

**R E F U G E**

by  
Mark Medoff

From a Story by Mark Medoff & Phil Treon

REFUGE 4

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REFUGE

Screenplay by Mark Medoff

Based on a Story by Mark Medoff & Phil Treon

TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. HOSPICE - DAY - DEMING, NM

A sign: "DEMING HOSPICE." We PUSH AT A WINDOW, travel through it, into...

INT. HOSPICE ROOM - DAY

AMELIA ONTIVEROS PHILIPS, 39, in scrubs, bathes the feet of a TERMINAL OLDER CHICANA, 80. Amelia SINGS "Rock of Ages" IN SPANISH.

AMELIA

"La roca de edades, hendidura para mí, me dejó ocultarme en tu..."

The woman's face doesn't work, but the eyes take comfort.

In AMELIA'S EYES, we see compassion for this woman's impending death morphing to some personal pain that turns her eyes to the light flooding the window.

EXT. CHARTER SCHOOL - DAY - LAS CRUCES, NM

The sign here says, "ALMA DE ARTES CHARTER SCHOOL." Again, A WINDOW that takes us into...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

DARRYL TRIPP, 24, sits on the edge of his desk, reading a student manuscript. He's impeccably attired in necktie, creased jeans and cowboy boots.

DARRYL (cont'd)

"Stubbled chin on his hands, like some bedrock on which to build a future, Charlito smiled, the gold tooth catching the hard winter light. And then he did something he hadn't in what seemed a lifetime: Charlie Medina laughed."

Darryl stares at the pages in his hand, so moved in some way that, for just a moment, he's lost.

Masking his hopes behind a wall of cool disinterest, the author, MIGUEL, 16, awaits his teacher's response.

DARRYL nods, tight-lipped; could mean many things. What's unmistakable is the envy in his eyes.

EXT. HOSPICE - DAY

Amelia exits, dialing her cell. It rings as she approaches her battered pick-up. Message.

JACK (V.O.)

It's Jack. Leave a message.

AMELIA

I'm calling to tell you what you told me to tell you: Come home so you don't die.

She flips the phone shut; stares at the SUN. WHITE OUT.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Amelia's truck smokes to a stop. Door sticks. She leans away and drives both feet into it. The door flies open and boomerangs back. She wallops the door again, avoids the recoil.

Outside, she slams the door with all her might.

INT. BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

She sits alone. Stares at the crucified Christ, as if trying to discern the true man. Quietly, she asks...

AMELIA

Really -- forgive?

O.C., the sound of a SIREN.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

A SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR streaks through a SANDSTORM of biblical fury. At the wheel, DEPUTY CAMILLE PORTILLO, 30.

INT. PATROL CAR - DAY

Deputy Portillo screams, almost as if she were having an orgasm. In fact, that's the case...because DEPUTY JACK PHILIPS, 40, rises up out of Camille's lap clutching her thong in his teeth.

EXT. DESERT PROPERTY - DAY

Camille skids to up beside an old RV. Through the dust: a partially framed house. The RV door opens. Amelia's there, still in her scrubs.

Jack rolls out of the patrol car, salutes Camille. Camille peels out, lending dust to dust...

...as Jack turns to Amelia with his megawatt smile and outstretched arms of the Christ-alike victim.

JACK

Pooh Bear!

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Wide to right of frame: the RV and partially framed house.

Wide to the left: A MAN, on a motorcycle, leather jacket added to his ensemble, aimed at that homestead. Camille passes with a wave, disappearing Darryl in dust.

EXT. RV - DAY

The RV, windows dark, is ghostly through the storm. END TITLES...as we PUSH IN and hear through a wall of grit...

JACK (O.C.)

You had any guts -- a single gut'd get the job done, Pooh Bear -- you'd pull that trigger!

A GUNSHOT! Jack howls like a deranged dog...

JACK (CONT'D)

Aaaaarroooooooooooooo!

...and gargles into silence.

INT. RV - DAY

No lights. On the bed, Jack lies under the covers except for one leg, trouser shoved up to reveal 6 inches of hairy, naked flesh above his boot. TRACK TO...

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

MIRROR: Amelia in bra, scrub pants, holds Jack's Glock 17, her face blood spattered. "Cristo es Dios" is tattooed above a breast.

A MOTORCYCLE O.C. She lunges at a window, cracks the blinds. Bars slat her face. The motorcycle goes silent. Just the storm and her out of control breathing.

