

LARA AND THE DEAD BOY

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FADE IN:

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE - MOJAVE DESERT - SUNRISE

The scarab-tattooed hand of LARA LEE, 30, manically turns the radio dial. Dirty, bloody, rebellious yet vulnerable, her hair is shorn and left shoulder bandaged.

A fly lands on the dashboard. She shoos it away. More flies swarm around her hand, a macabre Snow White.

At the radio, Lara passes, stops, returns to a Motown classic. Her hand relaxes. She leans against a man's shoulder, attached to a mysterious DYED-BLOND HEAD.

LARA LEE

Nothing else ever got to me like
this, you know. You have to take
some of the blame for that.

Lara watches the desert dawn, lighting a cigarette.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Swanning into my life out of the
blue, all danger and destiny. Call
it what you like: serendipity,
kismet, fate.

The man is SILENT, intimately visible, yet obscured.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

This isn't how I imagined things,
either. But we've had our
adventures. And in these dark days,
who gets the fairy tale?

Dyed-Blond Head comes into focus. The man, a Z-list James Dean, is handsome, battered, and days-old dead. Flies swarm them.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Who would deserve one?

Lara takes another drag.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Not the outlaws and morgue rats.

She places the cigarette tenderly between his lips. It dangles comically. Lara strokes his face, for the last time.

EXT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE - MOJAVE CLIFFSIDE - SUNRISE

The wheels of the Oldsmobile touch the cliff's edge. Lara takes the dead man's hand.

LARA LEE

"Goodnight, sweet Prince."

She REVS the engine.

FOUR DAYS AGO.

EXT. BARGAIN BURIALS - PARKING LOT - DAY

A flickering neon sign above a bungalow: "BARGAIN BURIALS". Lara ZOOMS into the parking lot on a motorcycle.

She parks next to a pink Hearse with "SHIRLEY" plates. Takes off her helmet, slides down aviator shades.

She shakes off her biker jacket and takes out a set of keys. A wooden sign on the door: "Mortuary! Funeral Home! Crypt!" She unlocks the deadbolts.

On her arm: a full sleeve tattoo of the same Z-list James Dean's face.

INT. BARGAIN BURIALS - MORGUE - DAY

Lara pulls a bewigged DEAD CLOWN, 50s, out of a giant freezer. She straps him onto an industrial wheelbarrow.

Lara wheels him to a table next to a black leather bag and embalming tools: knives of all sizes, chainsaws, embalming guns, trocar needles.

LARA LEE (V.O.)

As the cheapest death-prep squad in all of Los Angeles, possibly the world, we get some odd customers.

She unstraps Dead Clown from the wheelbarrow and lays him out. Lights a cigarette. Smokes as she works.

LARA LEE (V.O.)

If you can call corpses customers.

Lara wields a knife like a sushi chef. Cuts out his tongue.

INT. BARGAIN BURIALS - CHAPEL - DAY

The Bargain Burials chapel is akin to a fancy shed. FUNERAL GUESTS sit in full clowning regalia in front of the open casket of Dead Clown.

Lara leans against the entrance door beside MOZART HOROWITZ, 60, casually dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and flip flops.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
That's my boss, Mozart Horowitz.
He's a Third Gen funeral director
and the closest thing I have to
family in this fucked-up town.

At the pulpit a black priest, FITZROY FREEMAN, 55, adjusts his white robes and pushes down on a red foam nose.

LARA LEE
This is weird.

MOZART HOROWITZ
The wonderful thing about death, my
dear, is that it never fails to
surprise you.

The Funeral Guests walk to the casket to pay their respects. Lara lights a cigarette as she watches the procession.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
Mozart is that rarest of birds: a
white trash Jew. His Bubbe got
knocked up by a rodeo cowboy and it
was all downhill from there.

Fitzroy's red nose pops off. He scrambles to reattach it.

FITZROY FREEMAN
We are gathered here today to pay
tribute to our brother under God,
Bucky McGee Two. Father, son,
husband, he was a man who
considered himself to be first and
foremost... An artist.

A LADY CLOWN throws herself on the casket, rending her rainbow-colored wig. A DIGNIFIED CLOWN pulls her away.

FITZROY FREEMAN (CONT'D)
Wherefore, comfort one another with
these words...

Lara ashes into a model urn.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
 "Father Fitzroy Freeman" is an
 actor, ordained last week.

Four CLOWN BEARERS approach the pulpit. They lift the casket and carry it towards a side door. Beer cans attached by string RATTLE behind the casket.

FITZROY FREEMAN
 It is our nature to want to
 understand now, but trust requires
 we lean upon God...
 (existential)
 Even when things seem unclear.

The Funeral Guests follow, HONKING their horns out of unison.

EXT. BARGAIN BURIALS - PARKING LOT - DAY

Lara watches the Clown-Bearers lever the casket into the hearse. It drives away. The exhaust BANGS. Fitzroy jumps into a defensive pose, hand reaching as if for a gun holster.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
 Fitzroy used to play gangsters in
 Blaxploitation flicks, until he
 stopped accepting roles that
 stereotype his culture.

Fitzroy smooths his robes and ostentatiously crosses himself.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
 He will soon tell me that this is
 the most undignified gig he has
 ever taken.

INT. BARGAIN BURIALS - FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

Fitzroy slumps against an empty coffin, fanning himself with a psalm sheet folded into a fan. He downs a mint julep. Lara, drinking a can of Coke, passes him a huge cocktail jug.

FITZROY FREEMAN
 This is the most undignified gig I
 have ever taken.

BEEP! On her hip, Lara's Pager: "Knee deep in stiffs tomorrow. Take the night off! Xoxo -M."

Fitzroy rolls his eyes as he refills his glass to the brim.

FITZROY FREEMAN (CONT'D)
 When are you getting a smart phone,
 Lara? That pager is ridiculous.

Lara drags deeply on her cigarette.

LARA LEE
 Once you're in the data Matrix,
 anyone can find you.

FITZROY FREEMAN
 Who on earth would want to find
 you?

LARA LEE
 Lots of people.

Lara puts out her cigarette in his cocktail and walks away.

INT. BARGAIN BURIALS - STAIRCASE - SUNSET

Lara lugs a film projector, deck chair and bucket of popcorn
 up the stairs.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
 Jack Nicholson was once described
 as a "very social loner". I feel
 the same way. Except I socialize
 with movies.

EXT. BARGAIN BURIALS - ROOF - SUNSET

The WHRRRR of the projector aimed against the white wall of a
 neighboring building. Lara puts up her Doc Marten-ed feet, in
 a rooftop cinema for one.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
 Some people might think it's sad
 that Mozart is my only friend, but
 being an embalmer is a bit like
 being in a secret society.
 (beat)
 I was really tight with someone a
 long time ago.

Lara eats a fistful of popcorn as CREDITS ROLL for late-80's
 b-film, DINO-SAW-RUS REX.

THIRTEEN YEARS AGO.

EXT. LAS VEGAS TRAILER PARK - PARKING LOT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

YOUNG LARA, 13, rummages through garbage in the light of a streetlamp. She lifts out a rotting melon. Sniffs it. Tosses it back. Reaches to the bottom of the dumpster.

EXT. LAS VEGAS TRAILER PARK - TRAILER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A trailer door SLAMS. Young Lara's mother, YOUNG JUNEBUG LEE, 28, chases after TRUCK DRIVER, 35. She grabs his shirtsleeve. SMACKS the back of his head.

YOUNG JUNEBUG LEE
 Motherfucker! Shit-fer-brains
 moron!! How dare you? How VERY dare
 you?!

TRUCK DRIVER
 Get off me! Crazy bitch!

YOUNG JUNEBUG LEE
 I am NOT crazy! I am not CRAZY you
 rat-bastard!!

Junebug claws at his face in rage. He pushes her off him.

EXT. LAS VEGAS TRAILER PARK - PARKING LOT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Young Lara pulls out a plastic bag. Opens it. Inside is a suffocated CAT. She recoils.

YOUNG LARA
 Gross!

Her disgust turns to fascination. She lifts out the body and slings it over her shoulder.

YOUNG JUNEBUG LEE (O.S.)
 Baby no, wait. Come back! I didn't
 mean it. Don't go. Please!

O.S. SMACK!

Young Lara hides behind the dumpster, clutching the cat.

YOUNG LARA'S POV: Junebug sprawls on the ground holding her cheek. Truck Driver REVS his engine. Junebug chases after him. Opens the door of the moving truck. Hauls herself in. The truck drives off.

SIDEWALK

Young Lara emerges from behind the dumpster, petting the cat. She sits on the sidewalk, lays the dead animal in front of her. Takes a Swiss Army knife from her pocket. Opens it.

YOUNG DUSTY JONES, 10, wearing a REN & STIMPY t-shirt underneath his backpack, watches from across the street.

YOUNG DUSTY
Whatcha doing?

Young Lara brandishes the knife with false confidence.

YOUNG LARA
Vivisection.

YOUNG DUSTY
Gross. Can I help?

Dusty holds up a corkscrew attached to his key chain.

YOUNG LARA
I guess so.

Young Dusty joins her on the sidewalk, his backpack spilling over with library books. Lara arranges the cat like a vampire at their feet.

They contemplate the dead animal in silence, their tools held like party favors.

YOUNG DUSTY
You new here?

YOUNG LARA
Yeah. You been here a while?

YOUNG DUSTY
I was born here. Pops says we'll die here.

YOUNG LARA
I'd rather DIE than die here.

YOUNG DUSTY
Me, too!

YOUNG LARA
Yeah? What's your name.

YOUNG DUSTY
Dusty Jones.

YOUNG LARA

Lara Lee.

They shake hands.

YOUNG LARA (CONT'D)

We should make a pact!

YOUNG DUSTY

Okay.

Young Lara takes her knife and makes a deep gash in her palm.

YOUNG LARA

I, Lara Lee, do solemnly swear
never to die here.

Young Lara grabs Young Dusty's hand with her bloodied palm.

YOUNG DUSTY

What are you doing?!

He resists with all his might. Lara is stronger.

YOUNG LARA

I saw it in "Natural Born Killers".
Stay still!

She slices his hand open. Young Dusty begins to SOB. Young Lara looks around the empty parking lot in alarm.

YOUNG LARA (CONT'D)

Be quiet!! Don't be such a crybaby,
God.

Dusty wipes away his tears, leaving bloody marks across his cheeks. Lara looks around the trailer park, inspecting her new home. She kicks a broken liquor bottle at their feet.

YOUNG LARA (CONT'D)

This place is even worse than
before. We have to be strong,
Dusty. Real strong.

YOUNG DUSTY

Y-you coulda just t-trusted me. You
didn't have to c-c-cut me.

Lara lays her hand on his. Dusty opens his eyes warily.

YOUNG LARA

Junebug says, without rituals, we
ain't got nothing. Now, swear it.

YOUNG DUSTY
I, Dusty Jones, do swear-

YOUNG LARA
Solemnly.

YOUNG DUSTY
Do solemnly swear, never to die
here.

They shake hands, holding eye contact.

YOUNG LARA
Now it's unbreakable.

They look back at the cat.

YOUNG DUSTY
Do we bury it after?

YOUNG LARA
If we don't bury the body-

INT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - BED - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

In a trailer strewn with witch-craft and vodka bottles, Young Junebug strokes Young Lara's hair in a cot next to her bed.

YOUNG JUNEBUG LEE
His soul wanders the earth, lost
forever! A hungry ghost. These
roaming demons FEED on the energy
of little girls who do bad things-

Young Lara pulls her blanket over her head in terror.

EXT. LAS VEGAS TRAILER PARK - PARKING LOT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Lara closes the cat's eyes as Dusty covers his ears.

YOUNG LARA
That's what happened to my daddy.
He was incinerated in a car crash.
Junebug says, he deserved his fate.

YOUNG DUSTY
Who's Junebug?

YOUNG LARA
My momma. But she don't like it
when I call her that.

Young Lara does an impersonation of her mother in the throes of demonic possession.

YOUNG LARA (CONT'D)
She's a witch! When she hears the voice of the Devil, she speaks in tongues.

Young Dusty covers his eyes with his hands.

YOUNG LARA (CONT'D)
She has a grimoire, and everything.

YOUNG DUSTY
A grim-what?

YOUNG LARA
Her spell-book.
(whispers)
Black magic.

She tickles Young Dusty's ribs. He GIGGLES.

EXT. BARGAIN BURIALS - ROOF - NIGHT

On screen, loincloth-clad DEAN MITCHUM, then 37, emerges from a cave armed with a chainsaw.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
And so began a beautiful friendship. It wasn't all dead cats and grotesquery. We just didn't have any toys.

TITLE CARD: STARRING, DEAN MITCHUM

LARA LEE (V.O.)
Then everything got fucked up.

Dean battles an ANIMATRONIC DINOSAUR. It rips the chainsaw from his grip. Cornered, Dean grabs a long shard of rock.

INT. JUNEBUG'S TRAILER - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Young Lara watches Dean Mitchum on a small, shitty television under a blanket on the couch. Truck Driver's hand creeps up between her legs. She pulls her legs away.

On TV, Dean launches the rock in a perfect arc into the dinosaur's neck. Ludicrous death throes ensue.

LARA LEE (V.O.)
 I've been totally obsessed with
 Dean Mitchum since I was thirteen
 years old and saw his debut,
 "Supernova Snake Creatures", for
 the very first time. It's a work of
 cinematic genius.

The hand creeps back under her blanket. Lara buries deeper
 under the covers, watching the television fixedly.

EXT. BARGAIN BURIALS - ROOF - NIGHT

On the projector, Dean recovers his chainsaw and scalps the
 beast. He hangs the dino-skin from his belt. He embraces a
 swooning RAQUEL-WELCH-ALIKE with outrageous passion.

LARA LEE
 Lucky bitch.

Dean blows a kiss straight to Lara through the camera. Lara
 runs her hand over the tattoo of his face on her bicep.

INT. BARGAIN BURIALS - FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

Mozart, reading in an armchair with a whiskey, startles when
 he sees Lara swing open the door from the stairwell.

MOZART HOROWITZ
 Lara! You're still here.

She hides the projector behind her and crosses the room.

MOZART HOROWITZ (CONT'D)
 I thought you might have gone out.
 You know. To a party!

LARA LEE
 I'm not invited to parties.

Mozart pulls down his reading glasses.

MOZART HOROWITZ
 Lara, I hope you don't think I'm
 overstepping the mark. But if I
 were to give you one piece of
 advice, it would be: grasp it.

LARA LEE
 Grasp what?

Mozart shakes his fist in the air.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Life!

Lara knits her brows, trying hard to understand.

LARA LEE

It helps my insomnia to work.

Lara swings open the door behind him towards the morgue.

INT. BARGAIN BURIALS - MORGUE - NIGHT

A chainsaw WHIRRS as Lara saws open the breastplate of OLD WOMAN, 70, smoking as she works. The radio BLARES heavy metal. The clock strikes twelve. Then, NEWS BREAK:

RADIO ANNOUNCER

A sad day for fans of actor Dean Mitchum, best known for cult movies "Supernova Snake Creatures" and my personal favorite, "Dino-SAW IV".

