soak up the rays. I am a major parrothead.

DOUG

You play sometimes.

KELLY

I am so not about sports. Do you like the beach, Miranda?

MIRANDA

I can't remember the last time I went to the beach.

DOUG

I'll bet you look great in a bikini. Or what are those new things called? With the little kind of shirt?

KELLY

Tankinis.

DOUG

I love those...

*

Doug continues to talk, but once again his voice fades away-

*

CHARLIE (VO)

Miranda?

FREEZE FRAME: ON DOUG, MOUTH OPEN IN MID-SENTENCE.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

MIRANDA (VO)
What? Let me finish the story.

ANGLE ON: MIRANDA

CUT TO: *

118 INT. HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

118

CLOSE UP ON: *

Miranda's HAND DRAWN MAP of So Cal Mart's floor-plan. *

Miranda continues to tell the story to Charlie. *

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

CHARLIE

You felt a whole weird vibe with them,
didn't you?

MIRANDA

Well, kind of.

CHARLIE

That's because they're swingers.

MIRANDA

What?

CHARLIE

Do I have to draw you a picture?

MIRANDA

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

You know.

MIRANDA

No, I don't.

CHARLIE

You don't?

MIRANDA

No.

CHARLIE

Well, it's kind of nice to know that you
don't know everything.

(uncomfortably)

...Okay, well. Swingers. I guess some
people like to kind of, well, spice up
their life by getting together with other
partners.

MIRANDA

You mean...?

ANGLE ON: THE FREEZE FRAME OF DOUG, MOUTH OPEN.

MIRANDA (OS)

Oh God.

CHARLIE (OS)

They were speaking swinger code.

ANGLE ON: A FREEZE FRAME OF KELLY, FLIRTING OBVIOUSLY.

MIRANDA (OS)

Oh God, that's so gross.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED: (2)

118

BACK ON MIRANDA: She gets up, hugging herself, and paces.

MIRANDA

Oh shit, what am I gonna do?

CHARLIE

What's the matter? Miranda?

MIRANDA

They asked me to a barbecue.

CHARLIE

What?

MIRANDA

You told me I should accept any and all invitations, so I could get to know these people. Get to know the layout.

CHARLIE

Well yeah, but I didn't mean you had to--

MIRANDA

--I didn't know they were swingers.

*

CHARLIE

Okay, okay. It's cool, you don't have to go.

MIRANDA

But I told them I would. I was thinking maybe I might be able to get at Doug's keys.

CHARLIE

...The God key?

MIRANDA

Right.

He's tempted for a moment, then--

CHARLIE

No. Listen, I don't want you to do this.

MIRANDA

I can take care of myself, Charlie. I have a lot of practice.

CHARLIE

This is one situation in which I would prefer it if you would call me Dad, okay?

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED: (3)

118

MIRANDA

Okay, I can take care of myself, Dad.

CHARLIE

You're what, eighteen now?

MIRANDA

I'll be seventeen in three weeks.

CHARLIE

Birthday coming? Better write that down.

(he does)

Seventeen. God, I forget you're so young.
It's like you aren't, really. You don't
act young, you're so...

*

MIRANDA

I'm precocious.

CHARLIE

Exactly, that's it.

(he focuses)

Listen, I'm serious Miranda. I forbid you
to go to that barbecue.

MIRANDA

I won't, okay?

CHARLIE

Promise me you won't go.

MIRANDA

Okay. God.

MUSIC IN: ANYTHING BY JIMMY BUFFETT.

119 **EXT. DOUG AND KELLY'S BACK YARD -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS**

119

A half dozen middle-aged SWINGERS play volleyball, clad,
unfortunately, in swimsuits. Some of the women sport thongs,
many of the men have chosen Speedos.

The volleyball net barely fits between cinder block walls in
the back yard of an older tract. The volleyball "court" is
furnished with real sand.

DOUG (OS)

I must've made a hundred trips down to
the beach in the middle of the night with
the pickup. Never got caught.

Courtside, Miranda accepts a parasol-enhanced drink in a
plastic cup from Doug.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

MIRANDA

I wonder how much time you'd do for stealing sand.

DOUG

I thought about it, believe me. It's destruction of community property, I think.

He offers a platter of rancid-looking shrimp. Flies BUZZ.

DOUG

One of the percs of the management position-- half price on all seafood. Better have some before they're all spoiled.

Miranda chokes down a shrimp, makes a face. Quickly gulps her drink. Kelly comes up.

KELLY

(indicating Miranda's drink)
That's a virgin, by the way.

Doug and Kelly leer at each other. Kelly holds out a pair of sunglasses for Doug. He waves them off.

DOUG

I'm cool.

KELLY

(to Miranda)
He likes to squint so he'll get those little tan lines around his eyes, like Clint Eastwood.

DOUG

No I don't.

KELLY

Personally, I think Clint's looking pretty bad lately. I think he needs work. Deep down, he's a nice guy though.

MIRANDA

You know this?

KELLY

Huh?

An uncomfortable moment.

DOUG

Bring your bathing suit, Miranda?

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (2)

119

MIRANDA

No. Why? I mean, you don't have a pool,
right?

DOUG

(channeling James Brown)
Hot tub.

MIRANDA

Um...

LEONID, a super-tan 60 year-old Russian man in a pack-revealing Speedo comes up to Doug.

LEONID

(heavy accent)
Dude, we need some more chairs.

DOUG

Okay Leonid, just a sec.

Miranda watches over Kelly's shoulder as Dave shucks off across the yard, opens a sliding glass door and goes into the house.

KELLY

Let's go check out my suits. I have a
major selection.

Miranda watches Doug come out of the house bearing his retractable KEY RING. CLOSE ON: the key ring, following it, a là "Notorious," as Miranda furtively watches Doug walk through the crowd.

KELLY

I think you're about my size...Miranda?

MIRANDA

Huh? Sorry. Um, I think I'll pass on the
hot tub.

KELLY

You sure?

Miranda watches Doug search through his keys until he finds the one that unlocks the padlock on a Rubbermaid storage cabinet, from which Leonid removes folding chairs. She watches Doug head back into the house to put back the keys.

MIRANDA

Changed my mind. Hot tub sounds good.

KELLY

It does, doesn't it?

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (3)

119

Kelly grins, then leads her to the sliding glass door, turning back to the volleyball game.

KELLY (shouts)
All right you guys, that's enough warm
up! Time to start the tournament!

Strangely enthusiastic CHEERS rise up from the "court."