EXT. RV - DAY

The Man has a stationery box under an arm and a helmet faceplate layered in dust. He flips up the visor: Darryl Trip. He KNOCKS. Nothing. He tries the door. It opens. He calls into the crack...

DARRYL

Hello? Anyone home? *Hola. Con su permiso? No estoy un bandido.*

Assuming an empty shelter in the storm, he enters. On a chair by the door, an open, upside down New Testament.

He un-helmets and shakes himself out. Sees he's made a mess on the floor. Spots a battery-operated HAND VAC attached to the galley. Puts the stationery box down.

He gets the vacuum, turns it on, and vacuums himself.

Bookshelf screwed to the galley: Gideon Bible, The Holy Bible, the New Living Translation, Union Prayer Book, Church Hymnal (The Red Book), 3 Left Behind novels, The House at Pooh Corner, and a ballet picture book.

He vacuums and peruses the books; his CELL PHONE RINGS. He squints at the I.D. Considers not answering but does.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Hey.

HELEN (V.O.)

Hiya.

EXT. COUNTY COURT HOUSE - DAY - LAS CRUCES, NM

HELEN KAUFMAN, 25, in business attire. She's not long from Brooklyn, has lost none of her accent.

HELEN  
What's that noise?

DARRYL  
Vacuum.

HELEN  
Why do you let me vacuum when you're just going to re-vacuum?

DARRYL  
I'll stop.

INTERCUT: INT. RV AND EXT. COURTHOUSE

He turns the vacuum off. He puts her ON SPEAKER, puts his phone down, continues along her bookcase.

HELEN  
I ran over for lunch, you weren't there, I ate some egg salad -- that wasn't for tonight, right?

DARRYL  
I hope you didn't touch the broccoli chiffon mold.

HELEN  
Figured you'd be there, only half day of school. Where were you?

DARRYL  
I repaved the parking lot.

HELEN  
Good for you.

Her attention is on a confab where 2 ATTORNEYS in cheap suits and cowboy boots flay (MOS) a YOUNG MAN, 28.

DARRYL  
Talked to Miguel forever.

HELEN  
Excellent. How was his story? Hold it.

The Young Man from above whispers in her ear.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Now they know I'm going to mop the floor  
with their \$150 Men's Wearhouse suits,  
they want to deal?

Darryl picks up the open New Testament, turns it over.

A passage streaked with red pen. We glimpse a few words.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Screw 'em -- no! Go, *vayáse*.

The Young Man goes up the steps to the Two Attorneys.

HELEN (CONT'D)

The *sheisters* from Noxious, Pompous, and  
Logorrhea think they're dealing with a  
*muchacha*.

DARRYL

Mm.

Darryl puts a finger to the open page, opens the flyleaf.

INSERT: FLYLEAF INSCRIPTION

SPANISH: *A mi ángel Ame en 13, "Él ese amor no, dios del  
entiende no; por Dios es amor." Su madre cariñosa.*

HELEN

Where were we?

DARRYL

Good story -- Miguel.

HELEN

You see what you've done for him?

DARRYL

Yeah, well...

HELEN

A kid I prosecuted 3 times.

DARRYL

Twice.

HELEN

Three times, Bumby.

DARRYL

Okay.

He replaces the New Testament as he found it.

HELEN  
Are you vacuuming again?

DARRYL  
No.

HELEN  
What's that noise?

DARRYL  
Sandstorm.

AT THE BOOKSHELF

He opens the overleaf of The House at Pooh Corner.

INSERT

"To Jack, my Eyeore, Let's turn "lummer" and mortar into a blessed HOME. Your Loving Pooh, Ame."

HELEN  
Where are you?

DARRYL  
Place...Desert road...Café. Have a salad.

HELEN  
Eat some protein, some legumes.

DARRYL  
I have a peanutbutter powerbar --

HELEN  
Eat a hamburger.

DARRYL  
Okay.

HELEN  
You don't have to eat the bun.

DARRYL  
I'll have a hamburger without a bun.

HELEN  
Get a pattie and a tomato...

DARRYL  
 (to his "waitress")  
 Yo, hold that salad; lemme have a  
 hamburger with all the trimmings.

HELEN  
 I wouldn't eat onion with all the faces  
 you gotta breathe on tonight.