Lara's cigarette falls from her open mouth into the chest.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Returning from Mexico City on his fiftieth birthday, Dean's body was discovered slumped over a toilet in LAX, his death believed to be by accidental overdose.

In a trance, Lara turns off the chainsaw, then the radio.

LARA LEE

I need that body.

DEAN MITCHUM'S SULTRY VOICE OVER speaks to Lara.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)

I know you do, baby.

Lara jumps. Looks around, afraid. Takes a deep breath.

LARA LEE

I knew this could happen one day-

Dean finishes her sentence.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)

But you didn't think it would be this way.

Lara shakily lights another cigarette. Paces back and forth.

LARA LEE
At least you're not the devil.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
Come and get me, baby.

Lara grabs a set of overalls hanging on a chair. Holds them to her chest. Tosses them aside, shaking her head. They land on the wheelbarrow.

LARA LEE
What do you want me to do? Waltz into L.A. County Coroners and pretend I'm the night janitor?

Still chain-smoking, she splashes cold water on her face at the sink. Her eyes dart to the wheelbarrow. She talks to herself in the mirror.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Pick the morgue locks and drive away with you in Shirley the pink Hearse?

Lara bites her lip.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Mozart would kill me. That car is his baby.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
Grasp it. Grasp life.

Lara snatches a pair of furry dice keys dangling from the wall and tosses her black leather doctor bag, along with knives and embalming supplies, into the wheelbarrow.

INT. PINK HEARSE/EXT. LOS ANGELES STREETS - NIGHT

The pink hearse peels through empty industrial streets, BLARING ridiculous/awesome heavy metal like W.A.S.P.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CORONERS - SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Lara in overalls, ostentatiously holding a mop, nods at bored SECURITY GUARD, 50, who slides over a sign-in clipboard. Lara jumps and points behind him.

LARA LEE
What the fuck!

Security Guard whips his head around. Lara pulls over a clipboard marked "ARRIVALS". Her finger runs down the list until it reaches "Dean Mitchum: Room 202."

SECURITY GUARD

What? What is it?

She slides the clipboard back.

LARA LEE

Don't you get spooked sometimes?

The guard crosses his arms in annoyance. Lara signs the original sign-in sheet.

SECURITY GUARD

I never get spooked.

LARA LEE

You don't believe in the afterlife?

SECURITY GUARD

Not one in Lincoln Heights.

Lara's lip twitches. She pushes the wheelbarrow away.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CORONERS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lara creeps down a dark, winding hallway, the wheelbarrow trailing behind her. The dim electric lights flicker.

She opens her leather bag and double-checks the contents: embalming tools, knives. She runs her fingers over a scalpel.

BANG!

Lara pauses. Listens.

LARA LEE

A backfiring car...

Lara trains a flashlight on the doors. On the left, "Room 202." She gets a pin out from her pocket. Picks the lock.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CORONERS - MORGUE - NIGHT

Lara inspects the toe tags on a row of body bags laid out on metal beds. At the last one, she pauses. Lara unzips it reverentially. Stares down at Dean's dead face, entranced.

GROOOOAN.

Lara jumps back. Looks at the body bag uncertainly.

LARA LEE

Dean?

BANG! BANG!

Panicking, Lara drags the body bag onto the wheelbarrow.

FOOTSTEPS.

Lara hides next to the door, the wheelbarrow held vertically against her, her face pressed against Dean's.

DOORWAY

Gangster ARTURO, huge, and Gangster JESUS, slim, in sharp black suits with tights over their heads, run into the morgue with handguns. The door stays open, shielding Lara from view.

BODY BAGS

The gangsters check the toe tags of the lined-up corpses. They speak to each other in subtitled SPANISH.

ARTURO

Where is he, Jesús?!

JESÚS

I don't know, Arturo. The tracker sent us here!

Jesús runs his hand over a hunting knife sheathed on his hip. Looks around suspiciously. Creeps towards Lara's hiding place. Opens a closet near the entrance door.

ARTURO

The signal could be off. Maybe he's in the next room.

They run out, the morgue door SLAMMING behind them. Lara EXHALES, stroking Dean's hair with trembling fingers.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CORONERS - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lara presses into the darkness of the hallway, quietly dragging the body bag in the wheelbarrow behind her.

SLAM!

Lara freezes.

STAIRWELL

Lara creeps up the stairwell. Waits.

O.S. SHOUTING IN SPANISH.

She sprints up the stairs BANGING the wheelbarrow behind her.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CORONERS - SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Lara flings open the door opposite the security office. Stifles a scream. The Security Guard has been shot through the forehead, wound smeared against the perspex glass.

EXT. L.A. COUNTY CORONERS - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Lara heaves herself and Dean-In-A-Wheelbarrow down the stairs towards the parking lot.

PARKING LOT

The pink hearse lies semi-hidden behind a dumpster. Lara POPS the trunk. Unstraps Dean. Shoves the body bag in.

BANG! BANG!

Lara jumps. Bullets hit the ground inches from her feet.

LARA LEE

Shit! Shit!

Lara races to the driver's door.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lara SLAMS the door and fumbles with the dice keys.

LARA LEE

What the FUCK is my baby into.

Lara REVS the engine. It stalls. She tries again.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Shot full of holes in the trunk, the corpse GROANS.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)

Drive baby... DRIVE!

LARA LEE
Shirley you dirty old bitch! Don't
fail me now!

Lara SMACKS the dashboard. The engine REVS to life. Lara steps on it.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. L.A. SIDE STREETS - NIGHT

Lara takes crazy turns through dark streets, headlights off. She checks the rearview. The back of the hearse is open, Dean sliding out the trunk.

Lara turns sharply to fling him back in.

LARA LEE
(to Dean)
Are you okay??

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
I'm fuckin' dead, baby!

Wing mirror: A white van driven by Arturo in hot pursuit. Jesús hangs out the window holding a machine gun. Lara SLAMS on the accelerator.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET - NIGHT

Lara turns sharply into an industrial road, going over the curb. She just misses crashing into a brick wall. Homeless tents line the street. She careens past them.

INT. WHITE VAN/EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET - NIGHT

Jesús leans further out the window, aiming through the open back of the hearse at the driver's seat.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET - NIGHT

BANG! BANG! BANG! Bullets fly through the car, narrowly missing Lara's head.

BARK! BARK! BARK! A STREET DOG rushes the car. The hearse swerves wildly.

INT. WHITE VAN/EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET - NIGHT

The van swerves to miss the dog, crashing through a row of tents towards a wall. Jesús flies out the window onto a tent.

STREET

Arturo slumps across the steering wheel, half thrown out the pane of broken glass. Jesús hauls himself out of the tent towards him. He pulls Arturo's hulking body onto the street.

They speak in subtitled SPANISH.

JESÚS

What the fuck was that?!

Arturo SPITS out a tooth and wipes his mouth.

ARTURO

I am not a dog-killer.

Arturo pushes Jesús off him. Rips the tights off his face and shakes out his hair in the van's wing mirror. Jesús takes off his own tights to reveal a tattooed face and shorn hair.

JESÚS

You look like sweaty gristle, you vain fuck.

Arturo takes out his phone and opens an App. Shows Jesús a glowing yellow dot moving along a map of Los Angeles.

ARTURO

We will find him by morning. Boss will be displeased.

JESÚS

You tell him. You're his plaything.

ARTURO

You're his brother!

Jesús paces, rending his hair, playing with a necklace of gold teeth at his throat.

JESÚS

You think blood will protect me?! My life is not worth one point two million dollars of fentanyl! Not to my brother. I was the one to back Dean's "fool-proof" plan... IDIOT fan that I am! Dios Mio, if I die because of that wooden ham and his claim to freakish expanding intestines of steel.

Jesús KICKS a pile of clothing in frustration. It GROANS. Jesús winces and tosses a hundred dollar bill on the body.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. EMPTY STREET - NIGHT

Lara checks the rearview for signs of pursuit. Sees none. She wipes sweat off her clammy forehead. Blinks back tears.

LARA LEE
I could have lost him.
(to Dean)
I think we've lost them!

SILENCE.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Dean?

Lara pulls over beneath a streetlamp. Gets out of the car.

EXT. HEARSE/EXT. EMPTY STREET - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Lara paces back and forth in front of the car, chain-smoking.

LARA LEE
I am NOT crazy. I AM not crazy. I
am not CRAZY.

Distant ZOOM of traffic.

HEARSE TRUNK

Lara's shaking hand runs down Dean's face. Her fingers trace a silver dogtag necklace, engraved with a MAYAN OUROBOROS snake eating its own tail.

LARA LEE
Talk to me, baby.

SILENCE... SIRENS.

Lara re-zips his body bag. Slams the trunk shut.

INT. HEARSE - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Lara speeds down the highway, smoking, headlights off. She turns on the radio. A bluesy tune like Bobby Bland's "I'll Take Care Of You" plays. Lara sings along.

LARA LEE
"I know you've been hurt by someone
else, I can tell by the way, you
carry yourself... So if you'll let
me, here's what I'll do..."

Dean's CROONING VOICE joins her.

DEAN MITCHUM
"I'll take care of you."

Lara smiles tenderly.

INT. LAS VEGAS MOTEL - BEDROOM - MORNING

DUSTY JONES, 27, simultaneously boyish and haggard, snorts a line of coke off the bare breast of CINDY MARTINI, 21, who sprawls across the shabby bed in a g-string.

Dusty, rapt, watches a MOTORCYCLE STUNTMAN on TV perform death-defying tricks. He SHOUTS his appreciation. Cindy inspects her long fake nails.

DUSTY JONES
Goddamn was I good.

CINDY MARTINI
Honey, I think you're great-

DUSTY JONES
I AM not great. But I WAS the best.

Cindy strokes his hair as Dusty racks up another line on her navel. Prepares to snort.

CINDY MARTINI
-But, this is twenty times we
watched this now.

Dusty looks up, betrayed.

DUSTY JONES
You've been counting?

CINDY MARTINI
I can't do it no more.

DUSTY JONES
Frailty thy name is call girl.

Dusty snorts half the line.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
Fine. Put on "My Six-Hundred Pound
Life" or whatever fresh hell you
call entertainment.

Cindy grabs the remote on the bedspread. She struggles to operate it with her nails.

CINDY MARTINI
It's a very touchin' show!

Dusty rolls his eyes. His cell phone RINGS on the table, next to a liter of cheap whiskey. He unscrews the bottle with his teeth as he inspects the caller ID: "NICK THE NARC".

CINDY MARTINI (CONT'D)
About trauma, addiction, and grief.
You might learn somethin'.

Dusty spits the cap out. Drinks deep. Answers the phone.

DUSTY JONES
I don't give a fuck about trauma,
addiction or grief.
(to caller)
Nick! You're calling just in time.

Cindy sits up, disrupting his line.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
(to Cindy)
NO! Staaay. Down girl.
(to Nick)
Not you! Of course not you.
(pause)
Well, technically you've called
five hours too late. But I haven't
taken any Oxy, so I count that as a
win, don't you?
(pause)
You can't do that!
(pause)
Nick, the whole point of this NA
fandango is to have some kind soul
obliged to talk you OFF the ledge.

Dusty extends the line to Cindy's g-string.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
AWAY from the baby-stripper
treasure trail of bounteous blow,
or whatever the case may be.

He listens, rolls his eyes. SNORTS the whole line.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
I'm dangerous for your sobriety?
I'm dangerous for MY sobriety!
(pause)
I would never have called her a
whore if I knew she was your wife.
Look, I've had a very bad week.
(MORE)

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

(pause)

Maybe she wouldn't be so UPSET if she wasn't a WHORE.

(pause)

Fine! "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law", or however the Serenity Prayer goes, you Satanist prick.

Dusty violently tosses his phone into a trash can.

CINDY MARTINI

What happened?

DUSTY JONES

I've been fired by my sponsor.

CINDY MARTINI

Is that allowed?

DUSTY JONES

Five times! At this rate I'll have to find a priest.

CINDY MARTINI

My daddy's a minister.

DUSTY JONES

Of course he is, Cindy. You stink of heaven. Positively reek of it.

Cindy GIGGLES as Dusty buries his face between her thighs.

INT. TABLE - PEGGY SUE'S 1950'S DINER - DAY

In the kitsch 1950s themed diner-in-a-trailer, Lara sits in a booth staring at a plate of untouched, perfect pancakes.

She fiddles with the coin-operated fortune-telling napkin holder on the table.

LARA LEE

I can't do it. I can't see her again. I'm sorry, Dean.

DEAN MITCHUM

You can, baby. Ask for a sign.

Lara takes a quarter from her jean pocket, inserts it and closes her eyes. She twists the lever. Opens her eyes.

The napkin holder declares: "YES".

INT. HEARSE/ EXT. TRAILER PARK - LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - DAY

In the middle of the desert off the side of the highway, Lara drives into a sparsely-populated trailer park. Leans out the window to talk to an OLD LADY.

LARA LEE
Junebug Lee still here?

OLD LADY
Her trailer's here. But haven't
seen her in some time.

Lara nods her thanks and breathes a sigh of relief.

EXT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - DAY

Lara digs up a dead rose bush in front of the dilapidated silver trailer. Underneath it is a large tin box. She opens it reverentially. It is empty.

LARA LEE
Fuck.

She checks more hiding places around the trailer. Nothing. She SLAMS her fist against the door. It opens widely.

INT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - DAY

Lara drapes diaphanous caftans over the windows. Her black embalming bag lays open on the kitchen counter. She grabs a stack of black candles from inside it.

Dean's naked body lies on the kitchen table. Lara places candles around him, HUMMING. Lights them. Removes a wilted gas station bouquet from the embalming bag.

She scatters broken petals over Dean's body. She gathers her utensils and lays her silver knives out next to his body.

LARA LEE
Finally, we are alone.

Lara kneels. Holds her hands up in prayer.

RATTLING.

Lara freezes. The door shakes on its hinges. Swings open. A shaft of daylight beams onto the macabre spectacle. Lara HISSES, arms thrown over her face, vampiric.

An obliterated Dusty, whiskey bottle in hand, fiddles with his keys trapped in the doorknob. He looks up.

SILENCE.

Dusty trips and falls to his knees in shock. Nose to nose, Lara and Dusty share a long moment of eye contact.

An expression of childish joy crosses his face. Lara glances at the dead body on the table. Dusty tears his eyes away from her face and follows her gaze. His jaw drops.

Dusty takes a bitter swig from the whiskey bottle.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

I- I can explain-

Dusty shuffles up from the floor and closes the door. Locks it. Turns to face Lara, devil-may-care mask in place.

DUSTY JONES

Well, well, well. Lara Lee. I always knew one day you'd darken my door. I should have known it would be for necromancy. So, what are you doing here in Las Vegas?

LARA LEE

I came for my mother's grimoire.

Dusty pulls up a chair next to Dean, as debonair as he is inebriated.

DUSTY JONES

Junebug must have taken it. You'll be happy to hear your mother has dried out, become a Scientologist and moved to the suburbs with an Auditor named Clive.

(beat)

I rent this place for fifty dollars a week, 'til I get back on my feet.

Dusty finishes off the bottle. Tosses it over Lara's head into the kitchen sink. It SHATTERS. Lara flinches.

LARA LEE

How long have you been off them?