120 INT. DOUG AND KELLY'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

120

Miranda wipes perspiration from her forehead and gulps more of her drink as she follows Kelly, who looks back and beckons her to come down the hall leading to--

121 INT. DOUG AND KELLY'S MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

121

Doug comes out of the bedroom just as they're heading in.

DOUG
Oh, um, should I...?

Kelly gives him a look. He nods and heads outside. Miranda has to squeeze up against the wall to let Doug's bulk pass.

MOMENTS LATER, IN THE BEDROOM--

Miranda SEARCHES nervously through dresser drawers while Kelly's in the closet, sorting through bathing suits.

KELLY (OS)
I'm guessing a thong is out.

MIRANDA
(startled, searching)
...What?

KELLY (OS)
Thong?

MIRANDA
No.

Miranda crosses to a bedside table, but finds nothing. She looks across the California King at the other table and sees the GOD KEY. It twinkles.

She sips her drink, a little unsteady on her feet as she creeps toward the key. She's about to pick it up when she hears CHEERS from outside. She looks out the window at--

122 EXT. DOUG AND KELLY'S VOLLEYBALL GAME - DAY

122

Everyone is now playing.

*

123 INT. DOUG AND KELLY'S MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

123

Miranda grimaces, then picks up the God Key.

Suddenly A PAIR OF HANDS descends on her shoulders-- Kelly's. Miranda jumps like she's been hit with a cattle prod, dropping the key.

KELLY

Hey, it's all right.

Miranda suddenly sits down hard on the side of the bed, perspiration flowing from her forehead. She holds up her drink.

MIRANDA

Are you sure this is a virgin?

Kelly takes the drink, sniffs it.

KELLY

Oh boy.

She kneels in front of Miranda.

KELLY

Here, put your head between your knees for a minute.

Miranda does. Kelly massages her hair.

MIRANDA

I don't feel so good.

KELLY

The sun, the drink...

MIRANDA

The shrimp.

KELLY

Maybe.

Miranda suddenly sits up.

MIRANDA

Kelly, do you think I'm normal?

KELLY

You're okay, you're just a little tipsy right now.

MIRANDA

(delirious)

No, that's not it. I'm not normal.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

There's something wrong with me. I spend all my time being scared. Normal people don't do that. Normal people have someone, like parents or something, who just says, you know, sometimes, "It's gonna be okay," don't they?

KELLY

I guess.

MIRANDA

God, don't you ever wish someone would just say that, "It's gonna be okay"?

Just as Kelly starts to speak Miranda looks over her shoulder--

AT THE MIRROR--

Where she sees the reflection of Kelly's bathing-suited ass. Kelly has a wedgie. Miranda's forehead sweats. Her color is bad. She looks out the window at the middle-aged, naked volleyball Players.

SUDDEN ANGLE ON: The plate of rancid shrimp. The wedgie. The Players. The shrimp. The wedgie. Gestalt.

Miranda throws up. Kelly doesn't get out of the way in time.

KELLY

Shit!

MIRANDA

I'm sorry.

DOUG (OS)

Everything okay in here?

Kelly starts heaving, then gets up and runs toward the bathroom. Doug walks in, right into her path.

DOUG

Honey?

Kelly throws up on Doug.

DOUG

Jesus.

With the two of them thus engaged, Miranda, still retching, eyes the GOD KEY.

124 **EXT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS** 124

Miranda drives up to find Pepper's Harley parked in front. *
She gets out and walks up to the porch, looking a little
worse for wear, listening to MALE LAUGHTER within.

On the front door she finds FOUR STAPLES, each with a snippet of paper attached, as if whatever was stapled there has been torn off. She studies them for a moment, then opens the front door and steps into--

125 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 125

Miles the dog runs to greet her. Charlie and Pepper sit side-by-side on the couch, passing a joint, chuckling. *

Seeing her, Charlie stands up, beaming. Pepper goes to the piano and starts to play.

CHARLIE
(to Miranda)
Hey!

MIRANDA
(weakly)
Hi.

CHARLIE
What happened to you? You okay?

MIRANDA
Fine.

CHARLIE
Good. Great. Listen, did you know Pepper
used to work for an alarm service
company?

MIRANDA
Was that before or after he went to jail?

PEPPER
Before.

CHARLIE
He knows alarm systems inside and out.

Miranda looks across the room, sees the maps, the books.

MIRANDA
Charlie, what did you tell him?
(He shrugs. She turns
to Pepper)
What did he tell you?

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

Pepper just smiles and holds up the DOUBLOON.

126 **EXT. FRONT PORCH -- A SHORT TIME LATER - NIGHT**

126

Miranda and Pepper are on the darkened porch, peering in through the window at Charlie, who's pacing, flipping through books and maps.

PEPPER

Well, I personally have never seen him so happy.

MIRANDA

That's not happiness, Pepper.

PEPPER

He's just excited.

MIRANDA

That's not excited. That's a manic state.

PEPPER

Why does everyone have to go putting labels on everything? I bet there's a statistic somewhere that shows there's less great guys than there used to be before they started labeling everyone and drugging them. Definitely less fun.

MIRANDA

Fun?

PEPPER

Hey, he's not hurting anyone.

MIRANDA

Not now. But what do you think's gonna happen when he finds out there's no treasure?

PEPPER

How do you know there isn't?

MIRANDA

Oh please.

PEPPER

Come on, Miranda. The journal, the gold piece--

MIRANDA

--Oh God, you really believe him.

PEPPER

Yeah. Don't you?

(she shrugs)

Then why are you doing this?

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

MIRANDA

I'm a door mat.

PEPPER

A what?

MIRANDA

Or, I don't know, an enabler or something.

PEPPER

Come on, you believe. You just don't want to admit it. It's all right. What's wrong with believing in something?

MIRANDA

A lot.

PEPPER

Besides, fuck it, without your father my life would be pretty dismal. Sorry about the language.

MIRANDA

Jail's pretty dismal.

PEPPER

Been there.

MIRANDA

Get real. Why are you doing this?

PEPPER

Simple-- being around your dad makes me happy. There's something about him.

MIRANDA

Yeah, he's crazy.

PEPPER

Of course he is. But I've never regretted any of the time I've spent with him, which is more than I can say for most people.

He heads down the porch steps.

PEPPER

Don't worry so much.

She watches him climb on his Harley, fire it up and drive off, then she turns to the FOUR STAPLES on the front door. She fiddles with the triangular snippets of paper still attached.