DARRYL  
 (calling)  
 Hold the onions!

HELEN  
 So, the final count on entrees at my  
 office: 3 filets, 4 salmon, 2 veges.

DARRYL  
 (overlapping)  
 Three filets, 4 salmon, 2 vegetarian --

HELEN  
 Excuse me, Bumby: Café on which desert  
 road in what sandstorm?

DARRYL  
 Felt so good after I talked to Miguel,  
 took a ride a few miles west.

HELEN  
 Are you on that motorcycle in a  
 sandstorm?

He opens a cupboard, looks, closes, opens another.

DARRYL  
 Not at the --

HELEN  
 Oh, Darryl. How few miles?

DARRYL  
 Can't say, really.

HELEN  
 How long have you been gone?

DARRYL  
 Few minutes.  
 (his watch)  
 Fifteen...Uh -- ninety.

HELEN  
 Bumby, that's an hour and a half.

DARRYL  
Nah -- well, maybe.

HELEN  
We got company in 4 hours. And you gotta  
get the filets and salmon.

The 2 Cowboy Attorneys try to stare her down. She shoots  
them a finger. One gives back. She fires a pair.

DARRYL  
Okay, wind stopped; hitting the road.

HELEN  
You haven't eaten.

DARRYL  
(calling)  
Lemme have burger that to go!

A BAILIFF steps out the door...

HELEN  
You're not going to eat a hamburger on a  
moving motorcycle.

BAILIFF  
We're back, ladies and gentlemen.

HELEN  
Okay, we're back. Love ya! Helmet!

INT. RV - DAY

She's gone before he can finish his...

DARRYL  
I lo...

He shuts his phone. Adjusts his necktie...and suddenly  
yanks the knot fiercely, his eyes bulging. He chokes,  
but continues what appears an effort to hang himself.

A LIGHT goes on.

Darryl turns to a woman in bra and scrubs. He lets his  
tie go, coughs, gasps for breath.

AMELIA  
What are you doing here, mister?

DARRYL  
¿Qué?

AMELIA

You heard me.

DARRYL

Vaciado de la ciudad, tomé una vuelta incorrecta.

AMELIA

Wrong turn...city dump....What's in the box?

DARRYL

¿Qué?

AMELIA

Please don't make me repeat myself when you hear me the first time. And why are you speaking Spanish when I'm speaking English?

DARRYL

Hmph. Stationery.

AMELIA

Box of blank stationery?

DARRYL

Figuratively speaking.

AMELIA

So, headed for the dump, you drove 90 miles off course with blank stationery?

She moves a step, disclosing the heap on the bed. He gives the heap a good look.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Don't look at that, look at me.

It's not easy, but he does as ordered.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

This is private property. Legally, I can shoot you.

The weapon comes from her thigh, aimed at Darryl's chest.

DARRYL

I won't say anything.

AMELIA

About what?

DARRYL

Whatever you don't want me to say  
anything about.

AMELIA

You don't know what happened here.

DARRYL

And don't need to.

AMELIA

But you think you know.

DARRYL

Lie to me, I'll swear to it.

AMELIA

Minute ago you were ready to hang your...  
Maldígalo! I gotta take you with me.

DARRYL

I'm sorry, you...

She throws him the keys to the RV.

AMELIA

Drive.

DARRYL

No, what? No, see, I...Jesus Christ,  
lady, can't we just pretend --

AMELIA

Don't say "Jesus Christ" like that! Say,  
damn, poop, hey, mother-humping-son-of-a-  
burrito, but not "Jesus Christ" as an  
expletive! I gotta go. You comin'?

The Glock is a mighty, silent arbiter of scheduling.

DARRYL

Why not.

He gets in the driver's seat. She slides into the  
passenger seat. He keys the ignition. Grinding. He  
tries ago. More grinding.

EXT. RV - DAY

The hood rises. Darryl chunks some grease off the  
battery cables. He and Amelia yell against the wind.

DARRYL  
Stand there.

AMELIA  
Why?

DARRYL  
Sand.

She does. He spins the wing nut off the carburetor.

AMELIA  
Got a name?

DARRYL  
Mr. Tripp. Tripp. Darryl. Darryl  
Tripp. You?

AMELIA  
Guessing you're from Hollywood or New  
York with those cowboy boots. What're  
they made of, Mr. Tripp -- some  
endangered reptile?