DUSTY JONES

Three years. More or less.

(beat)

Thirteen years is a long goodbye.

Lara's eyes are dry, but her throat is thick.

LARA LEE

I never promised you anything.

DUSTY JONES

No, you did not.

Dusty takes a crumpled cigarette out of his shirt pocket and lights it off a candle burning by Dean's head.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

Is that Dean fuckin' Mitchum?

He inhales deeply and LAUGHS.

INT. L.A. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Mozart sits at a table with his head in his hands, opposite DETECTIVE MURPHY, 45, and OFFICER MARTINEZ, 30. Detective Murphy pushes a blurry CCTV photograph beneath Mozart's face.

In it, the hearse pulls out of the morgue parking lot, body bag hanging out of the trunk, driver invisible.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

We gotta dead guard on our hands,
God rest his soul. Died protecting
some Z-list corpse from one mystery
thief in one missin' car-

MOZART HOROWITZ

She's a hearse.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

What?

Mozart looks up with quiet dignity.

MOZART HOROWITZ

She's a pink hearse. Named Shirley.

Detective Murphy pushes his face into Mozart's.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

And as both a funeral director and
owner of said faggot wagon, you're
tellin' me you have NO IDEA who
absconded with our dear dead Dean
Mitchum?

Mozart leans in until their noses touch.

MOZART HOROWITZ
Dean who? Detective Murphy, I've
never even heard of the guy!

Officer Martinez pushes a headshot of Dean across the table.

MOZART HOROWITZ (CONT'D)
He's, what, a porn star?

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Washed-up actor.

MOZART HOROWITZ
Then I certainly don't know him.

DETECTIVE MURPHY
Excusez-moi, Monsieur Horowitz, I
am not sure you understand the
gravity of the situation. Would
booking you as an accomplice to
murder in the first degree make
your predicament more clear?

Mozart throws his hands in the air.

MOZART HOROWITZ
Gentleman, please. I mostly do hair
and makeup these days. Glad-hand
relatives, arrange flowers!

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Who's the driver, Mozart. No jokes.
No games. A clown customer said a
weird woman is your right hand man.

DETECTIVE MURPHY
"Loner," he said. "Funny fish," he
said. "Gotta tattoo on her arm of a
movie star", looks just like this,
he said.

Detective Murphy SHAKES Dean's headshot. Mozart bites his lip
and turns his head away.

MOZART HOROWITZ
Lara Lee, my embalmer, takes care
of everything else.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
We've been trying to get hold of
this "Lara Lee" without success.

MOZART HOROWITZ
She doesn't have a phone.

Detective Murphy scribbles "OFF-GRID. TERRORIST?" on a pad.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
How do you contact her?

MOZART HOROWITZ
We make arrangements. We keep them.
Like in the Seventies. And what a
decade it was.

DETECTIVE MURPHY
Lara Lee a fake name? Sounds fake.

MOZART HOROWITZ
I don't know what to tell you.
She's an enigma.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Maybe this will jog your memory.

Officer Martinez presses a button on a laptop connected to a television. The screen flickers to life.

TV: Dean Mitchum fiddles with his tripod camera. His apartment is decorated with film paraphernalia: posters, weapons, a scalped dinosaur head. He sits in an armchair.

DEAN MITCHUM
(to camera)
Baby, if you're watching this...
I'm sorry, but the worst has
happened.

He SUCKS on a weed pen.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - DAY

Bejeweled fake nails insert a CD into a shitty old laptop. Press play. MYSTERIOUS LEGS in platform stilettos cross on a lip-shaped table. Dean Mitchum appears as before.

DEAN MITCHUM (CONT)
Baby, if you're watching this-

Sound of O.S. SCOFFING. The nails press FAST-FORWARD.

DEAN MITCHUM (CONT'D)
-Enough cash to show the world my
true talent! Without being typecast
in these yes, totally rad and great-
looking, but slightly ridiculous
roles.
(beat)
(MORE)

DEAN MITCHUM (CONT'D)

Baby, if I pull this off, I'll be at the top of the pile. Palme D'Or level shit! And on the red carpet, there's only one trick I want on my arm-

FAST FORWARD.

DEAN MITCHUM (CONT'D)

-Like my scene in "Revenge Of The Swamp Beasts II" when I went all Method at a hot dog eating contest to better understand "the anaconda"-

LONG FAST FORWARD.

DEAN MITCHUM (CONT'D)

Only this time I'll be swallowing a kilo of Fentanyl-

The nail presses STOP.

MYSTERIOUS LEGS VOICE (O.S.)

Holy shit.

The mysterious legs unravel. The recording REWINDS.

INT. L.A. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Dean Mitchum kisses the TV screen goodbye.

DEAN MITCHUM

This is for art, bitch.

Dean turns off the camera. The screen goes blank. Mozart, Murphy and Martinez exchange glances.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Gentlemen, I fail to see how the ramblings of a drug mule to a sex worker who won't return his calls has anything to do with me. May I please go?

Mozart slips his cardigan back onto his shoulders.

EXT. L.A. POLICE STATION - DAY

Mozart strides out of the police station, drinking a shitty coffee and jittering with nerves. He calls Fitzroy.

MOZART HOROWITZ
 Fitzroy! This is Mozart. I need
 you. And your car.

Mozart hangs up. Dials another number. Listens.

AUTOMATIC VOICEMAIL
 Hello. You have reached the
 automatic voicemail for the pager
 of "LARA LEE". Please leave a
 message after the tone.

BEEP!

MOZART HOROWITZ
 Lara!! CALL ME IMMEDIATELY. I'm
 coming to save you. And Shirley!

Mozart hangs up.

INT. BLACK LINCOLN/EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Arturo and Jesús speed down the highway listening to Mexican
 RAP. Jesús runs his knife lightly over his tattooed fingers.
 They speak in subtitled SPANISH.

JESUS
 -THE Dean Mitchum's debut as
 writer/director/star of: "Enraged
 Charles", action/horror tale of
 social collapse in a futurist
 dystopia; murder, revenge and
 muscle cars, shot for cheap on his
 friend's ranch in Australia. It
 would have been epic! Do I regret
 befriending that stoned loser and
 helping him live his dreams? Yes.
 But also, I would've watched the
 shit out of that film.

Las Vegas signage. They turn off the interstate. Jesús opens
 a suitcase.

Inside: a mini arsenal. He loads a handgun.

ARTURO
 Have you never seen "Mad Max"? Dean
 was only useful for his wildly
 expanding rubber intestines and
 bizarre confidence in his own
 survival. He's no Brad Pitt.

JESUS

The point isn't that it wouldn't be as good as "Mad Max", the point is the fact that DEAN had never heard of "Mad Max" would have made the movie a masterpiece of failure!

(beat)

Is the target still static?

Arturo checks an app on his phone. A flashing point a few miles outside Las Vegas. He nods.

ARTURO

At least he didn't question the necklace. "Never work with imbeciles", Papi always said.

Jesús rolls down the window and points the gun out at the desert. Takes aim at a distant bird.

JESUS

When God closes a door, he opens a window. Bang, bang.

BANG!

The bird drops from the sky. Jesús smiles.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. LOS ANGELES OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Fitzroy, his head wrapped in a scarf and wearing sunglasses, drives while Mozart draws circles on a huge map.

FITZROY FREEMAN

How do I let myself get dragged into other people's fuck ups, time and time again?

MOZART HOROWITZ

The same reason I do, Fitzroy. You're a noble human being.

FITZROY FREEMAN

I'm afraid I'm just horribly bored! The trouble with living a life of principal, Mozart, is that dignity is fundamentally tiresome.

MOZART HOROWITZ

According to FindMyKeys, after the "Eat To The Beat" diner, Lara stopped somewhere in the desert five miles outside Vegas.

Mozart folds up the map. Fitzroy looks into his rearview.

FITZROY FREEMAN

Is that van strange to you?

MOZART HOROWITZ

It's a white van. What's strange?

FITZROY FREEMAN

It's strange the same van would
follow us all the way out of L.A.

Fitzroy hands Mozart a pair of opera glasses from his coat pocket. Mozart spies on the van.

MOZART HOROWITZ

My God! It's the same cops. Is this
legal? Don't they need a warrant?

FITZROY FREEMAN

Oh, sweet ignorance of white man!

MOZART HOROWITZ

What can we do about it?

FITZROY FREEMAN

Nothing!

Mozart leans back in his seat and closes his eyes.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Maybe they'll stop tailing us when
we leave the state.

FITZROY FREEMAN

Maybe they'll ARREST us when we
leave the state.

MOZART HOROWITZ

What do you want me to do? My
nerves are shot! I promise to take
the fall if we wind up in prison.

FITZROY FREEMAN

That's not how prison works!

MOZART HOROWITZ

You're a priest, you'll be fine.

FITZROY FREEMAN

I'm an actor and a black gay man!

MOZART HOROWITZ

You knew the risks. "High adventure at great personal cost, for an improbably virtuous cause," I said. Are you in or are you out?

FITZROY FREEMAN

I'm in. Goddamnit!

MOZART HOROWITZ

You're a true friend, Fitzroy.

Mozart closes his eyes to sleep and lowers his shades. Fitzroy speeds up the car, eyes locked on the rearview.

INT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - DAY

On the table, lit candles surrounding Dean's body shake as Dusty and Lara wrestle on the floor for the landline phone.

DUSTY JONES

Lara! I don't want to hurt you.

LARA LEE

Hurt me? Ha! I owned you then-

Lara punches Dusty on the ear. Dusty winces and drops the phone. Lara snatches it and hides it behind her, entwining them together by the long lead.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

And I'm owning you now.

DUSTY JONES

I was fourteen then!

Dusty uses his full strength to upend their positions and trap Lara beneath him, their faces a hairsbreadth apart.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

I'm a man now.

Dusty pins Lara's arms on the floor with his knees and wrests the phone from her grip. He sits back comfortably.

LARA LEE

What are you doing?!

Dusty pulls the receiver towards him and starts to dial.

DUSTY JONES

Calling the police.

LARA LEE

You would do that to me?

Lara's body goes limp. Her lips tremble. Dusty softens. He puts the phone back into the receiver, smooths his hair and collects himself.

DUSTY JONES

Lara, there's a dead body in my trailer. I can't merrily let you do... whatever it is you were about to do. What were you about to do? No! Don't tell me.

RING! RING!

They both stare at the phone in surprise.

LARA LEE

Who could THAT be?

RINGGG!!

DUSTY JONES

I have friends! I have a life! I haven't spent the last decade mired in a haze of alcoholic pining, you lunatic narcissist.

(answering)

Hello? This isn't a good time.

(pause)

Slow down. Say that again.

Dusty's eyes flicker to Dean's corpse and widen.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - DAY

Red-rouged MYSTERIOUS LIPS speak into a telephone, amused.

MYSTERIOUS LIPS

-Bizarre video saying he swallowed a MILLION DOLLARS worth of Fentanyl to fund his "movie stardom" with bad plagiarism of Mad Max. And all to walk ME down the red carpet of the Palme goddamn d'Ór!

(whispers)

I think the crazy bastard might be dead-

She bites her perfect lip with perfect teeth.

INT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - DAY

Dusty watches Dean's body with fascination.

DUSTY JONES
(into phone)
Stay right there.

Dusty hangs up. Lara struggles beneath him.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
We need to get him out of here.

LARA LEE
Oh, so it's WE now, is it?

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Bullets pelt through the trailer above them, narrowly missing Dusty's head. He drops on top of Lara.

She head-butts his nose and switches their positions. Lara grabs the telephone and rips off the cord.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
No police!!

DUSTY JONES
That's your priority?!

Lara rolls underneath the kitchen table. She grabs Dean's arm and tugs at his corpse.

Dusty kicks out the table leg. It upends, forming a protective barrier around Lara. The candles roll in every direction. Dusty grabs Dean's body to use it as a shield.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Dean's chest catches the bullets as behind him, Dusty GAGS.

BEHIND THE TABLE

Lara watches Dean get shot up from a mirror on the wall.

LARA LEE
Don't you hurt him!!

DUSTY JONES (O.S.)
I think he can take the pain!

INT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - DAY

Dusty pushes the corpse off and army-crawls to the space under Junebug's bed. He rummages under the mattress for a sawn-off shotgun and ammo. Dusty loads the shotgun.

DUSTY JONES

And I thought the most exciting
thing to happen today would be
falling off the wagon.

Behind him, Lara's torso snakes over the table. She grabs Dean's sprawled body on the floor. Struggles to lift him up.

BANG! BANG!

Dusty ducks and runs to the kitchen. Peeks out the window. He fires wildly.

BANGBANGBANG!

Dusty ducks to reload.

BEHIND THE TABLE

Lara pulls Dean's body halfway over the table top.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

She ducks. Tries again. Success. Dean falls on top of Lara. She smells his hair.

DUSTY JONES (O.S.)

DO YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE
FUCK IS HAPPENING, LARA?

She checks the mirror. Watches Dusty reload the shotgun.

LARA LEE

I didn't expect you to be here!

A fallen candle rolls towards the hanging end of a caftan curtain. Dusty watches, aghast.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Bullets pelt through the table.

DUSTY JONES (O.S.)

ARE YOU OKAY?

Lara doesn't reply. She dips her finger into one of Dean's bullet holes with fascination.

The caftan goes up in flames.

Dusty leaps over the table to join her. Pushes her head down and uses the end of his shotgun to SMASH the back window. He climbs through the hole.

DUSTY JONES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
COME ON YOU CRAZY BITCH!

Lara gathers Dean's body against her own and maneuvers his torso over her back to push him upwards.

LARA LEE
You know I HATE that word!

With great effort, she forces Dean's head and shoulders through the window.

EXT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - BACKSIDE - DAY

Junebug's leopard-print sheets cover Lara's ride. Dusty rips them off to reveal the pink hearse. He double-takes.

Dean's head and shoulders emerge through the broken trailer window behind him. Dusty grabs Dean by the shoulders and drags him onto the ground.

BANG! BANG! BANG! (O.S.)

LARA LEE (O.S.)
START THE CAR!

Lara throws furry dice keys through the window.

EXT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - FRONT - DAY

The gangsters lean against their Lincoln, weapons in hand. They speak in subtitled SPANISH.

ARTURO
They are certainly dead.

JESÚS
Five times a charm?

Another round of SHOTS. The curtains in a nearby trailer twitch. Old Lady peeks out. Jesús BLASTS her head off.

Smoke furls out Junebug's trailer window.

ARTURO
Dios Mio! Fire!

Jesús saunters to the trunk, pops it.

JESÚS
And you said we would never use
this.

He holds up a fire extinguisher.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

Dusty manhandles Dean into the back seat of the hearse and chucks the shotgun after him. Dean's head hangs comically over Dusty's shoulder in the driver's seat.

DUSTY JONES
LARA?!

LARA LEE (O.S.)
COMING!!

Dusty turns the ignition. It stalls.

INT. JUNEBUG'S LAS VEGAS TRAILER - DAY

Lara scoops as many scattered knives and embalming tools as she can into her doctor's bag. The locked door of the smoke-filled trailer RATTLES behind her.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Lock shot off, the door flings open. Jesús stalks in. He sprays the fire extinguisher over Lara's corner of the room. Lara coughs, covered in foam, and stumbles to the table.