*

127 **INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT** 127

In the bedside light, Charlie sleeps soundly, a book on his chest. Miranda sneaks in and stands over him.

CLOSE ON: THE GOD KEY

As she sets it carefully down on the bedside table, then turns out the light.

CUT TO:

128 **INT. MIRANDA'S ROOM -- NEXT MORNING** 128

Miranda awakes to the sound of a COMMOTION. She walks out into--

129 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY** 129

It's EMPTY. All the furniture is gone. She goes to the window, looks out at--

130 **EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY** 130

That's where the furniture is. MOVERS are hefting it into a truck, supervised by a SHERIFF'S DEPUTY.

CHARLIE (OS)

Miranda? Is this what I think it is?

Charlie enters in his bathrobe, holding up the God key.

MIRANDA

Charlie, what's going on? What did you do?

He reaches into the pocket of his robe and produces a crumpled sheet of paper. Miranda takes it, unfolds it. The four corners have been TORN AWAY. It's a Government form. Across the top are the words--

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE

CHARLIE

Had a little trouble making the payments on the third mortgage.

MIRANDA

Third mortgage?

CHARLIE

Didn't I tell you about that?

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

MIRANDA

I didn't even know there was a second one.

CHARLIE

I took out the second to pay off the first, then a third to pay off the second, and so on...

(he holds up God key)

How did you get this?

MIRANDA

And so on?

She wants to sit down, but there's nowhere to sit. She watches the MOVERS carry her bed out the front door.

MIRANDA

They're taking everything.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY

That's what they do.

CHARLIE

Miranda, you went to that orgy, didn't you?

The Sheriff's Deputy shakes his head sadly and moves away.

MIRANDA

It was a barbecue, Charlie. Jesus, can you just forget about that for a minute and focus? What are we going to do? When do we have to be out of here?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I haven't had a chance to read the fine print.

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY

You had 'til midnight two weeks ago.

CHARLIE

Sure. They're chomping at the bit to get in here and put up a Taco Bell. The natives are getting restless. They want their Enchiritos.

MIRANDA

God, I am so sick of hearing you talk.

131 INT. HOUSE / MIRANDA'S ROOM - DAY

131

She pushes past the Movers and into her room. Slams the door, looks around. They've taken everything. Everything of value,

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

at least; the toy animals Charlie made out of corks and toothpicks are still there, arranged on the windowsill.

She goes to the window and watches the movers.

There's a KNOCK on the door. She doesn't answer. Charlie comes in, still holding the God key.

CHARLIE

Are you sure nothing happened?

Miranda doesn't answer.

CHARLIE

Something happened, didn't it? The swingers got you. God, what have I done? What the hell kind of father am I?

MIRANDA

You've done all right.

CHARLIE

Jesus Christ, I'm the worst fucking father in the world. I am, right? I sent you into the lion's den.

MIRANDA

You didn't send me. It was my idea. And besides, nothing happened.

CHARLIE

I'm supposed to be guiding you, giving you advice.

He stands beside her and together, in silence, they watch as the last of their possessions are loaded into the truck.

MIRANDA

...So what sort of advice would you give me?

CHARLIE

I don't know. Except, well, okay, I am a man, so I know this-- you can't trust men.

MIRANDA

...That's it?

CHARLIE

Oh, and never trust anyone named Kyle.

She smiles a little. She nods at the moving van outside.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: (2)

131

MIRANDA

I was wondering, when you went to the bank, what did you give as the reason we needed the money?

CHARLIE

"Home improvement."

She looks around at the run-down house.

MIRANDA

Mm hmm. What about the second time?

CHARLIE

"Swimming pool."

MIRANDA

Ah.

CHARLIE

Look, the timing couldn't be better.

MIRANDA

When is the timing ever right for being kicked out of your house?

CHARLIE

So okay, maybe we have to step up the schedule a bit, things might seem a little rushed, but now all the elements are in place.

MIRANDA

Elements?

CHARLIE

(holds up the God key)

This is a perfect example of that Chinese thing, you know, catastrophe equals opportunity?

She looks at him in disbelief, then turns away, pressing her forehead against the glass, letting her breath steam it.

There's a KNOCK on the door

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY (OS)

Excuse me, it's time for you to go.

Charlie and Miranda leave the room together.

CLOSE ON: The window, where the condensation left by Miranda's breath slowly disappears.

FADE TO BLACK

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: (3)

131

OVER DARKNESS--

Miranda reads from Padre Garces's diary.

MIRANDA (VO)

"...When the savages were silent, that was when the company was most affrighted. Evidently they were gathered around the entrance to the cavern, awaiting such time as our hunger might overwhelm good sense and force us out into the open. Ofttimes, perforce, the officers were compelled to use their muskets, firing over the natives' heads."

A FLASHLIGHT COMES ON, REVEALING:

132 **EXT. PARKING AREA BEHIND SO CAL MART -- NIGHT**

132

A PLASTIC SHOPPING BAG blows past as Miranda, Charlie and Pepper skulk around the So Cal Mart fire door, stamping their feet in the cold. Charlie consults Miranda's DRAWN MAP.

*
*
*

CHARLIE

I'm getting really great vibes here.

Pepper smiles, puts on his BIFOCALS, pulls out the GOD KEY and fits it into the door.

*

CHARLIE

I can't believe we're really doing it.

MIRANDA

I have no problem believing you're doing it.

Pepper turns the key. The fire door opens.

THE ALARM GOES OFF.

It's incredibly loud. Lights flash on the side of the building.

Miranda starts running away. Charlie grabs her.

CHARLIE

Where are you going?!

MIRANDA

Away! What's it look like?

Pepper holds the door for them.

PEPPER

Come on!

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

MIRANDA

Guys, we've gotta get out of here!

CHARLIE

No, we've gotta stick to the plan! Come on, let's go.

MIRANDA

Oh God.

Charlie grabs her and they all run--

133 INT. SO CAL MART -NIGHT

133 *

The ALARM NOISE is deafening. Red lights flash.

CLOSE ON: A FLASHLIGHT BEAM as Pepper fumbles with a padlock on an access gate. His glasses fall off. *

PEPPER *

Shit, where'd they go? *

Charlie scans the floor with the flashlight, Pepper finds his glasses and gets the lock open. *

They run up a flight of stairs to a locked door. Pepper slips the God Key in and opens the door, revealing a room full of electrical panels. *

Miranda waits in the doorway nervously as the two men go inside. Pepper runs to a large access panel and opens it with the God Key. Charlie shines the flashlight on the wires and LEDs within. *

PEPPER *

Where's my glasses? *

CHARLIE *

On your head. *

He holds the flashlight while Pepper unhooks some wires. *

134 EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT

134

A Fire truck approaches. A Police car is close behind. *

135 INT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT

135

Miranda watches from the doorway, covering her ears as the two men huddle over the alarm panel. *

CHARLIE

Hurry up.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

135

PEPPER

Done.