DARRYL  
These, no, these are purebred Labrador.

AMELIA  
What line of work you in?

DARRYL  
I'm a Language Arts teacher.

AMELIA  
That what we used to call an English  
teacher?

DARRYL  
The current ornate appellation to deepen  
our self-esteem.

AMELIA  
Was that American you were speaking?

DARRYL  
English teacher, yeah. And you...  
(reading her nametag)  
...Amelia? Is it Doctor Amelia, Nurse  
Amelia, Cafeteria Custodian Amelia?

Her eyes drift to the partial house. Darryl follows.

DARRYL (CONT'D)  
Want to crank it up?

It's a moment before her eyes turn from the house to him.

EXT. RV - DAY - AERIAL (FEW MINUTES LATER)

From up here, we can see the highway in the distance, the RV assaying a checkerboard of hardpan roads toward it. Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty" is stuck, repeats the same chord like a bad cough.

INT. RV - DAY (TRAVELING)

THE DASH: PLASTIC JESUS bobbles. Amelia palm-slams the stereo. "Sleeping Beauty" still stuck. She kicks the dash; Plastic Jesus flies, "Sleeping Beauty" plays properly.

She grabs Plastic Jesus, licks his suction cup, slams him back in place. He bobbles.

"Sleeping Beauty" sticks.

She palm-slams the "Power" knob, killing the music; heaves herself out of the passenger seat. Rushes at the back of the RV, grabs Jack and shakes him like a leaf.

His head pops out from under the covers and his TOUPEE flips up in front, remains glued down in back.

THROUGH THE MIRROR, Darryl watches her lunatic behavior.

She grabs some red licorice from a tub, takes her seat again, yanks off a hank of licorice.

AMELIA

Who you teach, Mr. Tripp?

DARRYL

No one, really.

AMELIA

How's that work?

DARRYL

"The children who take up space in my classroom despise the hours of learning. Many can't speak the *lingua franca*; Spanish, Spanglish, Ebonics, plus myriad inarticulate manifestations of rampaging hormones. And I lack the ability to overcome their limitations, defined by putrid and pestilential TV programs and electronic, polyphonic chaos."

AMELIA

Sounds like you wrote that up beforehand.

DARRYL

Like to have a little prepared text for the occasional "situation." Kidnapping, I guess. Technically. At this juncture.

AMELIA

Not exactly what I hoped the Lord had in mind for me, sunrise today.

DARRYL

You can still drop me at the highway and we'll call it a lift.

AMELIA

Know what I think, Mr. Tripp? I think I don't want to be alone.

DARRYL

You got him.

AMELIA

He was never much of a companion; better now, but still not that great.

She roars back to where a BASKETBALL sits in a FRUIT BOWL. She hurls herself at the DOOR, OPENS it, and while the RV moves onward, kicks the basketball out!

EXT. DESERT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

In SLOW MOTION the basketball ascends, falls, bounces.

INT. RV - DAY (TRAVELING)

She opens and hands him a bottle of water.

DARRYL

Thanks.

AMELIA

Lady friend a lawyer?

DARRYL

Brand new Assistant District Attorney. Looking to make her rep. I suggest you hire good --

AMELIA

Where's your cell phone?

He nods at his jacket. She gets the phone...and, with it, a plastic pill bottle. She reads the label.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Why you taking this?

DARRYL

Dad thinks I need it.

AMELIA

I hope Dad's a doctor.

DARRYL

Top ten since Hippocrates.

AMELIA

Why?

DARRYL

Borderline manic-depressive.

AMELIA

"Borderline"?

DARRYL

Story of my life -- neither fish nor fowl. Not a brisket, not quite zucchini.

AMELIA

This covers a big dose of depression.

DARRYL

So, I'm guessing you're not a janitor.

AMELIA

I assume you took it this morning.

DARRYL

Be crazy not to -- reckless.

(off her look)

Matter of fact, I didn't.

AMELIA

Why not?

DARRYL

Intervention. Rehab.

AMELIA

Who performed the intervention?

DARRYL

(chugging his water)

Doc Darryl.

AMELIA

See where it says: "Don't stop taking this medication without consulting the prescribing physician"?

DARRYL

Unilateral decision.

She shakes a single pill in her palm, holds it out.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Don't want it.

AMELIA

Take it, Mr. Tripp.

DARRYL

Please do not speak to driver while vehicle is in motion.