JESÚS
(English)
This who gives us so much trouble?

Arturo leans his head in to inspect her.

ARTURO
(English)
A slip of thing.

Jesús hands him the extinguisher. Arturo puts out a fire near her feet. Jesús takes his hunting knife out.

JESÚS
(English)
Where is our beautiful boy full of
White Mexican Death, hmm?

Jesús strokes the knife down Lara's cheeks. Lara shakes, hand closing around the embalming gun in her bag. Jesús LAUGHS.

O.S. REVVING distracts them.

Lara pistol whips Jesús across the face with the embalming gun, before leaping over the table. Jesús winces, licks blood off his bleeding lip. Grins.

Jesús throws his knife at Lara's shoulder as she tries to climb out the window. Lara CRIES OUT and falls. On Junebug's bed, the fire rages out of control.

ARTURO
(to Jesús)
I'll handle this. Start the car!

The bloody hunting knife comes hurtling from behind the table to embed itself in the wall by Jesús's head. He takes it from the wood, wipes it on his leg and sheathes it.

BEHIND THE TABLE

Lara curls up in a ball, clutching her wound. Arturo peers over, scratching his chin with the gun.

ARTURO
(in English)
Feisty little scamp. Make peace
with the Lord.

Arturo aims at her forehead. Lara's eyes flip open. She uncoils and launches a series of tiny suture needles towards his face with the embalming gun.

Arturo falls back in agony, covering his eye and SCREAMING. Lara crawls out the jagged window, clutching her bag and arm.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

Junebug's trailer is so shot full of holes it is practically transparent. What remains goes up in flames.

In the distance, the pink hearse drives wildly across a fake flamingo and crocodile strewn lawn. The Lincoln follows.

The trailer collapses in on itself, a pile of burning tin.

INT. HEARSE/ EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Dusty speeds through seedy backstreets as Lara struggles to attach her seatbelt over her bloody shoulder.

LARA LEE
When was the last time you were
behind the wheel!?

DUSTY JONES
Three years and one day ago.

In the rearview, Arturo, a scarf around one eye, hangs out the Lincoln window with an AK47 strapped to his chest.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
But for the first time in a long
time I can say that if we die
today, it IS NOT my fault!

GUNSHOTS.

LARA LEE
Get down!!

Lara ducks as low as she can.

INT. HEARSE/ EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Dusty turns so sharply down an alley the hearse drives onto the wall, just managing not to flip.

LARA LEE
ARE YOU INSANE?

Behind them, the Lincoln overshoots the alley.

POLICE SIRENS.

Dusty grins and steps on the accelerator.

INT. LINCOLN/EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Jesús drives as Arturo writhes and MOANS in the passenger seat, clutching his eye. They speak in subtitled Spanish.

ARTURO
My eye! My beautiful eye!

JESÚS

Never fear, Arturo! Even with one eye you are leagues more attractive than my brother. I'm taking you to the hospital-

ARTURO

No hospital! We'll lose them. We lose them, I lose your brother.

Jesús SCOFFS.

JESÚS

Lose them? They are amateurs! They haven't even realized they are being tracked. We'll take our time now and flay them slowly later.

ARTURO

The driver is not an amateur.

JESÚS

He can drive, but he cannot shoot! We'll revenge you, Arturo. An eye for eye. Then the teeth, the tongue, the heart!

Jesús clasps Arturo's hand tightly. Arturo squeezes back.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The hearse barrels down the street, chased by a COP CAR.

DUSTY JONES

You never looked me up, did you?

LARA LEE

What are you talking about?

Dusty U-turns and drives directly into oncoming TRAFFIC, as the surrounding cars HONK and swerve.

DUSTY JONES

If you did, you'd know I was once the most highly sought after stunt driver in all of Nevada.

Lara looks at Dusty as if he has lost his mind. In the rearview, a truck collides with the cop car.

LARA LEE

What happened to you, Dusty?

DUSTY JONES
I broke my back.

LARA LEE
I meant what happened to YOU.

Lara punches him in the chest.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
HERE!?

Lara MOANS as the movement pulls her wound. Dusty turns sharply onto a side road, knocking her sideways again.

DUSTY JONES
What do you care?

LARA LEE
You're my oldest friend!

COP CAR TWO speeds across the road ahead of them. Dusty BREAKS. Dean's body flies forward and SMACKS the windscreen.

DUSTY JONES
So now we're friends.

Lara pulls Dean's body back and tenderly inspects his head.

LARA LEE
You could have broken his neck!

Dusty looks at Dean appraisingly. Lara's eyes narrow.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
What's your angle?

DUSTY JONES
Never thought I'd be jealous of a
dead man, is all.

LARA LEE
Who was that, on the phone before?

SIRENS.

Dusty puts the hearse in reverse and hurtles through a RED TRAFFIC LIGHT past a LONG HAUL TRUCK. Lara covers her eyes.

DUSTY JONES
Don't you trust me?

LARA LEE
Not anymore!

DUSTY JONES
Then why are you here?

LARA LEE
I have no where else to go.

Lara lowers her arm and looks behind them at the massive traffic collision left in their wake.

INT. HEARSE/EXT. GARAGE - DAY

Dusty drives into a garage. He turns off the engine, jumps out and presses a wall code. The door closes. Darkness.

APPROACHING SIRENS.

The SIRENS fade into the distance as the police pass directly outside the building.

DUSTY JONES
We've lost them.

Dusty flips a switch. Fluorescent lights illuminate the gloomy garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Lara shakily gets out of the hearse and looks around at the run down garage, empty but for one beat-up yellow Oldsmobile.

LARA LEE
What now?

DUSTY JONES
Now, we wait.

Dusty takes off his shirt. Lara stiffens. He rips it in half.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
And I pray.

He steps towards her and grabs Lara by the shoulders.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
And you explain.

Dusty uses the fabric to tie off the blood flow to her wound.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. PEGGY SUE'S 1950'S DINER - DAY

Fitzroy drives past a T-Rex statue in the "Diner-Sour" theme park leading to the diner-in-a-trailer. Parks the car.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Did we lose them?

FITZROY FREEMAN

Yes, Mozart. We are being stalked by police on the interstate highway, and we've "lost them" by stopping for a theme-dining experience.

Mozart and Fitzroy open their doors in unison.

EXT. PEGGY SUE'S 1950'S DINER - PARKING LOT - DAY

They approach the restaurant's "Eat To The Beat" jukebox entrance. The police van circles the dinosaurs behind them.

MOZART HOROWITZ

You know what? Turn back. I'll hunt down Lara by foot!

FITZROY FREEMAN

Would you give me a moment's peace! I need to eat. I need to think. One doesn't simply waltz into Hades with no plan whatsoever.

Fitzroy opens the door and motions for Mozart to enter first.

INT. PEGGY SUE'S 1950'S DINER - HALLWAY - DAY

They pass portraits of Monroe and James Dean to stand beside a life-size sculpture of Elvis.

FITZROY FREEMAN

We shall save your crazy embalmer's skin after a nutritious home-cooked meal of cheeseburger and shake.

MOZART HOROWITZ

She hates that word.

FITZROY FREEMAN

"Embalmer"?

Mozart waves his hands in exasperation.

MOZART HOROWITZ

"Crazy"!!

FITZROY FREEMAN

For God's sake, just- be cool.

Fitzroy puts on a pair of totally unnecessary shades.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE CAR/EXT. DINER-SOUR THEME PARK - DUSK

Detective Murphy and Officer Martinez tool around the dinosaurs, killing time. The sun sets behind them.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

You sure they know where they're going?

Detective Murphy reaches in the glove box and removes a Playboy magazine. Flips through it.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

A detective is a hunter, Martinez. They're on the scent. I know it.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

But that doesn't mean that they know where they are going.

Murphy shakes the magazine at Martinez in frustration.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

Trust me, Martinez! A bit of respect for your elders is all I ask, ya know? You respect me, I respect you. Capiche?

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Capiche.

Murphy returns to the Playboy.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

That's Mexican, right?

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Sure is.

Martinez locks his jaw and turns to look out the window.

INT. PEGGY SUE'S 1950'S DINER - NIGHT

An Oldies tune plays on the jukebox. In a booth, Mozart sways to the music across from Fitzroy.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Maybe we shouldn't worry. You weren't there when I was being interrogated. If it weren't for that gutless rat of a clown, they'd never know Lara exists!

Fitzroy knits his brow in confusion as MATRONLY WAITRESS, 60, arrives with their giant meals, coffee and coke.

MATRONLY WAITRESS

Hope you two enjoy Peggy Sue's special. You give me a call if you're wantin' on anythin' else.

She refills Fitzroy's coffee.

FITZROY FREEMAN

Thank you ma'am. We surely will.

They watch her waddle behind the counter.

FITZROY FREEMAN (CONT'D)

We must consider the possibility that they are not true morons. They could be playing a part.

Mozart nods in dawning understanding.

MOZART HOROWITZ

And that's exactly what makes them so dangerous.

He SIPS his coca-cola loudly.

INT. GARAGE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Lara rolls back and forth on an old wheelchair in darkness in front of a desk, watching Dusty sleep on a moth-eaten couch, her wound bandaged up.

She looks at the clock on the wall. Lights a cigarette. Waits. As the clock strikes eight p.m., she rolls forward and kicks Dusty's leg with one Doc Martened foot.

LARA LEE

Dusty. It's time.

Dusty grunts and rolls over, turning his back to her.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Dusty!

Lara stands and shakes his shoulder. He buries deep into the couch, shivering. Lara SLAPS his face. Dusty looks up, hurt.

DUSTY JONES

Ouch!

LARA LEE

Pain is weakness leaving your body.

Lara turns on the lights. Dusty drags himself upright, wincing and holding his head.

DUSTY JONES

You did not just quote Bruce Lee to my hangover.

LARA LEE

You said you needed five hours' sleep and then you would help me.

Lara nods towards a large horizontal refrigerator in the back of the room. She grins, with a sudden impish charm.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Unless you want a stiff in your freezer forever?

Dusty's lips twitch. He stands up and walks towards her. He strokes her face in passing.

DUSTY JONES

There you are.

Lara shies away. Dusty's smile fades.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

And there you go.

He crosses the room to open the refrigerator. Dean's corpse has been covered in a blanket. Beer bottles surround it.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

And there's my blanket. Beer?

Dusty grabs a bloodstained bottle and wipes it on his shirt.

LARA LEE

I stopped all that when I left Las Vegas.

DUSTY JONES

Why?

LARA LEE

I like to have my wits about me.

He opens the bottle with his teeth, SPITS out the cap. Swigs.

DUSTY JONES

I can't think of anything worse.

(beat)

What do you want, Lara?

LARA LEE

I told you.

DUSTY JONES

You said you "saw life and you grasped it".

Lara nods. Dusty rubs his face, exhausted.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

You're not going to do something stupid, are you?

LARA LEE

I want to be alone with him. I want to perform his last rites. And I want to bury his body.

(beat)

What's in this for you?

Dusty runs his index finger over the scar on his palm.

DUSTY JONES

After all this, you still don't trust me, do you.

LARA LEE

(hesitant)

I do trust you.

DUSTY JONES

Once upon a time, you told me a blood pact is unbreakable.

LARA LEE

I remember.

DUSTY JONES

Do you remember what we promised?

LARA LEE
What we solemnly swore.

DUSTY JONES
Never to die here. Let's just leave
it at that.
(beat)
Who are those men?

LARA LEE
I don't know.

DUSTY JONES
Are there more coming?

LARA LEE
There might be.

DUSTY JONES
Police?

LARA LEE
You heard them.

Dusty takes another sip of beer. Throws Lara a set of keys.

DUSTY JONES
Start the yellow Oldsmobile.

Lara nods and walks stiffly out of the office. Dusty picks up a pack of matches from the desk and dials the number on the back from the landline.

As it RINGS, he takes a key from the wall and unlocks a desk drawer. He pulls it open. It is filled with handguns.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

A smoke-filled, blue-lit strip club with an upscale ambiance on a tight budget. Men in suits smoke cigars and drink cocktails as they watch the stage.

The mysterious long legs in familiar platform shoes from before wind around a pole, the mysterious lips moving to something sad and sultry like Portishead.

They belong to GIA MORETTI, 37, transgender stripper and club owner. Gia finishes her set, elegantly scooping up piles of bills and blowing kisses to her adoring crowd.

Gia approaches the BOUNCER, who waits beside the stage with a champagne flute.

GIA MORETTI
How was I tonight?

BOUNCER
You were wonderful, Miss Moretti.

GIA MORETTI
Aren't you a dear.

Gia kisses his cheek, takes the champagne and sashays through pink velvet curtains that lead to her dressing room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Gia throws open the dressing room curtains. HOPE CHARLES, 27, nurses her BABY and applies lipstick in front of a mirror.

GIA MORETTI
Still no word?

HOPE CHARLES
Not a goddamn whisper.

GIA MORETTI
Bastard!

Gia, dejected, downs her champagne and slips on a silk robe with fluffy trim hanging on the back of her chair.

She brightens when she sees a bouquet of red roses on her dressing table and grabs the sender's card with excitement. As she reads it, her face falls.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
There is nothing like the *tristesse*
of a beautiful bouquet of red
roses, sent from the wrong man.

Gia dumps the flowers into a trash can at her feet. Hope reaches in to take them for herself.

HOPE CHARLES
Gia, why you put up with that man's
shit? He never call when he say he
will. He owes you money. His veins
are more bourbon than blood, and
his DICK gonna turn green and fall
off any day now!

Hope burps the baby on her shoulder. Gia powders her nose.

HOPE CHARLES (CONT'D)
He's an asshole.

GIA MORETTI
He's not an asshole.

HOPE CHARLES
Mm-hm. Is this the part where you
tell me I don't know him like you
do?

Gia takes the baby from Hope and bounces her up and down.

GIA MORETTI
He's a very sensitive drug addict.

HOPE CHARLES
There's other places than rehab to
meet a man, is all I'm gonna say.

GIA MORETTI
Yes. But what would we have to talk
about?

HOPE CHARLES
Gia, you own your own club. You a
boss lady. Why you so hung up on
this goodfornothin' man-ho? We both
know all he ever gonna bring you,
is heartache and pain.

GIA MORETTI
I know, Hope. It's over. I'm never
speaking to him again.

RING!

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
Oh my god! That's him.

Gia hands over the baby and runs to the phone.

PHONE

Next to the phone hangs a poster of Divine in "Female
Trouble". Gia's bejeweled nails rest on the receiver.

HOPE CHARLES
Girl, at least make him wait!

GIA MORETTI
What if he hangs up?

RING!

Gia picks up breathlessly.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
 La Fidélité Gentleman's Lounge, Gia
 Moretti speaking.
 (pause)
 I've been waiting for your call.

Hope rolls her eyes as she applies nipple tassels in the mirror. The baby grabs at the swinging shiny objects. A NANNY tiptoes in. Hope passes her the baby.

HOPE CHARLES
 I'll be home by three.
 (to Gia)
 You crazy.

Gia SHUSHES her. The nanny exits.

GIA MORETTI
 Am I alone? No... But I can be.
 (pause)
 Does the club have a- basement?