Pepper slams the panel shut and runs off down an aisle.
Charlie and Miranda follow him to--

136 INT. SO CAL MART, THE OUTDOOR DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

136 *

Pepper jams a screwdriver into the valve of a BOTTLE OF
COLEMAN CAMPING GAS. Propane HISSES out. He does this to
another bottle, and another.

MIRANDA

Are you sure this is going to work?

PEPPER

Pretty sure.

He opens a bunch more bottles. He sniffs the air.

PEPPER

That should do it.

He runs toward the door, knocking over a display.

*

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

136

CHARLIE
Where are you going?

PEPPER
Outside, remember?

MIRANDA
What about us?

PEPPER
Huh?

MIRANDA
What do we do?

PEPPER
Oh, hide, I guess.

Pepper darts out the door, slams it shut. Charlie and Miranda run down the aisles under the flashing red lights. In a moment,

137 INT. SO CAL MART BACK DOOR - NIGHT

137 *

A DOOR FLIES OPEN--

TWO COPS run inside, followed by a FIRE FIGHTER.

138 INT. SO CAL MART, SHELF - NIGHT

138

TWENTY FEET ABOVE THEM--

On a shelf behind shrink-wrapped palettes of pet food, Miranda and Charlie scramble into hiding. Up here, they're closer to the ALARM, so the noise is earsplitting and they have to yell. From their vantage, they can see across the store to the "Alarm Room".

*
*

MIRANDA
Are you sure this'll work?

CHARLIE (YELLING)
Oh yeah, no problem! See, Pepper changed the panel so it says there's a gas leak!
So--

Suddenly the alarm STOPS. Miranda claps her hand over Charlie's mouth. They hear FOOTSTEPS below.

*

A fire fighter comes out of the "alarm room" and speaks into his walkie.

*
*

FIRE FIGHTER (OS)
(over walkie)
Panel says gas leak.

*

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

Charlie winks at Miranda, who takes her hand away from his
mouth. She's impressed. Charlie swings his binoculars to the
Coleman display right below them.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED: (2)

138

FIRE FIGHTER
Smell anything?

ANOTHER FIRE FIGHTER (OS)
Yeah, I found it.

*

Charlie and Miranda look at each other, listening as--

139 INT. SO CAL MART, BELOW SHELF - NIGHT

139

The Firemen find the leaking propane bottles.

FIRE FIGHTER
Dang, I use this same brand.

They start carrying the leaking propane bottles out the back door.

140 EXT. SO CAL MART -- LATER

140

Their work done, the Fire Fighters wrap up their gear. The Cops secure the doors.

141 INT. SO CAL MART -- CONTINUOUS

141

From their hiding place, Charlie and Miranda watch as all the fluorescent lights are turned off.

CHARLIE
Excellent.

Miranda starts to climb down. Charlie puts his hand on her shoulder.

CHARLIE
I think we should wait here a while.

They wait in the dim green glow of the EXIT signs, while outside the moon rises.

DISSOLVE TO:

142 INT. SO CAL MART, VARIOUS ISLES & ANGLES - NIGHT

142

FLASHLIGHTS ARE SWITCHED ON--

The beams dart over shelves that rise to the ceiling, laden with colorful goods. Like intrepid subterranean explorers, Charlie and Miranda make their way down the aisles. Miranda stares in awe up at the merchandise, seemingly endless, receding into darkness.

143 **INT. SO CAL MART, TOY SECTION - NIGHT**

143

Beside the Barbie display, a flashlight beam illuminates the linoleum, searching.

CHARLIE

I know it's here somewhere.

MIRANDA

Smell that?

CHARLIE

What?

MIRANDA

Ammonia. They must have cleaned the floor. They cleaned your X off.

Charlie searches the floor.

MIRANDA

Well, I guess that does it.

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

MIRANDA

We'll have to call it off, obviously. We don't know where to dig.

CHARLIE

No no. It's okay, it's okay, I remember where it was.

He paces. Miranda looks on, doubting.

CHARLIE

Here.

MIRANDA

Here?

CHARLIE

Yes...No, a bit more to the left.

He stares abstractedly, looking less than sure of himself.

MIRANDA

...Charlie?

He stops pacing.

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

CHARLIE

Here.

(he stamps his foot)

Yeah, this is it. We dig here.

MIRANDA

Are you sure?

CHARLIE

(laughs)

I guess I'd better be, huh?

Charlie looks around, fighting through his own self-doubt.

*

CUT TO:

144 INT. CAMPING DEPARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

144

Miranda lights a Coleman lantern, revealing Charlie's still
doubting face. She takes his arm, "Lil-Tramp style" to lead
him off to--

*

*

*

CUT TO:

*

145 INT. SO CAL MART, TOOL DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

145

Charlie's face lights up at the sight of all the tools. He
uses his flashlight to search shelves filled with power
tools. He stops. He's found what he wants.

*

*

CHARLIE

(to Miranda)

Give me a hand with this.

Miranda helps Charlie wrestle a large box down from the
shelf.

CUT TO:

A WALKIE-TALKIE--

Charlie keys it and speaks.

CHARLIE

(into Walkie-Talkie)

Anyone around?

146 EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE SO CAL MART -- NIGHT

146

Standing guard in the shadows, his Harley beside him, Pepper
speaks into a matching Walkie-Talkie.

*

PEPPER

Nope. All clear out here.

147 **INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT**

147

In the light of the Coleman lantern Charlie puts on a pair of
safety goggles, and tosses Miranda a pair to do the same. He
then fires up a MAKITA JACKHAMMER and batters away at the
concrete floor. A chunk breaks free and Miranda wrestles it
out of the hole.

*
*
*
*
*

*

148 **EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT** 148

Pepper can hear the JACKHAMMER. He looks up at the stars, leaning on his bike. He looks back down. A POLICE CAR is rolling down the frontage road, right toward him.

He quickly keys his Walkie-Talkie.

 PEPPER
 (into Walkie-Talkie)
 Charlie, come in.

There's no response. The jackhammer continues SPUTTERING. The police car keeps coming.

 PEPPER
 Charlie, come in!