She presses the pill at him. He slaps the pill away. She shakes out another. He grabs the bottle, dumps its contents (24 pills) into his mouth and chews.

She grabs the wheel. They swerve! He stomps the brakes.

EXT. RV - DAY

They recoil as the RV skids to a stop. Amelia shoves the RV into "park." She climbs onto Darryl's lap, gun in hand, tries to pry his jaws open. He chews. She pinches his nostrils shut. He can't breathe, but he won't open.

INT. RV - DAY

Darryl tries to open the driver's side window.

AMELIA

Do not spit that out the window!

She tickles him with the gun, strangling his nostrils.

Finally, he chokes, gags, laughs, and spits the partially masticated mess all over her. She drops into her seat.

She scrapes gobs of soggy pills off herself, gathers a good bit of the munched medication back into the bottle.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Why'd you stop your medication?

DARRYL

Woke up dead last week, decided to see if  
the un-medicated state would kill me.

AMELIA

Take a left onto that two-lane.

He drives.

She collects his upended "STATIONERY." We get a close  
enough look at a page or two to suspect it's fiction.

She smooths out several wrinkled pages, reading.

DARRYL

You mind not reading that.

She shoves the manuscript into its box.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Darryl turns east. A CELL PHONE RINGS O.C.

INT. RV - DAY - TRAVELING

Amelia finds the ringing phone. Looks at the I.D.

AMELIA

Helen.

DARRYL

Take a message.

AMELIA

(handing him the phone)  
Put it on speaker.

DARRYL

(answering, on speaker)  
Hi there.

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

She's outside a courtroom walking, us with her.

INTERCUT: INT. HALLWAY AND INT. RV

In the RV, the old highway stretches ahead.

HELEN  
Where are you?

DARRYL  
On the road.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Helen into the PARKING LOT, us with her.

HELEN  
You sound like you're inside something.

DARRYL  
My helmet. Why are you calling?

HELEN  
Want me to go to the market for you?

DARRYL  
You have no facility for picking fish.  
Okay, cop coming up behind me, gotta go.

Amelia snaps her head to her side mirror.

THROUGH MIRROR

No cop car behind them.

RESUME INTERCUTTING

Amelia realizes Darryl just wants off the phone. He flips his phone shut.

She studies him.

DARRYL (CONT'D)  
What?

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE PARKING LOT - DAY

Helen approaches her car. Leaning against it is a handsome Latino, 40, who, as it happens, goes by the single name RIVERA. She stops, keeping some distance.

He smiles with extremely white and even teeth.

INT. RV - DAY - TRAVELING

Amelia takes the cell phone from Darryl.

AMELIA  
Entertaining tonight?

DARRYL  
Engagement party.

AMELIA  
Whose?

DARRYL  
Ours.

AMELIA  
What time?

DARRYL  
Seven -- barring the unforeseen.

AMELIA  
Thing is, the cops aren't taking me.

DARRYL  
Don't sweat it. I can miss it.

AMELIA  
Miss your engagement party?

DARRYL  
Why not?

AMELIA  
Not to take your side against me, but why  
would you want to do that?

DARRYL  
Get engaged anytime. How many hi-jacking  
opportunities does a guy --

AMELIA  
Women bought dresses, men got haircuts!  
Folks hired babysitters! Ladies at some  
flower shop shredded their fingers  
clipping ends off roses! Somebody  
planned a menu and spent hours chopping  
and mincing -- for you, Mr. Tripp!

DARRYL  
Hey! I planned the stinking menu! I  
clipped the roses! I chopped and --

AMELIA  
A week ago you get off your medication!  
Today you decide to dump stationery and  
commit suicide by necktie!

DARRYL  
 Hey, no offense, but none of that's your  
 goddamn business!

AMELIA  
 Do not take the Lord's name in --

DARRYL  
 Screw the Lord, lady! Seriously -- screw  
 Her!

She smacks him, jolting him.

DARRYL (CONT'D)  
 Lay it to me, oh fundamentalist  
 freakazoid, for God is love!

AMELIA  
 You skunk, you pull over!

EXT. RV - DAY

Darryl flies at us OUT THE DOOR and lands in a heap.

AMELIA (cont'd)  
 Get up! You just bust in and read the  
 writing in people's...

She slams him into the side of the RV.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - RV

She propels him into THE BATHROOM.