Gia bites her lip in confusion.

INT. PEGGY SUE'S 1950'S DINER - NIGHT

Mozart puts the last morsel of apple pie on his fork and eats it. Fitzroy looks at his watch.

MOZART HOROWITZ
 That was spectacular.

FITZROY FREEMAN
 You certainly savored every bite.

Mozart holds up his phone, with the FindMyKeys app location.

MOZART HOROWITZ
 You really think we should lead
 them straight to this address?

FITZROY FREEMAN
 We need a believable cover for
 being here.

MOZART HOROWITZ
 Can't we say we're on a road trip?

FITZROY FREEMAN
 Who goes on a road trip as a
 suspect in a murder investigation?

MOZART HOROWITZ
A funeral director and a priest?

Fitzroy puts on his sunglasses. Throws a wad of cash on the table.

FITZROY FREEMAN
Let's roll, Kato.

They stand to leave. The jukebox turns over to an Oldies classic. Mozart looks at Fitzroy pleadingly.

INT. POLICE VAN/EXT. PEGGY SUE'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Officer Martinez stares at the old men through binoculars. Detective Murphy WHISTLES and shakes his Playboy centerfold in Martinez's view. Martinez bats the magazine away.

Through the diner windows, Mozart and Fitzroy dad-dance.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
What I can't figure out is if these two really are blind old fools, or if it's all... an act.

DETECTIVE MURPHY
That's what makes them dangerous, Martinez. That's what makes them very fuckin' dangerous.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
You still don't think we should notify the Las Vegas department?

Mozart and Fitzroy dance out of the trailer.

DETECTIVE MURPHY
Those fuckers? They're shady as shit. We have to be wise to the game, Martinez. Money talks. Justice... is silent.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
"Capiche."

Fitzroy's car drives past the giant dinosaur statues. The police van drives after them.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. DRIVE THROUGH - NIGHT

Dusty leans out the window to speak in a Fast Food drive-through box. Lara stares out the passenger window.

Tucked in the backseat with the wheelchair folded next to him is Dean, in mechanics overalls, sunglasses and a trucker hat.

DUSTY JONES

-Fries and two Cokes. Thanks!

LONG SILENCE.

LARA LEE

...And how is my mother?

DUSTY JONES

Your mother. What a question. She's sober but not sane. Lucid but a lunatic. She's sworn off "The Craft" but will tell you your fortune for the right price. The ending is always tragic.

Lara lights a cigarette.

LARA LEE

And her... auditor? Clive?

DUSTY JONES

A good man, as far as cult mind controllers go. Maybe she's met her match in Scientology.

LARA LEE

For blackmail to work, the victim must be capable of shame.

The Oldsmobile arrives at the food window. Dusty smiles.

DUSTY JONES

You made a joke. I didn't think you could, anymore.

LARA LEE

Neither did I.

DUSTY JONES

Did you ever miss us?

LARA LEE

All the time.

DUSTY JONES

Then why-

A DRIVE-THROUGH EMPLOYEE, 18, interrupts.

DRIVE-THROUGH EMPLOYEE
Two cheeseburgers with fries and
two Cokes. Have a great day!

Dusty leans out to take the food. Hands Lara her paper bag.

LARA LEE
I need to go Junebug's new place.

DUSTY JONES
It's a detour. Do we want a detour?
I can think of hundreds of reasons
why we should not detour. Like the
thawing corpse in my car.

LARA LEE
I need her grimoire.

Lara takes a bite of her cheeseburger.

DUSTY JONES
Is that really what you need, Lara?
A dead man and a book of spells?

Lara nods. Dusty's knuckles whiten on the steering wheel.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
Never say I didn't try to give you
what you need.

Dusty bites into his hamburger savagely as he pulls out of
the drive through.

INT. 1969 OLDSMOBILE/EXT. JUNEBUG'S SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Dusty pulls up outside a small, unremarkable suburban home on
a quiet, unremarkable suburban street and parks the car.

LARA LEE
Stay here. I won't be long.

Dusty looks at Dean, wrinkling his nose in disgust.

DUSTY JONES
If you think I'm waiting with HIM,
you're as crazy as your mother.
(beat)
I'll be back in five minutes.

Lara and Dusty get out of the car in unison. Dusty strides
off into the night. Lara stares at the house. Walks up the
flower-lined path to the front door.

EXT. JUNEBUG'S SUBURBAN HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Lara hesitates, her hand over the buzzer. She peeks through a window. The house is pitch black. Lara rummages amidst the pots and plants on the entranceway for a key.

In a metal box under a succulent she finds a key. She opens the door.

INT. JUNEBUG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lara investigates her mother's home, stepping very quietly.

She picks up PICTURE FRAMES above a fake fireplace: Junebug, in conservative clothing but retaining her aura of sex and trauma, hanging on the arm of balding auditor CLIVE, 50s.

In surprise, Lara picks up photos of herself as a baby and small child. She takes one of her mother holding her and slips it in her pocket.

Lara rifles through the closets in the living room. Nothing.

INT. JUNEBUG'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lara opens cupboards, looks in and behind plants, finally pouring herself a cup of water in frustration.

LARA LEE
(to herself)
Please don't be under her fucking
bed...

Lara looks out the window to the garden lit by fairy lights.

INT. JUNEBUG'S KITCHEN/EXT. JUNEBUG'S GARDEN - NIGHT

Lara spots a rose bush, it's petals so lushly red they are almost black, growing in the center of the garden. Smiles.

Lara gets a knife so large it could be a shovel from a drawer. She quietly opens the door to the garden.

EXT. JUNEBUG'S GARDEN - NIGHT

Lara plunges the knife into the bottom of the rosebush, shoveling the dirt away with her bare hands. She keeps digging and digging until the bush is upended.

Lara tumbles, covered in fallen rose petals.

PING! The knife hits metal. Lara reverentially pulls out a silver box. BLOWS the dirt away. She opens it and holds her mother's black GRIMOIRE to her chest.

CLICK! The sound of a gun safety coming off.

Lara slowly stands up gripping her knife, the end of a rifle held to the back of her head. It is in the hands of Junebug Lee, now 40s, naked beneath her open Chinese robe. Junebug speaks in a breathy voice, untethered to reality.

JUNEBUG LEE

I can shoot intruders, you know.
Castle doctrine in Nevada says so.

LARA LEE

It's me, Junebug. It's Lara. Your daughter.

Lara slowly turns around. The rifle doesn't budge, held now to Lara's forehead.

JUNEBUG LEE

...Lara? Can it be?

Junebug's hand reaches out to caress Lara's shorn locks.

JUNEBUG LEE (CONT'D)

You've cut off all your hair.
You look like a boy, now...

Mother and daughter search each other's faces, gun still cocked between them, knife in Lara's hand.

LARA LEE

I like your new teeth.

Junebug smiles brilliantly, showing off her veneers.

JUNEBUG LEE

Clive bought them for me. Aren't they beautiful? Clive and the Church protect me. But this weekend, he's in a sweat lodge. So he gave me this.

Junebug waves the gun up and down. Lara lets her knife drop. Her hand gently pushes the gun away to the side.

LARA LEE

You once told me that when I am grown, you would give me your grimoire. I'm grown now.

BANG!

Junebug tosses the rifle to the side and Lara SCREAMS as it goes off, dropping the spellbook. Junebug grabs the grimoire, holding the book fiercely to her chest.

JUNEBUG LEE

L. Ron practiced black magic,
before he downloaded the Sacred
Scriptures. But the occult is
impure! Dangerous.

LARA LEE

Junebug, I need that book. There's
a soul I need to set free.

Lara puts her hands over Junebug's, tries to wrest the book free. Junebug pulls away and stumbles towards a fire pit.

JUNEBUG LEE

No! Better to burn it! Until
there's nothing left but ashes.

Junebug pours lighter fluid over the logs in the fire and reaches for a box of matches.

JUNEBUG LEE (CONT'D)

One day, the synchronicities and
contradictions will make sense!

LARA LEE

Please, Junebug! He has a demon.
Only you can help me free him! Let
me help him like... Like Clive
helped you.

Junebug pauses, holding up the lit match.

JUNEBUG LEE

Demon? I had a demon.
(beat)
Demons are a serious business.

LARA LEE

I know. Please...

Junebug holds the book to Lara, who grasps the other side.

JUNEBUG LEE

Magic is my gift to you. Your
inheritance is darkness, but it may
be used to capture light.

Junebug lets go of the grimoire. Lara clasps it to her chest.

JUNEBUG LEE (CONT'D)

To purge a demon, you must burn the thing you love the most. Fire liberates! Or the soul lingers.

LARA LEE

You told me unburied souls linger in the material realm.

JUNEBUG LEE

So thought the Greeks. Buried or burnt. Fire is quickest. Fire is potent. Fire is pure.

LARA LEE

Thank you... mother.

Junebug starts HUMMING a song like "My Funny Valentine" and clutches Lara tightly to her chest.

JUNEBUG LEE

"Smile with my heart..."

(beat)

Little dove. Clive won't like it if you come here again.

LARA LEE

I know.

Junebug lets go of her daughter. Lara walks away.

JUNEBUG LEE

Lara!

Lara turns back. Junebug point to the grimoire.

JUNEBUG LEE (CONT'D)

Magic doesn't come from in there.

Junebug places her hand against her heart. Presses it, hard.

JUNEBUG LEE (CONT'D)

It comes from in here.

Lara walks away, swallowed by darkness.

EXT. 1969 OLDSMOBILE/EXT. JUNEBUG'S SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Dusty leans against the car, smoking. Lara approaches holding the grimoire tight to her chest.

LARA LEE

You didn't tell me how sick she is.

DUSTY JONES
I thought you remembered.

They open the car doors in unison.

INT. 1969 OLDSMOBILE/EXT. JUNEBUG'S SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Dusty REVS the engine and drives off as Lara flips through the scrawled pages of the grimoire.

LARA LEE
She told me magic doesn't come from
spells. She told me magic comes
from in here...

Lara puts her hand on her chest. Dusty SCOFFS.

DUSTY JONES
Magic! Magic is just lunacy for
wild sentimentalists.

Lara snatches her hand back down.

LARA LEE
Whatever happened to your Pops?

DUSTY JONES
He shot himself.

LARA LEE
Oh my god. I'm so sorry.

Lara hesitantly touches Dusty's hand. He pulls it away.

DUSTY JONES
He spent his whole life waiting to
die. He waited until I was a man.
There was a strange nobility to it.

LARA LEE
You know Dusty, ever since I met
you again, I can't hear him.

DUSTY JONES
Can't hear who?

LARA LEE
Dean.

Dusty knits his brows in concern.

DUSTY JONES

...The place I'm taking you, it's kind of like a safe house. We'll talk there, okay?

LARA LEE

Okay.

Lara curls up with the grimoire and closes her eyes. Dusty watches her fall asleep.

DUSTY JONES

Shit.

Dusty turns back to the road with grim determination.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Gia waits alone, swaying in a slip to a blues tune, arranging the roses in a vase on her dressing table.

BOUNCER (O.S.)

Miss Moretti?

Gia takes one rose from the vase and smells it. Gives herself a coquettish once-over in the mirror.

GIA MORETTI

"And I'm so fucking beautiful I can't stand it myself."

(to Bouncer)

Come in!

The bouncer lifts the curtains. Dusty, wearing a backpack, walks in and kisses Gia's cheek.

DUSTY JONES

Gia. A vision as always.

Gia reaches for an empty glass.

GIA MORETTI

Champagne?

Lara wheels Dean's slumped body into the room. Disguised by the mechanic jumpsuit, trucker hat, and sunglasses, his body still looks gruesome. Gia's hand stops in mid-air.

DUSTY JONES

(to Bouncer)

Don't mind my uncle. He's not well.

The Bouncer looks from the wheelchair, to Dusty, to Gia.

BOUNCER
Miss Moretti?

GIA MORETTI
Leave us.

The Bouncer backs out of the room. Dusty whips off Dean's trucker hat. Gia falls from her stool. The rose tumbles to the floor.

DUSTY JONES
That ex-lover you said got in touch unexpectedly.

Lara tenderly adjusts Dean's wonky sunglasses. Gia stares at Lara's Dean Mitchum sleeve tattoo.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
Seems we have a mutual friend.

Gia looks from Dean, to Lara, to Dusty, assessing the love triangle immediately and expertly. She sips her champagne.

GIA MORETTI
Of course we do.

Gia flips her hair to the side. She adjusts a fake eyelash in the mirror, blinking rapidly.

DUSTY JONES
You're a remarkable woman, Gia!
Gracious in the most... unusual of circumstances.

Gia unravels her legs, smooths back her hair and stands, extending her hand to Lara.

GIA MORETTI
You must be Lara.

Dusty winces at the slip of familiarity, as he takes off his backpack and hides it under a table. Lara wipes her hands on her jeans and shakes Gia's hand, wary.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
How else could it be. My dead stalker is her "*homme fatale*", and your... well.

Gia gestures to Lara's obvious obsession with Dean.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
Life often has a certain poetic cruelty to it, don't you find?

Dusty sits on Gia's dressing table, wraps a feather boa around his neck. He swigs from the champagne bottle.

DUSTY JONES

All the time.

LARA LEE

Don't you mean poetic justice?

GIA MORETTI

There is no justice in suffering,
dear.

(ironic)

Only art. This way.

Gia grabs the champagne from Dusty and sashays to the end of the dressing room, not looking back. The fallen rose crumples beneath the wheel of Dean's chair as Lara pushes him after.

EXT. DUSTY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Mozart attempts to break the iron chain and padlock on Dusty's garage with pliers. Fails. Tries again. Fails. He wipes sweat off his forehead and hands Fitzroy the pliers.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Here, it's like opening a jar.
You'll get all the glory.

FITZROY FREEMAN

Not when you're doing so well.

Mozart wipes an imaginary fleck of dust from his shoulder. In the shadows behind them, the L.A. cops white van parks.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Thank you, Watson!

FITZROY FREEMAN

Excuse me? I'm Sherlock.

Mozart stands, pushing the pliers insistently at Fitzroy.

MOZART HOROWITZ

You're Sherlock, when I was the one
to instigate this rescue?

FITZROY FREEMAN

Oh yes, I remember. When you called
asking for my help AND CAR straight
after leaving the police station?

Fitzroy snatches the pliers from him.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE CAR/EXT. DUSTY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Murphy and Martinez watch Mozart and Fitzroy argue in front of the garage.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

Told ya. Criminals always return to the scene of the crime. Or, a crime.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

So far, it's two old men failing to open a door.

Murphy loads his gun in anticipation.

EXT. DUSTY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Mozart crosses his arms as Fitzroy HAMMERS on the padlock with the pliers in frustration.

FITZROY FREEMAN

Why are we breaking into a garage in front of the cops? Your absurd hearse will incriminate us!

MOZART HOROWITZ

It won't incriminate us! I am the victim of a callus robbery. What is your beef, Fitzroy?

FITZROY FREEMAN

"Beef?" Really. I have never before heard you use that term. Do you think that makes you sound hard? As hard as Sherlock?

MOZART HOROWITZ

If Sherlock existed in modern times he might say beef!

FITZROY FREEMAN

You don't get to be Laverne AND Sherlock!