No answer. He stuffs the Walkie-Talkie into his pants and watches the police car pull into the So Cal Mart lot, heading straight for him.

149 **INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT** 149

The excavation is about a foot deep now. Miranda adds chunks of concrete to a growing pile of rubble. The jackhammer suddenly JUMPS in Charlie's hands, striking metal, making SPARKS. He cuts off the machine and wipes his sweaty face.

 CHARLIE
 We hit rebar.

150 **EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT** 150

Pepper hears the jackhammer's silence. He smiles, relieved.

He's still smiling when the Police Car shines its searchlight on him. He squints, waving. TWO COPS get out and approach. One is YOUNG, the other OLDER.

151 **INT. SO CAL MART, HARDWARE - NIGHT** 151

Charlie searches the shelves in Hardware until he finds a De *
Walt GRINDER. *

152 **EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT** 152

The Older Cop bends down beside Pepper's bike, squinting at the engine.

 OLDER COP
 You say there's no spark at all?

 PEPPER
 No. I think I might've flooded it.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

OLDER COP

Hmm.

YOUNG COP

There's the throttle, right there.

OLDER COP

I know, I know.

153 INT SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

153

Miranda plugs the GRINDER in and Charlie turns it on. The SCREECH is deafening.

*

154 EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT

154

Pepper hears it. The Older Cop is too involved in tinkering with the engine to hear it, but the Younger Cop wrinkles his brow and turns toward the SOUND, toward the So Cal Mart.

Pepper has an idea.

PEPPER

Here, let me try.

He steps past the Older Cop, gets on his Harley, kicks it on and throttles it up to full. The engine THUNDERS, covering the noise from inside.

*

The Older Cop stands, wiping his hands.

OLDER COP

There you have it.

PEPPER

You fixed it. Hey, thanks fellas.

155 INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

155

Charlie leans into the Grinder, which cuts into the steel reinforcing rod, creating a fountain of SPARKS.

156 EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT

156

The sparks are clearly visible, the glass storefront lit from within by their flashing blue-white LIGHT.

The Young Cop has his clipboard out, making his report, but slowly, his brow wrinkling again, he turns toward the store, he's about to see the FLASHING SPARKS--

--When Pepper gets ANOTHER IDEA.

He jams the Harley into gear and TAKES OFF at high speed, knocking the clipboard from the Young Cop's hands, spilling

*

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED:
his forms.

156

YOUNG COP
SIR!

The Cops watch, choking on burning rubber, as Pepper skids out onto the frontage road and takes it up to seventy, popping a lame-ass wheelie on the way.

OLDER COP
Can you drive? My back is killing me.

YOUNG COP
All right.

The Older Cop heads wearily to the car while the Young Cop gathers his triplicate forms.

OLDER COP
Leave that crap here.

YOUNG COP
All right, but we're gonna need it.

The Young Cop shrugs and gets in the car. They hit the SIREN and take off after Pepper.

157 INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT 157

Charlie cuts loose a large chunk of concrete, turns off the grinder and keys his Walkie-Talkie. *

CHARLIE
(into Walkie-Talkie)
We're just about done, Pepper.
(he waits, listening)
...Pepper?

No answer. Charlie shrugs, sets down the Walkie-Talkie.

He steps out into the main aisle and sees Miranda staring into the light of the demo dishwasher. *

CHARLIE
Hey, let's get those last pieces out of there. *

She doesn't answer. She's transfixed by the dishwashers.

CHARLIE
Hey.

(CONTINUED)

157 CONTINUED:

157

MIRANDA

Oh...right.

She helps him pull the last few chunks of concrete from the hole, adding them to the pile. Now they're looking at dirt.

Charlie grabs a PICKAXE and swings.

158 **EXT. 101 FREEWAY -- NIGHT**

158

Strangely, all four lanes are empty. The wind blows. Then, from the distance, we hear a Harley. It's Pepper, approaching at a leisurely pace. He's got the freeway all to himself...

*

...Except for FOUR CHP CRUISERS, one in each lane, sweeping along behind him, lights blinking, P.A. speakers DRONING as they pursue him in a typically absurd low speed chase.

CHP P.A.

...Pull over...pull over...pull over...

159 **INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT**

159

Charlie SHOVELS dirt into a bucket then Miranda hauls it out of the hole on a rope. The excavation has grown deeper, the pile of dirt beside the hole higher.

Charlie puts his boot on the shovel and jams it in. Suddenly there's a CRUNCH. He's hit something hard.

*

He grabs a five foot steel BREAKER BAR, lifts it and jams it down into the hole, BREAKING THROUGH something.

*

*

CHARLIE

Huh.

MIRANDA

What's that smell?

She covers her mouth and nose.

MIRANDA

You must've hit the sewer line.

CHARLIE

No, the sewer line's clear over on the other side of the store, under Pet Care.

*

He turns on his flashlight and shines it into the bottom of the hole at--

AN OPENING

Charlie kicks at the edges of the opening, widening it. He shines his flashlight into it, revealing a large volume of

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED: 159
brown liquid racing past.

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED: (2)

159

CHARLIE

Boy, current's stronger than I thought.

MIRANDA

Looks a lot like sewage to me.

He climbs out of the hole, drags the heavy breaker bar out
and sets it out of the way on a shelf.

*
*

Beaming, overjoyed, he takes Miranda by the shoulders.

*

CHARLIE

It's the underground river! Just where
the journal said it would be.

He does a little dance around the excavation, then runs off
into the darkness.

MIRANDA

Where're you going?

There's no answer. Miranda sits down beside the hole, her
head in her hands. In a moment, she fans the air, grimacing
from the stench.

160 **EXT. 101 FREEWAY -- NIGHT**

160

Pepper's Harley leads the convoy of CHP cruisers down the
freeway.

*

CHP P.A.

...Pull over...pull over...pull over...

One cruiser separates from the herd and pulls up alongside
Pepper. The Cop with the bad back winds down his window.

OLDER COP

Sir?

Pepper stares straight ahead.

OLDER COP

Come on, Sir, you're just wasting gas.

There's SPUTTERING. The Harley shudders. Pepper checks the
gas gauge. EMPTY.

*

The engine coughs, then stops. Pepper manages to coast along
on momentum for a while, then the bike starts to wobble, and
he gets off and starts walking it.

*

Cops get out and surround him, guns drawn.

161 INT. THE EXCAVATION -- NIGHT

161

Alone, Miranda waits in the lantern light beside the hole, watching the rushing brown waters below. She has tied a bandana around her face.