Darryl hits the wall of the cramped space. She slams the  
 travel preventer (a sturdy locking device) shut.

INTERCUT THE TWO OF THEM

She reins herself in with many lassoes.

AMELIA  
 Look, I didn't...Hitting's not...

DARRYL  
 No, that wasn't your...

AMELIA  
 ...But you just can't...

DARRYL

...Forget it, I shouldn't have...

He stares at the dusty face in the MIRROR, wondering not just what he's doing here but what he's doing now that he is here.

AMELIA

You need anything?

DARRYL

I can't seem to find the room service menu.

AMELIA

Okay, don't talk.

(staring at Jack)

"Pondrán al asesino seguramente a la muerte." [Numbers 16]

DARRYL

What murderer will be put to death?

AMELIA

Quiet, Mr. Tripp!

DARRYL

Thought maybe quiet time was over.

AMELIA

No, it's not!

She heaves Jack over; his toupee flaps. She digs for his wallet, ripping the pocket to hell when the wallet won't exit to her liking. Two bucks. Slams the wallet at Jack like a missile. Tears his cell phone off his belt.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Mr. Tripp, we need gas. Gimme your wallet.

She unlatches and opens the bathroom door.

Darryl reaches for his back pocket...and lunges for the automatic. They wrestle. And: BANG!

The GUNSHOT shocks him. He stumbles, grabs for purchase but gets only a fistful of Jack. The 2 men topple off the bed; Darryl ends up under Jack (sees Jack wears the uniform of some sort of law enforcement officer).

Darryl wrestles Jack over but their combined momentum puts Jack right back on top, face to face with Darryl.

Darryl battles, rolls, heaves, and finally sheds Jack.

Caught among the chaos of pain, fear and fascination, Darryl careens off walls and counters, but as she blocks the door with her gun, inevitably runs out of landscape.

The Glock looks immense in the fist of this woman on the edge of a madness as delicate as his.

She grabs Jack's handcuffs. She cuffs one wrist...

AMELIA (CONT'D)

No more hitting! No more fighting!  
Commode!

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

...and hooks the other to the pipe under the sink.

DARRYL

I don't feel so hot.

She pulls his prescription bottle from her pocket, and with the tip of her little fingernail, digs a semi-moist dose off the salvaged half-chewed slab.

AMELIA

Suck and swallow. Don't bite.

She slips her pinky into the corner of his mouth. Faces close, Darryl does as he's told.

DARRYL

What's that perfume?

AMELIA

Sweat.

DARRYL

What is sweat?

AMELIA

(digging his wallet out)  
Water, ammonia, salt.

She closes the travel preventer. Opens his wallet. Pulls his credit cards and cash...

INTERCUT: INT. LIVING AREA AND BATHROOM - DAY

DARRYL

Attractive single white male in intimate relationship with toilet seeks plucky, rescue-minded individual. Smokers acceptable. Ha-ha. Darryl Tripp, ladies and gentlemen.

PHOTO: Darryl and Helen. She studies it, puts it back.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Funny thing happened to me on the way to the hostage-taking today. Miguel, kid I kissed off on the basis of his ludicrous attire and somnolent eyes before I'd read a word he'd written...

AMELIA

What's that mean -- "somnolent"?

DARRYL

"Soporific." Ha-ha -- Darryl Tripp, everyone. "Sleepy, disengaged."

She gets in the driver's seat.

His head drops as he gives himself up to exhaustion.

She picks up the STATIONERY BOX, looks for someplace to park it...but instead, takes the MANUSCRIPT out.

INSERT - TITLE PAGE

BLACK DOGS by Darryl Tripp.

Amelia props the manuscript on the steering wheel and puts the RV into gear.

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY - DAY

She steers the RV back onto the roadway.

EXT. DARRYL'S HOUSE - DAY

A blouse opening, nice lingerie underneath. A hand goes inside the bra...pulls out one FALSIE, then another.

Helen hurries from her car, multi-tasking: Briefcase between her teeth, she yanks her blouse free, unzips her skirt, keys the door, talks on her cellphone...

HELEN

I quashed the deal because those buffoons  
thought if they simply...

INT. DARRYL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The room is festooned with crepe, flowers, balloons.

HELEN

Darryl..?