Fitzroy throws the pliers across the street in a huff.

FIZROY FREEMAN

This is no use. We'll have to return with a blowtorch!

MOZART HOROWITZ

I say we find a dark and cosy bar
with leather sofas and go-go boys
in white boots and have a nightcap
while plotting our next move.

Fitzroy perks up.

FIZROY FREEMAN

White boots? Is it possible?

MOZART HOROWITZ

I have it on good authority that in
Las Vegas, anything is possible.

Mozart and Fitzroy hug it out.

INT. UNDERCOVER POLICE CAR/EXT. DUSTY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Martinez and Murphy start the van as in the distance, Mozart
and Fitzroy's car drives off.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

See? They've found a lead. These
men could be cartel. Killers in
elder clothing.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

I really, really strongly feel we
should contact the Las Vegas
department and get their take.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

We're in too deep, Martinez. Who
can say who's payroll they're on?
Anyone could be... any of us...

Martinez and Murphy look at each other suspiciously.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A basement with two small windows, filled with old furniture.
Lara takes Dean's body out of his wheelchair, avoiding her
bad arm. She struggles to lay him out on a billiards table.

GIA MORETTI (O.S.)

Does she know..?

DUSTY JONES (O.S.)

She will soon.

STAIRCASE

At the bottom of a staircase, Gia hangs off Dusty's arm. They speak in hushed tones.

DUSTY JONES

I thought we could split the proceeds.

Gia pulls away and SLAPS him across the face. Dusty winces.

GIA MORETTI

What do you take me for?

Dusty throws up his hands, baffled. Gia blinks back tears.

DUSTY JONES

Lara doesn't care about money! She's in this for the death magic glory. And I can't be indebted to you forever. I sell the stuff, you get your cut. Everybody wins!

Gia covers her eyes with her hands.

GIA MORETTI

Oh, Dusty. You really don't understand women at all, do you.

Dusty's body quivers with manic electricity. He takes Gia's shoulders in his hands.

DUSTY JONES

This is manna from heaven, Gia! Fallen right into our laps. Don't spit in the eyes of the gods!

Gia turns away. Dusty manhandles her back to face him.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

One kilo of fentanyl makes SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND counterfeit pills. Do you know what we could DO with that money?! How do you explain this series of events but crazy, beautiful, motherfucking fate!

Behind them on the table, Lara removes Dean's clothes.

GIA MORETTI

I don't want your dirty money.

DUSTY JONES
 Money is NOT dirty. People are
 dirty. I'll be dirty. For us!

GIA MORETTI
 I don't want that either!

Dusty cradles Gia's hands in his own.

DUSTY JONES
 Your pretty hands will stay clean.
 I'll take care of you, Gia.

Gia smiles. Looks around the cellar, at Lara cleaning her
 embalming tools next to Dean's naked body.

GIA MORETTI
 You would say that, now. Like this.
 In perhaps the only situation that
 could ruin it for me utterly.

DUSTY JONES
 You're being very immature. Look, I
 have a guy coming, he'll be here
 any second.

Gia rips her hands away and KICKS the wall with her platform.

GIA MORETTI
 You invited a drug dealer to my
 club?!

Behind them, Lara looks up at the noise. Dusty puts his hand
 over Gia's mouth.

DUSTY JONESD
 Do you even know your clientele?
 Why did you call me, if you didn't
 want my help?

Gia SLAPS his hand away. But lowers her voice.

GIA MORETTI
 I thought you would enjoy a crazy
 story. The chances of you rocking
 up with his smack-filled CORPSE
 were pretty fucking remote!

Dusty rubs his hands up and down Gia's arms.

DUSTY JONES
 Gia, don't be mad. I'm sorry. I
 should have discussed this with
 you. We got sidetracked.

GIA MORETTI
Sidetracked how?

DUSTY JONES
Long story. Listen, I'll take care
of everything, don't you worry.

Dusty turns away and runs up the stairs. Gia SHOUTS at him.

GIA MORETTI
Goddamnit Dusty! Be honest with me.
Be honest with yourself!

Halfway up, Dusty hesitates.

DUSTY JONES
Make sure Lara doesn't do something
stupid.

Dusty disappears out of sight. Gia KICKS the wall again.

GIA MORETTI
Bastard!
(to herself)
Idiot! Fool! ...You're in deep shit
this time, Gia.

BILLIARDS TABLE

Lara takes a silk cloth out of her embalming bag, along with
a bottle of iodine. She wipes the dirt and blood from Dean's
head and neck as Gia wobbles towards her.

GIA MORETTI
Can I trouble you for a cigarette?

Lara hands her a smoke. Gia lights it. Inhales. COUGHS.

LARA LEE
Not your brand?

GIA MORETTI
I don't smoke.

Lara removes the dogtag necklace with the Mayan Ouroboros
from Dean's neck. Offers it to Gia. Gia shakes her head "no".
Lara sets it aside.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
I imagine people are easier to
handle as sacks of flesh and bone.

LARA LEE

What do you mean?

GIA MORETTI

Flesh won't bruise your ego. Bones won't break your heart. It's the soul of a thing that's harmful, that's dangerous, that hurts.

LARA LEE

Are you calling me a coward?

GIA MORETTI

I'm just a girl trying to understand the man I love.

Gia perches on the billiards table and captures Lara's gaze. Lara's eyebrows knot, her hands moving down Dean's chest.

LARA LEE

You've misread the situation.

GIA MORETTI

When you've been around the block as many times as I have, my dear, you never misread a situation.

Lara tenderly washes Dean down his legs, around his toes.

LARA LEE

How convenient for you.

GIA MORETTI

It's more of a curse than a convenience. But I have learnt one thing. In the end, all that really matters is that you show up for the people you love.

LARA LEE

You're very moralizing for a stripper.

GIA MORETTI

I've accepted that the story doesn't always end like you want it to, is all.

Gia put her hands on Lara's face and turns her to face her.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)

Want, fulfilled, isn't the point of the thing. Don't you understand?

Lara jerks her head away.

LARA LEE
Not really.

Gia looks at Dean's rotting corpse. Wrinkles her nose.

GIA MORETTI
If you really knew him, you would.

LARA LEE
Don't you have somewhere to be?

Gia nods. Lara watches her saunter towards the staircase, steady pace regained. At the foot of the stairs, Gia turns.

GIA MORETTI
I hope you find what you're looking
for, Lara. Truly, I do.

Gia's legs disappear up the staircase in silhouette.

Lara returns to Dean and opens the grimoire. She reads a passage from Edgar Allen Poe's poem "The Sleeper".

LARA LEE
"At midnight in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon. An
opiate vapor, dewy, dim, exhales
from out her golden rim..."

Lara takes her knife and slices into Dean's chest, trailing the depth of the incision with her finger.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BOOTH - NIGHT

Dusty sits in a booth with ALPHONSE MUELLER, 35, a dapper drug dealer. He watches Hope work the pole without expression as men wolf-whistle and slide bills into her g-string.

Dusty tries and fails to flag down Cindy Martini, working as a cocktail waitress. He finally gets her attention.

DUSTY JONES
A bottle of your finest champagne,
Cindy! This one's on me, not Gia.

CINDY MARTINI
Finally going up in the world, are
we Dusty?

Dusty kisses her hand.

DUSTY JONES
Every day, every hour, every minute
in your presence.

CINDY MARTINI
(disbelieving)
I'll put it on your tab.

DUSTY JONES
There is no tab! I AM the tab.

Cindy turns on her heel and walks away. Dusty lights a cigar.

ALPHONSE MUELLER
Dusty, I don't know you but I know
people that know you. I run a
business and I expect things to be
done business-like.

DUSTY JONES
That's why I called you, Alphonse
Mueller. Man of his word, reliable
and trustworthy!

ALPHONSE MUELLER
Putting my cards on the table here,
Dusty Jones, everyone I know says
you're a has-been junkie.

Dusty blows a perfect smoke ring.

DUSTY JONES
That's fair.

ALPHONSE MUELLER
And a bullshit artist. A man so UN-
trustworthy and UN-reliable, he may
not live to see another year.

Dusty raises his hand, offended.

DUSTY JONES
That I would contest!

Cindy returns with a bottle of Moet and bats her eyes at
Alphonse. She places the glasses on the table flirtatiously
and uncorks the champagne.

ALPHONSE MUELLER
Thank you.

Dusty shoos her away.

DUSTY JONES

I may be a junkie, I may be a "has-been"- though all that means is once I was at the very top of my game, with the bad luck to fall victim to the corporate fascism we call healthcare!

Dusty pours them each a glass.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

Are you really going to hold a broken back against me? Now? Here?

Alphonse drinks and waves on his speech.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

-BUT I am not a bullshit artist. If anything, my biggest flaw is to be a man of honesty in this sea of MENDACITY we call the Neon Babylon. I am many things, but I am not a liar. It is my only charm.

(considering)

Cheekbones aside.

In the background, Jesús and Arturo, one eye bandaged, walk in and lean against the bar to scope the joint.

ALPHONSE MUELLER

So tell me, how did a kilo of White Mexican Death fall into the hands of a man who six months ago was begging my men for a hit?

Dusty stares into his glass. Downs it, re-pours to the top.

DUSTY JONES

I discovered my best friend and long-lost love whom I haven't seen in thirteen years in the trailer I rent from her witch mother, performing rites over the stolen corpse of a z-list celebrity she's been obsessed with since childhood.

Alphonse's eyebrows shoot up. He sips his champagne.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

This man died as a drug mule, hoping to finance his self-penned dystopian action/horror "Enraged Charles" and take Gia to Cannes.

Dusty BURPS.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
And now we have his body in the
basement.

Alphonse stares in astonishment. He bursts out LAUGHING.

ALPHONSE MUELLER
You're a trip.

Alphonse waves down Cindy.

ALPHONSE MUELLER (CONT'D)
Sweetheart! Bring us two shots of
your finest tequila.
(to Dusty)
These are on me.

They raise their glasses in a toast.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

As Lara dissects Dean's stomach, her eyebrows knit together in confusion. The tone of her recitation changes to horror as she cuts through the lining and unpacks endless drug baggies.

LARA LEE
"Strange is thy pallor! Strange thy
dress! Strange above all thy length
of tress... And all this solemn
silentness."

Lara pulls away, lights a cigarette with shaking hands.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
"Trust me. Trust me! Don't you
TRUST me?"

Lara paces back and forth in fury.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BOOTH - NIGHT

Alphonse pours the last of the champagne. They CLINK glasses.

ALPHONSE MUELLER
-To great fortunes and new
friendships!

DUSTY JONES
I'll meet you here at noon
tomorrow. I won't let you down!

Dusty slides him the SHITTY MOTEL BUSINESS CARD with ROOM 14 scrawled on it. Alphonse puts the card in his pocket.

STRIP POLE

Jesús and Arturo watch Hope gyrate. Behind them, Dusty and Alphonse shake hands in the booth. Alphonse leaves. Dusty basks in the brief moment of his glory.

Jesús WHISTLES, putting a bill too close to Hope's crotch. Hope draws her hips away and KICKS at his head.

JESÚS

Putá! That was- how you say?
Uncalled for.

Jesús wags at Hope with one finger as Arturo scopes the crowd with his one good eye.

BOOTH

Dusty clocks them. Turns white. Pulls into the shadows. When Cindy passes, he drops to the ground, hiding behind her skirt and crawling on hands and knees as she walks towards the bar.

A DRUNK CUSTOMER notices Dusty lurking behind Cindy as they pass the pole.

DRUNK CUSTOMER

Fuckin' pervert! You tryin' to
smell her pussy?

Drunk Customer grabs Dusty and pulls him up to his full height. Dusty tries to duck out of view.

DRUNK CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Gentleman pay extra for that.

DUSTY JONES

(whispering)

No, you're mistaken, she's a
friend, it's a joke!

The Gangsters turn around at the commotion. Grin.

ARTURO

I hate men who do not respect
woman.

JESÚS

Despicable.

Dusty scrambles out of Drunk Customer's grip. Drunk Customer grabs his shirt. Dusty STAGGERS.

Arturo swings at Dusty, who spins Drunk Customer around to catch the blow.

POW!

Drunk Customer clutches his broken nose and HOWLS.

ARTURO
(to Jesús)
It is time these people leave, no?

Jesús pulls a handgun from his jacket pocket and raises it in the air. Hope SCREAMS and runs off stage. Jesús FIRES once, into the ceiling.

JESÚS
Everybody fuck off!

SCREAMING CUSTOMERS shove each other in their rush to escape.

JESÚS (CONT'D)
Dios mio that feels good, creating
a big scene like in the movies!

In the confusion, Dusty throws himself to the ground, rolls, flips a chair with his feet into Jesús's face. Jesús falls.

As Dusty shuffles away, Arturo pulls out his gun. The gangsters stalk towards Dusty.

Dusty makes a break for it and runs towards the bar, throwing his body across the surface. Drinks scatter and SMASH.

BEHIND THE BAR

Dusty brushes broken glass off of himself and takes a handgun from his back pocket, loading it in front of BARTENDER, 20s.

DUSTY JONES
We will not die here. We will not
die here!

Bartender SCREAMS in answer.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

A partially sewn-up Dean lies on the table. Lara stuffs his organs back into him. The baggies of drugs are separated. She puts them in her embalming bag.

BANG! (O.S.)

Lara looks up, fuming. She arms a cordless injector with a series of needles and puts it in her back pocket.

LARA LEE
 Fuck you, Dusty. Fuck you very
 much.

She takes a spool of thick medical tape from her bag and bandages up Dean's bulging torso.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
 Careful, baby. I'm all in bits.

LARA LEE
 You're back!

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
 I never left. I didn't think you
 needed me anymore, is all.

LARA LEE
 I've always needed you.

Lara sags against him with relief.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Gia's bejeweled fingers touch up her makeup, slowly and impeccably, as she sits at her dressing table. The record player spins. A torch song PLAYS.

BANG! (O.S.)

Gia unlocks a drawer on the dressing table and removes a vintage jewelry box. In it is a pearl-handled pistol.

GIA MORETTI
 (desolate)
 "Who wants to be famous?"

BANG! BANG! BANG! (O.S)

Gia takes out a velvet bag and pours bullets on the table. She loads the pistol. She runs her fingers over it, brings it to her face. Runs the gun over her cheeks.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
 "Who wants to die for art?"

She takes the gun to her red lips and blows.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lara zips up Dean's mechanic suit.

BANG! BANG! BANG! (O.S.)

She grabs a chair and breaks the basement window. Throws her embalming bag through it. Takes a rope and attaches it under Dean's torso.

LARA LEE

I'm sorry baby. This wasn't the way
I planned.

Lara clammers through the broken window. Her hands winch Dean through, strung up under the armpits.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - BEHIND THE BAR - NIGHT

Dusty throws a bottle of whiskey in the air.

BANG!

Glass SHATTERS and booze sprays everywhere as the bottle is perfectly shot through at its highest turn.

DUSTY JONES

Fuck fuck fuck!!

Dusty shuffles to the far wall. The Bouncer runs behind the bar and grabs a shotgun from under the till. He stands.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Liquor bottles explode in a row above the bar. Bouncer ducks.