FOOTSTEPS approach from the darkness.

MIRANDA

Charlie?

No answer. A strange, bulky SILHOUETTE comes into view at the edge of the lantern light.

MIRANDA

...Hello?

The silhouette steps into the light. Miranda's eyes grow wide.

It's Charlie, wearing a scuba tank, weight belt and buoyancy-compensation vest. A scuba mask is pushed back on his head. A coil of climbing rope is over his shoulder.

CHARLIE

This place is great. They have everything.

He drops the rope, sits down on the edge of the hole and pulls on a pair of fins.

MIRANDA

What're you doing?

He seals the mask over his nose and eyes, puts on a water-proof HEADLAMP and switches it on.

CHARLIE

In those days they would've used pitch-pine torchlights.

MIRANDA

Um, Charlie...

He uncoils the rope.

CHARLIE

This should be more than long enough. According to the journal, the passage is only about forty *varas*. That's Spanish for yards. That makes it about a hundred-twenty feet long.

He ties one end of the rope around his waist.

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

161

MIRANDA

People get killed all the time doing things like this.

CHARLIE

Hold on to the other end of this, would you?

MIRANDA

Stop! You're jumping into raw sewage!

CHARLIE

What you smell is not sewage. It's sulfur. I noticed the water is slightly warmer than room temperature. That and the dark color indicate the presence of an iron sulfite hot spring.

MIRANDA

There's no reasoning with you. You have an answer for everything.

CHARLIE

That bothers you.

MIRANDA

Yes!

(she pulls at her hair)
All right. Oh hell, I was really hoping I wouldn't have to say this...

CHARLIE

...Yes?

MIRANDA

Don't make me say it.

CHARLIE

All right.

Quickly, before she can speak, he puts the regulator in his mouth and breathes NOISILY. For a moment, we enter Charlie's world, seeing through his face mask, watching Miranda's lips move, hearing nothing but his breathing.

Then we snap out of it. We're with her again.

MIRANDA

...There's no gold, okay? There's no treasure! You are about to jump into the sewer. This whole thing is a delusion.

He motions with his hands next to his ears, shrugging apologetically, indicating that he can't hear her, and moves closer to the hole.

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED: (2)

161

MIRANDA
Charlie, don't--

He salutes her.

AND DROPS INTO THE HOLE.

The rope uncoils as he descends. Miranda runs to it, grabs one end and ties it around the base of the Barbie display.

She runs to the hole and looks down. BUBBLES rise to the surface of the dark brown water.

The rope uncoils surprisingly fast.

162 **EXT. 101 FREEWAY -- NIGHT**

162

Pepper is on his stomach, hands cuffed behind his back, surrounded by Cops.

The Younger Cop gives him a rough body search. Just as he reaches Pepper's groin a SQUAWK comes from that region. The Cop jumps back, startled as a muffled VOICE emanates from somewhere below Pepper's belt.

MIRANDA'S VOICE
(on Walkie-Talkie)
Pepper, come in...Pepper?

OLDER COP
Roll him over.

They do.

MIRANDA'S VOICE
(on Walkie-Talkie)
I think I need some help in here...Pepper?

Pepper attempts an ingratiating smile.

Putting two and two, the Older Cop quickly grabs his radio.

163 **INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT**

163

Miranda grips the Walkie-Talkie, watching Charlie's rope uncoil.

MIRANDA (into Walkie-talkie)
Pepper, where are you?

164 **INT. UNDERWATER PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT** 164

Gradually, through cloudy, murky water, we see a light. It's Charlie's headlamp. He makes his way down a narrow tunnel, searching.

He finds a plank, a piece of rotten wood set into the rock wall. He scrapes corrosion off it and pries it away from the wall, revealing a small, dark space.

Behind the regulator, his lips form a smile as he shines his light into the space.

165 **EXT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT** 165

LIGHTS

Approaching from the distance, gradually resolving themselves into headlights. Pulling silently into the So Cal Mart lot.

When the headlights go out, we can see that they belong to a POLICE CAR.

166 **INT. THE EXCAVATION -- NIGHT** 166

Miranda keys the Walkie-Talkie and is about to speak when she hears the store's front doors rattling.

MIRANDA
(whispering)
Pepper, is that you?

Her eyes flash from the front door to Charlie's uncoiling rope. There are only a few feet left.

Quickly, she checks the rope at the base of the Barbie display, then runs toward the front of the store. When she reaches the entryway--

*

167 **INT. SO CAL MART, ENTRYWAY - NIGHT** 167

A SEARCHLIGHT

Glares into her eyes. She freezes.

168 **INT SO CAL MART, THE EXCAVATION - NIGHT** 168

Suddenly Charlie's rope reaches the last coil and snaps tight where the end is tied to the Barbie display. The shelf SQUEAKS as it is slowly dragged across the floor.

169 **INT. FRONT OF THE STORE, ENTRYWAY - NIGHT** 169

Miranda hears the squeaking and turns. She sees the display moving, starting to tip over.

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

169

COP P.A.
GET DOWN ON THE FLOOR!

Miranda hesitates a moment, looking toward the excavation, toward the searchlight--Charlie, the Cops, Charlie, the Cops-- then runs away, toward Charlie.

COP P.A.
STOP!

Miranda runs back--

170 **INT. SO CAL MART, EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT**

170

Arriving just as the knot UNRAVELS and the rope takes off, dancing across the floor. She dives for it...grabbing it just in time.

Glass SHATTERS, and a CANISTER flips past her, clanking end over end across the linoleum, spewing WHITE TEAR GAS.

*
*

She pulls hard on the rope. It's slipping through her fingers, burning her hands.

171 **THE UNDERWATER PASSAGEWAY,**

171

Where Charlie is straining against the rope. It's holding him back, keeping him from reaching all the way into the hole in the wall. Annoyed, he YANKS on the rope--

172 **INT. SO CAL MART, BACK AT THE EXCAVATION - NIGHT**

172

Miranda yanks back, really putting her back into it, unaware that the tear gas is parting, and--

A COP IN A GAS MASK

has materialized behind her. Watching Miranda struggling with the rope, he points a shotgun at her.

MASKED COP
(muffled)
Put your hands behind your head!

Without thinking, she puts one hand behind her head while holding onto the rope with the other.

COP
Both hands.

MIRANDA
I can't do that right now.

The Cop reaches out, trying to snatch the rope from Miranda.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

MIRANDA

Stop it!