Entering, Helen tosses the briefcase, sheds her blouse,  
drops her skirt to her instep and flips it up into her  
hand. She fires the ensemble at the WASHING MACHINE.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You do that, sir, you make me look like --  
Bumby! -- an idiot, so how 'bout don't.

In her underwear, she disappears into the bedroom.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Thank you, sir, you won't be sorry.

She steps out of the bedroom, hair going up in a  
scrunchy, phone flipping shut. She muses on the silence.

INT. OLD GAS STATION - DAY (DUSK)

We TRACK down an aisle. Reach the WOMEN'S RESTROOM;  
stare at the closed door a moment.

The DOOR OPENS and Amelia exits in a Hawaiian shirt and a  
short wig a different color than her own hair.

A LOCAL FARMER, 40, catches her eyes, smiles at her.  
Absently, she nods. His eyes follow her.

EXT. OLD GAS STATION - DAY (DUSK)

An ABANDONED RV. FIND Amelia at the rear, switching her  
NM license plate for the junker's Wyoming plate.

LEGS enter frame, a shadow falls over her. She looks up.  
The Farmer who smiled at her stares down, still smiling.

FARMER

Qué pasa, chica?

AMELIA

Just keep walking, please.

FARMER

Cost ya -- keep me walkin', walkin' away  
from this bein' what it is 'n all.

AMELIA

Are you soliciting me, sir?

FARMER

You smiled at me.

AMELIA

I nodded at you.

FARMER

Same thing.

She indicates a cross tattooed on the Farmer's arm.

AMELIA

Are you a Christian, sir?

FARMER

Goddamn right. That don't mean I don't  
get me a fair deal for service rendered --  
like I don't say nothin' 'bout you  
stealin' license --

AMELIA

You disappoint me, sir.

FARMER

Yeah, well, join the group. My wife, she  
thinks she's Queen Shit and I'm --

The Glock's in the Farmer's face.

AMELIA

Do not besmirch your wife, and here's our  
deal: I get the information off your  
driver's license and drive away. In the  
eye for an eye tradition of our mutual  
faith, you call the cops, I track you  
down and dismember you. That seem fair?

The Farmer contemplates the proposed scales of justice.

INT. RV - NIGHT - TRAVELING

The seat is piled with manuscript. Tchaikovsky plays.  
Amelia drives and reads. Darryl's cell phone RINGS in  
his jacket. Amelia doesn't even glance at the jacket.

EXT. DARRYL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Half a dozen cars. NINE GUESTS visible through a front window. A POLICE CAR pulls up, LIGHTS FLASHING. Helen comes outside. Guests gather in the window, among them the one-named Rivera and his EXOTIC WIFE, 38.

Helen meets the OFFICER, 30, at the curb.

HELEN

So, Chris, I think I'm missing my nudnick future husband. How d'ya like that? I don't.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

We PUSH AT THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING, identifying it as located in Las Cruces...

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

All units, Las Cruces, West Texas, ears on. APB for white, Anglo male, Darryl Tripp, 27...

INT. DISPATCH CENTER - DAY

An espresso steams from a high quality machine.

FEMALE DISPATCHER, 50, sets her demitasse next to her needle-point of her 2 peculiar looking grandchildren.

FEMALE DISPATCHER

...last heard from at 2:45 this afternoon, reportedly from a café somewhere between Deming and Silver City. For those of you topographically challenged, there is no café between Deming and Silver.

INT. RV - NIGHT - COUNTRY ROAD

The POLICE SCANNER crackles.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Mr. Tripp is presumed to be driving a Kawasaki 1600 Classic motorcycle, which if you're wondering, is a fabulous, steroidal stud of a machine.

Amelia stares at the scanner.

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The RV drifts left. A CAR HORN!

INT. RV - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Amelia yanks the wheel. The car streaks by on her left.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Darryl jolts awake.

DARRYL

Whoa -- doing up there?

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Amelia pulls over and stops short of a lighted house.

INTERCUT INT. BATHROOM AND INT. COCKPIT

She puts the manuscript aside.

DARRYL

Where are we?

She opens the travel preventer. He looks up at her from the floor. He gets a gander at the wig.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Color and a style or you kill a rat for that wig?

AMELIA

I read 62 pages of your story.

DARRYL

You...I told you not to!

AMELIA

But I did.

DARRYL

What kind of Christian illicitly reads a...You like it? Don't answer that, I don't wanna...Do you? Don't tell me.