ARTURO (O.S.)

Fuck! Jesus! God!

BANG! BANG!

Dusty leaps on the bar, shooting wildly as he goes. A bullet going through the center of Jesús's palm. He SCREAMS.

Arturo writhes on the ground, holding his stomach. Clocking Dusty, he reaches for his fallen gun.

Dusty falls to the floor and scrambles towards the dressing room. Jesús aims at Dusty with his good hand.

The velvet curtains swing open. Gia steps out and aims her pistol at seething Jesús's heart.

GIA MORETTI
Hello, boys.

She tosses the shotgun in her other hand to Hope on stage.
Hope aims at Arturo's head.

HOPE CHARLES
Drop it, motherfucker.

Viktor drops his weapon, rolling from side to side in pain.
Dusty pops his head over the table.

DUSTY JONES
Gia! Are you-?

GIA MORETTI
We can handle this. Hope?

Hope nods.

DRESSING ROOM

Dusty barges through the curtains, running to the cellar. He
flings open the basement door.

DUSTY JONES
LARA?! Jesus forgive me God-

STAIRCASE

Dusty races down the stairs. Stops at the bottom. He takes in
the empty basement.

SCREEEECHHHHH.

Through the broken window, the tires of the Oldsmobile peel
out of the parking lot.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
Traucherous bitch!!

Dusty PUNCHES the wall.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Lara speeds through empty streets, Dean's head slumped
against her shoulder.

LARA LEE
What were you thinking, Dean? I
deserve better than this.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
I know, baby. We both do.

SCREEEEEECH!

Lara SLAMS on the breaks, narrowly avoiding running over an ELDERLY CHINESE WOMAN crossing the street.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dusty rips open his backpack on the ground, slips on a holster and arms himself with more guns and ammo.

BANG! BANG! (O.S.)

He grabs a set of motorcycle keys on a pink keychain from Gia's dressing table.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Arturo lies in a pool of blood, shot through the head. The Bouncer slumps over the bar, shot through the chest. Hope rocks on her knees, her head in her hands, cradling Gia.

The club is empty.

DUSTY JONES
Is she-?!

GIA MORETTI
Get out!

Dusty hesitates.

GIA MORETTI (CONT'D)
For God's sake, go!

Dusty leans down to grab Gia's face and kisses her tenderly.

DUSTY JONES
I can never repair this, I know.
But I'll be back with the money, I
swear. Money for a better life. For
you, for me. For us both.
(beat)
Forgive me.

Dusty sprints out the door.

Gia pulls back from Hope, grimacing. She looks down. A bloodstain pools around the stomach of her silk robe.

Hope stares at the wound in horror. Gia crumples to the floor. She motions Hope towards her. Hope leans in, weeping. Gia whispers in her ear. Hope SOBS.

EXT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dusty REVS a hot pink motorcycle as approaching SIRENS blare. He takes off into the night.

INT. GAY CASINO - NIGHT

Mozart and Fitzroy sit on the hook of a craps table in a casino with GO GO BOYS dancing to POP MUSIC on the bar, surrounded by GAY MEN.

FITZROY FREEMAN

So we have nothing to go on? No family? No friends?

Mozart drinks a ridiculous cocktail, spirit crushed at last.

MOZART HOROWITZ

She never talked about the past.

OLD GAY MAN

Dice, be nice! Momma needs a new pair of shoes!

FITZROY FREEMAN

Well, I'm fresh out of ideas. At least we know they are, too.

Fitzroy nods towards Detective Murphy and Officer Martinez, attempting to hide and spy behind a row of slot machines.

FIZROY FREEMAN

The odds of us being framed for murder are high. I think we should fly to Bogota.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Whadyasay we send them on a wild goose chase? Pretend to be two dirty old men on a road trip. Gambling, strippers, the works!

Mozart puts a twenty dollar bill in the neon speedo of a passing GO-GO BOY.

MOZART HOROWITZ (CONT'D)

(to Go Go Boy)

Love your work.

Fitzroy speaks fatalistically into his beer.

FITZROY FREEMAN
One last gig before incarceration.

MOZART HOROWITZ
One last adventure!

FITZROY FREEMAN
And you've had so many?

SLOT MACHINES

Detective Murphy spies on them, one hand mechanically working the slot machine, listening to the Vegas cops on his radio.

COP RADIO
(crackling)
at Lah Fie-del-tee- East Flamingo
and- Paradise- 421- at-

DETECTIVE MURPHY
Homicide.

BING! BING! BING!

Detective Murphy drops to the floor as if he's been shot at. Three cherries roll together. Martinez hides a smile.

Murphy crawls back up as chips SHOOT out of the machine.

CRAPS TABLE

Mozart tugs at Fitzroy's arm as Murphy races towards the exit, winnings spilling out his pockets, Martinez behind.

MOZART HOROWITZ
Murphy's on the run! He must have
got a lead.

FITZROY FREEMAN
And so the hunter, becomes the
hunted.

Fitzroy puts on his sunglasses as the men rise.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - FLOOR - NIGHT

Hope cradles Gia's dead body in her arms, WEeping. She refuses to give her body up to two PARAMEDICS. MIDDLE AGED COP touches her shoulder.

MIDDLE AGED COP

Look, sweetheart, I know this has
been- I know you ain't- fuck.

(beat)

This is the hardest part of the
job. But you have to let her go.
Can you do that for me, honey?

Hope shudders as the paramedics take Gia's body away.

MIDDLE AGED COP (CONT'D)

There somewhere quiet we can go?
You wanna cuppa tea or somethin'?
Glass a wahdah?

Hope wipes away her tears and takes a deep breath. She stands
unsteadily and stumbles towards the dressing room.

HOPE CHARLES

Bourbon. A bottle.

The curtain swishes closed behind her.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Lara slams on the breaks at a red light. Dean's body flies
forwards and hits the dashboard. Lara straps him in harshly.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)

Be gentle with me, baby.

She lights a cigarette and rolls down the window as the
undercover L.A. cop van crosses in front of her.

Mozart and Fitzroy's car tails the cops. Mozart spies Lara
blowing smoke out the window as they drive past.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Mozart makes a sudden U-turn.

MOZART HOROWITZ

Our luck has turned!

Fitzroy SHOUTS in alarm, clutching the sides of the car.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STREETS - NIGHT

In the Lincoln, Jesús tails Lara, taking his sweet time. He
speaks to himself in subtitled Spanish.

JESÚS

I will tear you limb from limb,
little girl. That is a promise.

Jesús aims at the Oldsmobile with a shotgun. Behind him, Dusty catches up on Gia's pink motorcycle. In the distance, Mozart and Fitzroy follow.

BANG! BANG!

The Oldsmobile's back window SHATTERS. Lara swerves.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. SIDE ROAD - NIGHT

Lara reaches for the needle gun from her embalming bag as she accelerates. The Lincoln bumps her back fender. Lara leans out the window and aims at the tires.

LINCOLN

Dusty REVS his bike and swerves in front of Jesús in a Rear Peg Wheelie, aiming a shotgun at his head. The Lincoln runs off the road.

OLDSMOBILE

Dusty ZOOMS to Lara's open window. She waves the needle gun under his nose.

LARA LEE

I KNEW you were only in this for
the filthy lucre! What I couldn't
figure was WHY- HOW-

Jesús's car reappears in the side view mirror. Dusty whips a gun from his holster. Dusty does a One Handed Wheelie, aiming at Jesús's window.

BANG!

He shoots, misses. Swerves back to Lara's window.

DUSTY JONES

A man can have dual motives-!

LARA LEE

"You told me a blood pact is
unbreakable"! How could you throw
that in my face?!

BANG! BANG!

Dusty ducks, then aims at Jesús's car again.

BANG!

Jesús's front window SHATTERS. The Lincoln's brakes SCREECH.

Dusty's bike rights itself. He leans through Lara's window.

DUSTY JONES
I've said a lot of things-

LARA LEE
And I've done a lot of things.

In Lara's rearview, Jesús speeds towards them. Lara stops the Oldsmobile abruptly. Dusty drives off ahead of her.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
(shouting after him)
But I've always meant them!

The Lincoln RAMS her. Lara reverses it into a brick wall.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. LAS VEGAS OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Fitzroy peers at a Las Vegas map as Mozart drives.

MOZART HOROWITZ
She must be headed to the highway!

FITZROY FREEMAN
Take the next left!

Mozart takes the next right.

FITZROY FREEMAN (CONT'D)
Left, Mozart!!

Mozart turns the steering wheel right again.

INT. POLICE VAN/EXT. LA FIDÉLITÉ PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Murphy pulls into the parking lot of the gentleman's club, swarming with Las Vegas cop cars. He shakes his head.

DETECTIVE MURPHY
Lara Lee. Always one step ahead of
justice. But not for long.

Martinez rolls his eyes as Murphy opens the van door.

EXT. DESERT - WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS SIGN - NIGHT

A stretch of desert sporting a post-apocalyptic "Welcome To Fabulous Las Vegas" sign. The Oldsmobile and motorcycle shoot through the desert towards it, followed by an unhinged Jesús.

OLDSMOBILE

Jesús aims at Lara as her car RAMS into the Oldsmobile.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Dusty moves back and forth alongside them, trying to get a clear shot of Jesús through the window.

BANG!

Lara's mirror window SHATTERS. Her forehead gushes blood. Lara clocks the approaching sign and grins.

LARA LEE

(to Dusty)

After all that, it looks like we will die in Vegas!

DUSTY JONES

We never were any good at keeping our promises.

In Lara's rearview, Jesús catches up.

BANG!

A bullet whizzes between Lara and Dusty's ears. Lara slams the Oldsmobile into Jesús's car as she barrels towards Dusty's motorcycle. Dusty does a Stoppie and escapes.

BANGBANGBANGBANG!!

Jesús shoots at Dusty's bike with a machine gun. His tires blow out, flinging him from the bike as it spins off road.

Jesús gets out of the Lincoln and stalks towards him, taking his hunting knife from his hip.

Dusty helplessly watches Lara drive away.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

In her wing mirror, Lara watches Dusty abandon the motorcycle to run into the darkness off of the highway, Jesús tracking him with a flashlight and hunting knife.

Lara turns off her headlights and reverses.

EXT. HIGHWAY - WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS SIGN - NIGHT

Jesús wrestles Dusty to the ground and PUNCHES his face repeatedly. Lara stalks behind them, hidden by darkness. Jesús pauses for breath, his silhouette illuminated in the moonlight as he lifts the hunting knife high into the air--

Lara throws her thick metal trocar, spinning like a Chinese throwing star before impaling Jesús's neck. Jesús drops dead on top of Dusty, his throat spurting blood.

Lara kicks Jesús's body off. Dusty shakily stands up.

DUSTY JONES

You came back. I didn't think you would. Why did you come back?

LARA LEE

I guess because you were the first person to make life feel like an adventure-

Lara pulls the trocar out of Jesús's neck and wipes the blood on her shirt. She puts the trocar in her back pocket.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

And not like a trap.

Dusty is speechless. Lara turns and walks away from him. He runs to catch up with her.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

You promised that you would protect me. But you were never there.

DUSTY JONES

When?

LARA LEE

Lots of times.

Dusty stops her, holds Lara by the shoulders.

DUSTY JONES

You always run away before I have the chance.

SIRENS.

They turn towards the approaching lights in alarm.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Lara dives in the backseat. Dusty scrambles behind the wheel beside a strapped-in, beat-up Dean Mitchum. Dusty gags.

DUSTY JONES
Jesus Christ, Lara-

LARA LEE
JUST DRIVE!!
(beat)
I'm disappointed in you Dusty. I
thought you were better than this.

DUSTY JONES
Better than what? Your accomplice,
bait and savior?? What more do you
want from me!

His boot hits the accelerator powerfully.

LARA LEE
You used to have passion, ambition.
Now all that's left is escapism,
and a frankly ludicrous turn of
phrase!

DUSTY JONES
I BROKE my BACK!

Lara SMACKS Dusty across the back of the head.

LARA LEE
You gave up!

SIRENS.

A HIGHWAY PATROL CAR draws ever closer. They barely notice.

DUSTY JONES
And what have YOU done with your
life that's so goddamn impressive!

LARA LEE
I got out of this shithole, found
employment I excel at, and possess
the body of my idol!

The highway patrol almost touches the Oldsmobile bumper.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Things are pretty fucking peachy!

VROOOOOM!

Lara lights a cigarette as Dusty speeds to the max.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Mozart and Fitzroy, lights off, speed down the highway following the patrol car chasing the Oldsmobile.

MOZART HOROWITZ
What do we do?!

FITZROY FREEMAN
Create a distraction!

Fitzroy takes out a hidden pistol and takes a ZEN BREATH.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Dusty rolls down his window to breathe fresh air as Lara angrily sucks on her cigarette.

DUSTY JONES
What's your plan? Incinerate Dean
at Joshua Tree à la Gram Parsons?

LARA LEE
I would never do something so
cliché.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
This is fucked up, baby, but it
ain't cliché.

DUSTY JONES
Did you say something?

Lara looks at Dusty in shock.

LARA LEE
Maybe I'm not crazy?

BANG! BANG!

HIGHWAY PATROL COP shoots at Dusty and Lara.

DUSTY JONES
Take the wheel!

Lara leans forward and manhandles the steering wheel as Dusty arms himself. He aims through the broken back window.

BANG!

Dusty clutches his torso. Grimaces. Brings his bloody hand towards his face.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)
Well, now we're even.

Lara nearly swerves off the highway.

LARA LEE
Are you-??

DUSTY JONES
WATCH THE ROAD!!

Lara faints.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Mozart speeds along, neck and neck with the highway patrol.

Out of the blue, Mozart SLAMS into its side. It skids, hits a streetlight, flips over twice and careens over the road edge.

The Oldsmobile speeds off into the distance.

Mozart and Fitzroy drive to the side of the highway to observe the wreckage. The boot of the car catches fire.

FITZROY FREEMAN
I said DISTRACTION! NOT MURDER!!

The highway patrol car EXPLODES. They wince in horror.

FITZROY FREEMAN (CONT'D)
What happens to a body when it
burns?

MOZART HOROWITZ
(autopilot)
If they're skinny, it smells like
fireworks. When they're fat, it
smells like bacon.

SIRENS.

FITZROY FREEMAN
I think its time to move.

Mozart stares ahead, unmoving.

FITZROY FREEMAN (CONT'D)
Drive!!

Mozart SLAMS on the accelerator.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Dusty drives, clutching his side, Dean's busted corpse slumped next to him. Lara sprawls between them, out cold. Dusty's resentful gaze rests upon Dean.

DUSTY JONES

You could never make her happy.

Dusty looks out the window at the DINO-SOUR theme park sign. He turns off the freeway. Shakes Lara awake.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

Lara. Wake up.

Lara shoots upright and inspects Dusty's wound.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

Am I dying?

Lara sags back in relief.

LARA LEE

Not unless you consider the love handle a vital organ.

Lara looks around in confusion.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Where are we? Why did you stop!

DUSTY JONES

I don't know where you want to go!
Or if you want me to come with you.

Lara's stomach GARGLES loudly.