She fights him for the rope.

He shoves the shotgun in her face.

She looks right down the barrel.

FREEZE FRAME: ON MIRANDA'S EYE.

MIRANDA (VO)

Here are the only words I could think of--
"Would you like to make it a medium size
for only twenty-five cents more?" Over
and over in my head. My last words.
Stupid, stupid, stupid.

*
*

Miranda's eye BLINKS.

The Cop kicks her hand.

MIRANDA

Don't!

But she lets the rope go. It whips away, racing down the hole.

The Masked Cop points toward the door.

MASKED COP

All right. Let's roll.

She takes a last look at the dark water.

The Masked Cop holds the shotgun on Miranda's back as he pushes her toward the shattered automatic door, into the searchlights.

Another TEAR GAS CANISTER flips into the store and spins across the floor.

*
*

Miranda starts choking uncontrollably, then gagging. It's serious.

*
*

The Cop looks at her, then takes off his mask and puts it over her face.

*
*

MASKED COP

Just breathe.

*
*

Miranda breathes, feeling better, but the Masked Cop starts CHOKING, then GAGGING. Rubbing frenziedly at his eyes, he stumbles off into the haze.

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (2)

172

Miranda is alone.

*

MIRANDA

*

...Hello?

*

She looks around, then runs OUT OF THE GAS, back toward the excavation.

*

*

INT. THE EXCAVATION -- NIGHT

*

The tear gas hasn't reached here yet. Charlie is staring down into the hole.

*

*

MIRANDA

Charlie?

Seemingly unfazed, he walks over to a display of candy bars. He tears into a candy Bar, takes a bite.

*

*

CHARLIE

Huh. Being under siege changes the way food tastes. Everything tastes a bit livelier.

*

COP PA

Come out NOW!

*

*

MIRANDA

Get down! You're going to get us killed!

*

She shoves Charlie, toppling him over. She dives down beside him.

MIRANDA

God, you smell terrible.

CHARLIE

(still crunching candy)
I found it.

*

MIRANDA

What're you talking about?

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE

You have to see it. We can't leave until
you see it.

*
*
*

Charlie kneels beside the hole, shining his flashlight down
into the dark water.

*

CHARLIE

I couldn't get it all out, but I got a
lot. The rest was too heavy. It's a lot
easier to move under water.

*
*

MIRANDA

I don't see anything.

CHARLIE

Take off that mask.

*

She does. She looks into the hole, then at him.

*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLIE
Can you see it now?

MIRANDA
...Yeah.

CHARLIE
So, now you believe me?

MIRANDA
I believe you.

But Charlie doesn't hear. Standing perfectly still, looking down at the water, he's at peace.

There's the THUNK of the tear gas gun. The gas COMES CLOSER.

Miranda's breathing gets shallow. She starts to wheeze, then choke. Her eyes fill with tears.

MIRANDA
(coughing)
Where's that mask? Damn, I don't know how much more of this gas I can take.
(Her eyes roll back in her head)
Um, Charlie, I'm having a little trouble breathing.

He looks at her as if he hadn't noticed her before.

SHE COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR.

CHARLIE
I got ya.

He bends down to pick her up just as another THUNK sends a tear gas canister careening off a shelf RIGHT NEAR THEM.

Charlie reacts, jumping back, standing up, and HITS HIS HEAD on the breaker bar he left on the shelf above.

He reels, wobbling. He can't see straight. He touches the side of his head, where BLOOD is seeping through the hair.

He squints, steadying himself, and sees Miranda. He gathers his strength, grabs Miranda and throws her over his shoulder.

CHARLIE
Here we go, sack of potatoes.

He runs toward the stairs to the balcony, disappearing into the white gas.

173 **INT. EMPLOYEE LOUNGE -- NIGHT**

173

Miranda comes to, coughing. She looks around.

 MIRANDA
 ...Charlie?

There he is, tying her wrists behind her back with electrical cord.

 MIRANDA
 What're you doing?

He pulls the candy machine out from the wall and yanks the power cord off of it. He ties this one around her ankles.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED:

173

MIRANDA

(groggy)

What're we gonna do?

CHARLIE

You're going to stay right here.

MIRANDA

What about you?

She sees the matted, bloody hair at his temple.

*

MIRANDA

What happened to you?

*

*

CHARLIE

(not answering)

When I was in the hospital I read a lot of biographies of great men, and I noticed that an awful lot of them had fathers who were less than great...who were, well, screw-ups.

He gets another cord, this one from the sandwich machine, and uses it to tie her to the Coke machine.

She sees blood dripping from the matted hair, down his cheek.

*

MIRANDA

What're you *doing*?

CHARLIE

...And the way I started to see it, all these years that I've been trying to do something great, or at least wanting to, what I've actually been doing is laying the groundwork for you, so now you can go on and do great things, or whatever.

MIRANDA

(starting to cry)

But your Dad was a screw-up too.

*

CHARLIE

It's just a theory, okay?

He's SHAKING now. His face is GOING SLACK. His head injury is SERIOUS.

*

*

He folds a PIECE OF PAPER up and puts it in her pocket.

*

CHARLIE

(slurring his speech)

Don't lose this. It's important.

*

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED: (2)

173

MIRANDA

Wait, where're you going?

CHARLIE

(slurring)

*

Just tell them I forced you into this.

Tell them I went nuts. There shouldn't be
any problem. I have a history, after all.

He runs out the door and closes it behind him. We hear him
LOCK it.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED: (3)

173

MIRANDA

Charlie?

The door opens back up. Charlie sticks his head in.

CHARLIE

One more thing-- I don't think I ever
thanked you for all you did for me. So,
thanks.

MIRANDA

You're welcome.

CHARLIE

And don't let anyone push you around,
okay?

MIRANDA

Okay.

He ducks back out the door.

MIRANDA

Charlie? Come back!

But the door is shut. He's gone.

MIRANDA

Dad!

174 INT. SO CAL MART ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

174

COPS storm into the store, but this is no action scene,
except in their minds. Witness how they trip over each other.

CUT TO: *

174A INT. SO CAL MART - NIGHT

174A *

Charlie runs back and forth carrying something through the
smoke. *

CUT TO: *

174B INT. EMPLOYEE LOUNGE - NIGHT

174B *

Miranda looks at the inspirational posters that decorate the
space, as she listens to the shouts. *

CUT TO: *

175 **INT. BESIDE THE EXCAVATION - NIGHT**

175

Charlie straps the scuba tank back on. He heads for the hole, but turns back, taking a moment to look around at the tear gas-shrouded store, watching calmly as strange shadows flicker and dance like ghosts around the store with all its vari-colored products.

*
*
*

He looks on in wonderment.

Then puts the regulator and face mask on, climbs down into the hole and sinks under the water.

176 **INT. SO CAL MART, NEAR THE FRONT DOOR - NIGHT**

176

TWO MASKED COPS advance warily through the tear gas, making their way toward the rear of the store, closer and closer to the excavation. As they pass the Barbie display one of them drops from view,

177 **INT. SO CAL MART, THE EXCAVATION - NIGHT**

177

COP

Ugh.

The Other Cop gets down and grabs his partner's hand, hauling him out. As he rises, the first Cop kicks his legs, causing dirt, then concrete to crumble back into the hole, first a little, then a lot. A large piece of concrete falls like a cork into the opening, and the excavation is SEALED.

*
*

178 **UNDER THE WATER**

178

*

He looks around, getting his bearings, then heads into--

A NARROW PASSAGE

He gropes his way along the rock wall, his hands searching until they find PETROGLYPHS--native American figures, sun and moon symbols carved into the rock.

He makes a turn into an even narrower passage, but this time his tank catches on the opening. He can't move forward. He backs up and unbuckles his tank, removing it. He takes a last big hit of oxygen, holds it, and squeezes through.

The walls get tighter and tighter around him. The passage begins a steep descent. Charlie swims on, leaving a trail of blood in the water.

He navigates the passage, going down, down. Suddenly the light from his headlamp is reflected back at him, and that light is tinged with gold.

Charlie stops swimming, suffused in golden light. He reaches out, his eyes lighting up, blissful, gleaming with gold.

179 **INT. EMPLOYEE LOUNGE -- SECONDS LATER -NIGHT**

179

The door slams open and two uniformed, gas-masked COPS run in, guns drawn.

One of them sees Miranda, tied to the Coke machine, and moves toward her, removing the gas mask.

It's the FEMALE COP from the golf course, the one who spent the night with Charlie.

*

Recognizing her, Miranda shakes her head and smiles ruefully.

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED:

179

FEMALE COP
Gonna be okay, honey.

DISSOLVE TO:

180 **EXT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE -- FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT**

180

Yellow CAUTION TAPE is stretched all the way around the house. A "CONDEMNED" sign is stapled to the front door.

Miranda walks up the front steps with the dog and ducks under the tape. She looks in through the window. In the moonlight, she can see the outline on the wall, the shape of Charlie's upright bass. She turns and sits down on the porch floor.

In the distance, a train blows its HORN. She watches the moon.

DISSOLVE TO:

181 **EXT. HOUSE, THE NEXT DAY**

181

A BULLDOZER idles in the front yard, pointing toward the house, waiting.

Miranda stands at the edge of the yard with the dog, looking back at the house. She doesn't notice the BOBCAT, who watches as she gets in her car and drives away.

182 **INT. MIRANDA'S STATION WAGON -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS**

182

Sunglasses on, Miranda drives. She pulls into--

183 **EXT. SO CAL MART LOT - DAY**

183

She gets out of her car and joins the other SHOPPERS, choosing a cart, heading into--

184 **INT. SO CAL MART - DAY**

184

It's weird. She's like a zombie, like a Stepford Wife, walking down the aisles, apparently shopping.

She passes some CONSTRUCTION WORKERS repairing the hole Charlie disappeared into, smoothing out the last of the concrete. Miranda moves on, heading for--

185 **INT. SO CAL MART, BIG TICKET APPLIANCE SECTION - DAY**

185

She pulls out the piece of paper Charlie put in her pocket and unfolds it.

It's a bar-coded So Cal Mart MERCHANDISE TAG. She turns it over. On the back side is A MAP, drawn hurriedly by Charlie.

(CONTINUED)

185 CONTINUED: 185

A dotted line leads to an "X", like a kid's pirate map.
Beside the X Charlie has scrawled a SERIAL NUMBER.

Miranda consults the map and looks around. Walking on, she
finds herself at the DISHWASHERS.

She finds one model in particular-- the best one. She looks
at the tag, then notices that it matches the serial number on *
the display model. *

186 EXT. SO CAL MART PARKING LOT -- DAY 186

Miranda watches as a So Cal Mart EMPLOYEE hefts the *
dishwasher into the back of her Volvo wagon. *

SO CAL MART EMPLOYEE
Awful heavy for a dishwasher.

187 INT/EXT. MIRANDA'S STATION WAGON - DRIVING - DAY 187

Miranda drives while Miles the dog rests beside her. The *
Volvo's hatch is strapped down over the dishwasher. She stops *
the car and gets out--

188 EXT. BEACH - DAY 188

It's the first time we've seen the ocean. It's windy. She's
all alone, except for Miles, who watches the beach. She goes *
to the back of the car, unties the hatch, then partially *
slides out the bulky appliance. *

She stares at the shiny, brand-new dishwasher for a moment.

Waves CRASH. Miranda opens the dishwasher. She's numb,
stunned as her face is bathed in reflected golden light.

MIRANDA (VO)
You want to know how California got its
name? It's not named after some explorer
or king. Nope, someone made the name up.
A writer. He just pulled it out of his
imagination. In the sixteenth century. In
Spain. He made up this place where there
was unlimited gold and pearls and
beautiful, fierce women wore gold armor
and rode wild beasts. And he called it
California. It's true. It was a best-
seller back then. Not many people know
this.

In the distance, from the direction of the ocean, someone is
speaking CHINESE. Miranda slams the dishwasher closed and
turns toward the voices.

IN THE WAVES--

(CONTINUED)

188 CONTINUED:

188

A dozen CHINESE MEN in Jockey Briefs are struggling ashore. Clutching plastic bags, they flop onto the sand. Then dress.

*

One of them catches Miranda's eye. Still dressing, he crosses the sand toward her, smiling and waving.

CHINESE MAN
...California?

MIRANDA
Excuse me?

CHINESE MAN
This is California?

MIRANDA
Oh...Yeah.

He turns and offers his cohorts a burst of triumphant CHINESE. Then, ecstatic, he turns back to her.

MIRANDA
...Welcome.

Now she smiles.

Then turns and gets in the car, starts it up and drives away.

In a moment, two green Immigration and Naturalization VEHICLES pull up. Four OFFICERS run after the Chinese with plastic handcuffs, rounding them up.

A seagull SQUAWKS.

FADE OUT

THE END