INT. PEGGY SUE'S 50'S DINER - NIGHT

The battered and bloody pair sit in a booth staring at their menus, in front of Matronly Waitress. The jukebox plays something like Skeeter Davis's "End Of The World".

LARA LEE

I'll give you what you came for,
and then you should go. Forever.

DUSTY JONES

(to Waitress)
That's not what it sounds like.
(MORE)

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

(to Lara)

Many years ago, she stole my bike
and left me.

LARA LEE

With the characters Junebug brought
home, that was inevitable.

DUSTY JONES

(to Waitress)

Now she's doing the same thing, but
with a much more expensive car.

Lara shrugs, looks out the window.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

You know, she just wanted love.

LARA LEE

Yes. But only from strangers.

MATRONLY WAITRESS

Sounds like you two need some hot
apple pie with homemade whipped
cream!

LARA LEE

And a black coffee.

DUSTY JONES

And a neat whiskey.

MATRONLY WAITRESS

Comin' right up!

She shuffles off.

DUSTY JONES

Where are you taking him?

LARA LEE

I was thinking of the Bunker.

Dusty LAUGHS.

DUSTY JONES

You want to bury your true love in
the shithole where we used to get
fucked up surrounded by vagrants?

Lara looks hurt. Matronly Waitress places their drinks on the
table. Dusty stares into his whiskey.

LARA LEE
That was a happy time for me.

DUSTY JONES
Of course it was. If there were a
cross for every body buried there,
it would literally be a cemetery.

Lara stares into her coffee, vulnerable moment unnoticed.

LARA LEE
Somehow it doesn't seem important,
anymore.

DUSTY JONES
What do you mean?

LARA LEE
Nothing. I guess I'm tired.

Dusty puts his hand over Lara's. She pulls it away.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Look, we both got what we wanted. I
suggest we eat our apple pie and
say our goodbyes.

DUSTY JONES
(blindsided)
Goodbyes?

LARA LEE
Dusty, we've been in each other's
company less than forty-eight hours
and we've almost got killed a dozen
times. I could be wanted in two
states! Who knows the fallout we've
left behind.

Lara sips her coffee.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Individually we're terrible fuck-
ups and together we become a
shitstorm of destruction. It's best
we never meet again.

Dusty SLAMS his fist on the table. Lara jumps.

DUSTY JONES
What else is life BUT a shitstorm
of destruction? We're the Shivas of
the world, Lara, we're the Kalis!
We destroy to bring about change.
(MORE)

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

(beat)

We were deprived all of our lives
and now you CHOOSE to deprive
yourself- for what? Think about
what we could DO with this money.
Where we could go together!

Lara looks away, conflicted.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

Our dreams were so small, we
expected so little, that our most
grandiose wish was to die
elsewhere. This is our chance.
Probably the only one we'll ever
get. To dream so big, to expect so
much, to- to LIVE life, anywhere!

Lara slides her embalming bag towards Dusty over the table.

LARA LEE

You're right. But I can't do it
this way.

On his lap, Dusty opens it, staring at the bloody sacks of
fentanyl. He dips in his hand, the baggies slipping over his
fingers. Dusty's hand clenches around a fistful. He looks up.

Lara's Doc Martins slide out of the booth. In the mirror at
the end of the diner wall, he watches Lara walk away.

DUSTY JONES

It has it's way of coiling into
you, however deeply you retract.
(shouting after her)
You'll never escape it, Lara!

Lara stops.

DUSTY JONES (CONT'D)

Whateverthefuck you're looking for,
in Dean, in the goddamn desert, you
won't find it! Because what you're
seeking is inside of you, and it's
relentless, and inescapable, and
it's the exact same thing you're
running from.

Dusty finishes off his whiskey. Sets down the glass. Lara's
feet pick up again. She reaches the door, opens it.

LARA LEE

Goodbye, Dusty.

She hesitates. Turns to meet his eyes in the mirror.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
I hope it delivers.

Dusty watches the door swing shut behind her. The Matronly Waitress shuffles over with two slices of apple pie.

MATRONLY WAITRESS
Oh, honey. She done left you again?

DUSTY JONES
Could you please call me a cab?

Dusty shoves a forkful of pie in his mouth and swallows hard.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. MOJAVE FREEWAY - DAWN

Lara drives, Dean in the seat next to her, listening to the radio. A song like Gram Parsons's "Love Hurts" plays. Lara wipes tears from her eyes and swallows hard.

The Joshua Tree National Park sign appears ahead.

LARA LEE
It's not SO cliché. And it would be wise to get rid of this car.

Lara turns onto the park road.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)
Oh Du- Dean. It's been one hell of a ride. You lived fast, died young, and left a beautiful corpse. And I would know.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
I know you do, baby. I couldn't ask for a finer woman to free my soul.

Lara smiles.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - SUNRISE

Insects crawl through the dirt. A lizard sunbathes on a rock. The purple orange desert landscape of sand and cacti.

The battered car and its battered occupants sail over the sand in the direction of the rising sun over a cliff's edge.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - SUNRISE

Lara's scarab-tattooed hand manically turns the radio dial. A fly lands on the dashboard. Lara's hand lifts it away, a macabre Snow White.

At the radio, Lara passes, stops, returns to a romantic Motown classic. Her hand relaxes.

INT. LA FIDÉLITÉ GENTLEMAN'S LOUNGE - DRESSING ROOM - SUNRISE

Hope trembles on Gia's lip-shaped stool, swigging the last of the bourbon bottle. Middle Aged Cop sits next to her.

HOPE CHARLES

-Truth is. Gia had a lot of problems. Du-... Dean was the least of her problems.

Martinez and Murphy burst through the velvet curtain.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

Sir! There is a woman, Lara Lee, we know stole Dean Mitchum's corpse. She is violently linked to the criminal underworld-

Hope stands up.

HOPE CHARLES

No.

DETECTIVE MURPHY

What?

HOPE CHARLES

Fuckin' no. I have told this kind man exactly what happened tonight. And that was due to greed and crime and mistook bad love and all manner of things I want no part of. I am the only one to live to tell this tale. The sole witness. And that dirty business of ruined lives ends now, and it ends here. With me.

(breaking down)

I can't bear anymore.

Hope collapses in the arms of Middle Aged Cop and WEEPS. Detective Murphy PUNCHES the wall in a fury. Martinez hides a smile.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

I suggest, sir, we go back home?
Piece together what evidence we
have, instead of what you think you
know? Capiche?

Detective Murphy glares at Martinez, outraged.

INT. LAS VEGAS MOTEL - SUNRISE

Dusty closes the door of the same motel room he stayed in
with Cindy and collapses against it, holding the embalming
bag. He falls to his knees and crawls towards the bed. He
shoves the bag beneath it. Passes out on the floor.

INT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE/EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - SUNRISE

Lara leans against Dean's shoulder. Lights a cigarette.
Watches the desert dawn.

LARA LEE

Nothing else ever got to me like
this, you know. You have to take
some of the blame for that.

(beat)

Swanning into my life out of the
blue, all danger and destiny. Call
it what you like: serendipity,
kismet, fate.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)

This isn't how I imagined things.

LARA LEE

This isn't how I imagined it,
either. But we've had our
adventures. And in these dark days,
who gets the fairy tale? Who would
deserve one?

Lara strokes Dean's face, for the last time. Takes a drag.

LARA LEE (CONT'D)

Not the outlaws and morgue rats.

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)

I can't think of anyone who
deserves happy ever after more than
you do, baby.

Lara tenderly places the cigarette between his lips. It
dangles comically.

She holds the grimoire above the accelerator.

EXT. 1969 YELLOW OLDSMOBILE - MOJAVE CLIFFSIDE - SUNRISE

The wheels of the Oldsmobile touch the cliff's edge. Lara takes the dead man's hand. She REVS the engine.

LARA LEE
"Goodnight, sweet Prince."

DEAN MITCHUM (V.O.)
Goodbye, baby girl.

Lara flings open her door and rolls out of the Oldsmobile into the desert dust, as the car shoots forwards.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - MOJAVE DESERT - DAWN

Lara watches the Oldsmobile goes over the side of the cliff. She walks away from the wreckage, not turning to look back. Lights a cigarette, backlit by the rising sun.

EXT. MOJAVE FREEWAY - THE LAST CALL BOX ON EARTH - DAY

Lara's Doc Martin nudges open a highway call box. She puts coins in, DIALS a number. Waits. Frowns. Hangs up. Adds more money. DIALS again.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. MOJAVE FREEWAY - DAY

Mozart's phone RINGS. An unknown number. He and Fitzroy share a look of terror. Mozart throws his phone in Fitzroy's lap.

MOZART HOROWITZ
I don't want to die in jail!

RINGGG!!

Fitzroy answers solemnly.

FITZROY FREEMAN
Fitzroy Freeman, professional actor
and priest, speaking on behalf of
Mozart Horowitz, funeral director.
(pause)
LARA?! Where the hell are you?

Mozart lets out a SOB of relief.

INT. LAS VEGAS MOTEL - DAY

Dusty opens the motel door for Alphonse, doctors bag in hand. He exchanges the bag for a briefcase. Dusty claps Alphonse on the back and waves him goodbye, smiling.

Dusty closes the door. His smile evaporates. He sits on the bed, opens the suitcase. Counts stacks of money. Opens a drawer in the bedside table. He has kept one bag of fentanyl.

He stares at it. Closes the door. Opens the door. Closes it. Dusty lies on the bed and turns on the TV.

NEWS READER

In a story bizarre even for Sin City, the stolen corpse of the actor known as "Dean Mitchum" was found in a burnt out car owned by infamous stripper and club owner, Gia Moretti. The lovers hoped to fund their first movie together, but after a drug deal went wrong, both their lives ended in brutal murder. The two-state wide gang war originated in L.A. and ended, tragically, in Las Vegas early this morning.

Dusty's shaking hands turn off the TV. Tears stream down his devastated face. His eyes swivel to the bedside table drawer.

INT. FITZROY'S CAR/EXT. MOJAVE FREEWAY - DAY

Mozart and Fitzroy see Lara walking along the side of the freeway. They pull over. She gets in the back of the car and lies down, exhausted.

FITZROY FREEMAN

Looks like baby girl's been adventuring.

LARA LEE

I don't want to talk about it.

Mozart drives off, manic and nervy.

MOZART HOROWITZ

You know, I think it might be time for us all to take a little trip!

Fitzroy points to the spinning New Orleans keychain in his ignition.

FITZROY FREEMAN

I have family down in New Orleans!

MOZART HOROWITZ

I do love hot jazz!

(clearing throat)

You know, Lara, I've wanted to get out of the family business for some time now.

Lara sits up, blindsided.

LARA LEE

What?!

MOZART HOROWITZ

At my age, funeral directing becomes somewhat macabre. Yet I've never felt ready to retire...

Fitzroy inspects the highway behind them in the rearview with his opera glasses.

FITZROY FREEMAN

This is certainly the moment for a change of pace and location. Maybe even name..?

LARA LEE

(desperate)

But what transferable skills do we have?

SIX MONTHS LATER

EXT. HOPE'S TRAILER - PORCH - DAY

Hope nurses her baby on a swing. A shotgun lies within easy reach. Dusty drives up Hope's driveway in a Corvette. He emerges, carrying a briefcase.

His hair has been cut, he looks healthy and fresh.

Hope swings and nurses, watching him take the stairs. Dusty eyes the gun and stops on the top step.

HOPE CHARLES

I do declare, Dusty fuckin' Jones. I'd say I never thought to see yo' face again, but that would mean underestimatin' life's bitter irony.

DUSTY JONES

I would have come sooner, if I thought it was safe.

HOPE CHARLES

Mm-hm. You could have called to explain that.

DUSTY JONES

It took me this long to be able to do the right thing.

HOPE CHARLES

If you had come any sooner, I swear to God I'd have shot you dead on this porch, child on my breast.

DUSTY JONES

I would deserve nothing less.

HOPE CHARLES

But I don't deserve to go to prison over yo' sorry ass. So. Now we're on the same page, what the FUCK do you want?

DUSTY JONES

I know what I've done is irreparable. But I have something that could help you... that could help your daughter.

Dusty puts the briefcase on the ground before her feet.

HOPE CHARLES

Your dirty money that took Gia's life, you mean.

Dusty clears his throat.

HOPE CHARLES (CONT'D)

I want to hear you say it.

DUSTY JONES

The money didn't take Gia's life.

HOPE CHARLES

No. You did.

Hope's leg slides out, drawing the briefcase beneath her.

HOPE CHARLES (CONT'D)

It ain't right she took the blame. For you, of all people.

DUSTY JONES

This is going to sound like I'm
defending myself. Maybe I am.

(swallowing hard)

But Gia wouldn't have cared. What
did she used to say? "Reputations
are for the meek. Notoriety is for
the magnificent!"

His voice breaks. Hope stares into the distance. Dusty sits
on a second chair, looks at the floor.

HOPE CHARLES

"People only value two things in
this world. One, is the thing they
can never get. And the other, is
the thing they've already lost."
Gia also used to say that.

(deep breath)

Now, to me, she's both.

Dusty looks up in surprise. Her baby CRIES. Hope SHUSHES her.

HOPE CHARLES (CONT'D)

Don't make the same mistake.

Dusty nods and puts on his sunglasses. He walks off the porch
towards the Corvette. Opens the door. Gets in the car.

EXT. SAMURAI CHOP - NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

Dusty stands in front of a small, graffiti-covered little
sushi bar on a trendy-seedy New Orleans alley. Breathes deep.

INT. SAMURAI CHOP - BAR - NIGHT

B-film posters of Dean plaster the interior. The radio BLARES
heavy metal. Lara stands below it, expertly CHOPPING fish.

Dusty seats himself at the sushi bar next to an OLD CLIENT,
who WHISTLES as he watches Lara's knife fly.

OLD CLIENT

Hot damn. Wouldn't want to cross
her in a dark alley!

DUSTY JONES

(to Old Client)

She studied with the masters in
Japan.

Lara startles and nearly chops off her own finger.

She turns down the radio. Guts another fish, not looking back at Dusty.

LARA LEE

I thought by now you'd be living
the high life on a beach in
Southeast Asia.

DUSTY JONES

I toyed very seriously with the
idea. But it wasn't for me.

LARA LEE

Paradise too perfect for you?

DUSTY JONES

The Golden Triangle of opiate
production isn't the ideal habitat
for a tenderly sober specimen such
as myself.

LARA LEE

Oh?

Lara peeks up at his reflection in the mirror above the bar.

DUSTY JONES

Turns out, however far I ran and
wherever I looked, I was always
trying to find something out there,
that was always in here.

Dusty touches his heart. Then points at Lara's. Lara blinks back tears.

LARA LEE

And what was that?

DUSTY JONES

Some kind of magic.

Lara presents him with a plate of perfectly prepared sushi.

LARA LEE

You said magic is just lunacy for
wild sentimentalists.

DUSTY JONES

I've always thought of myself as
one of the last, great romantics.

Lara smiles brilliantly.

LARA LEE

Me, too.

OLD CLIENT

I'll be damned. She smiles!

A cockroach scuttles across the table top. Lara's hand snatches up her sushi knife. The blade expertly flicks the insect into the air.

She sends it flying towards the doorway, where it lands. It scuttles out of sight into the street.

FIN.