AMELIA

You want to know or you don't?

DARRYL

Yes.

AMELIA

Does anybody write about anything but --

DARRYL

Stop, I changed my mind.

She opens the door, steps down, looks around, stretches.

INTERCUT: EXT. SMALL HOUSE AND INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The small house looks warm. MUSIC emanates from the house, and now LAUGHTER. She stares.

DARRYL

Does anybody write about anything but what?

AMELIA

Cops with damaged psyches?

DARRYL

No, every writer in the...It's a genre book, for Chr...Just say you hate it.

AMELIA

Can't there be something between liking and hating?

DARRYL

No, God, no!

Absently, she picks up a few pieces of roadside garbage.

AMELIA

The way you describe how people look and where they are, that's like poetry.

DARRYL

So, other than the story, the characters and the dialogue, the book is great.

She picks up some more roadside garbage.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Go ahead, get it said.

AMELIA

You sure?

DARRYL

No, I'm not sure, but do it!

Now the laughter in the house turns to GASPING.

AMELIA

In a minute.

She moves toward the house with its homey sounds, feel.

DARRYL

Oh, sure, I can wait. I mean I only  
spent the last two and a half years...

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

His voice fades as she creeps to a window and peers in.

HER POV

A MAN AND WOMAN have sex, the Woman on top...and he...he  
chokes her. As her eyes begin to roll in her head, he  
lets go, and asphyxia averted, she laughs wildly again.

AMELIA

Turns her back, rolling to the side of the window.  
Breathing hard, she stares out and...

FLASHCUT - INT. RV - NIGHT

AMELIA'S EYES roll in her head. Their are fingers around  
her neck. She gasps.

Amelia rides Jack. Jack chokes Amelia. Terrified, she  
tries to knock his hands away...then get at his eyes, but  
his powerful forearms keep her at bay. She slumps  
unconscious onto him. He continues to pump even as he  
slaps her face, gently at first, but then once hard. Her  
eyes spring open and he howls.

RESUME - EXT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

As she approaches the RV, Darryl comes back at her...

DARRYL

Told me I had to write everyday for at  
least an hour for ten years before I  
should expect anyone but my mother to  
care. Ten years!

INTERCUT: INT. LIVING AREA AND BATHROOM - NIGHT

Entering, she discards the litter, squirts liquid sanitizer on her hands as...

AMELIA

Black Dog isn't a good title.

DARRYL

I was hoping but couldn't be sure.

AMELIA

It's generic.

DARRYL

Wow -- "generic." You come on with that I-dropped-out-of-high-school-to-work-at-the-chile-packing-plant-at-14-thing, but you're sneaky smart, girl.

AMELIA

I should stop.

DARRYL

No, I should. Go on. I'm always a little cranky when I wake up handcuffed to a sink.

AMELIA

The detective -- Mason -- would be better if I believed any cops are that sensitive.

DARRYL

Let me etch that in the gunk on your sink: All cops are insensitive. This is a fictitious character!

AMELIA

You want me to believe him?

DARRYL

Yes, of course I want you to believe him, but because I hate you for not loving him, I have to continue to be petulant and childish and really, really, really childish! How about Grace?

She stares out at the house, inside of which...what?

AMELIA

I'm going to open some sardines.

DARRYL

Don't use the canned fish deflection on me!

She opens sardines, gets some crackers as...

AMELIA

Anna's a man's view of a woman, a man who watched too many movies about good looking, tough, sarcastic chicas written by men don't know zip about women.

DARRYL

Tee-shirts and bumper stickers on order: "Knows zip about women!"

AMELIA

What I'm wondering is, if you set off to trash your story, why'd you drive 90 miles out of the way, then seek refuge?

DARRYL

Because. The wind. Was blowing.

AMELIA

It's not a sign of weakness to seek refuge.

DARRYL

Man, I wish I had more etching room on this sink.

HER POV AT SMALL HOUSE

The front door opens and the WOMAN is ejected. She stumbles to her car and drives off. In the LIGHTED DOORWAY, the Man stands naked.

THE MAN

He yawns, scratches, spits.

EXT. RV - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Amelia takes a two-handed stance and fires three shots at the doorway, sending the Man diving for cover.

DARRYL

What! What's that? What are you doing?

Quickly, she gets back in the RV.

AMELIA  
Coyote eating a cat.

She hops in the driver's seat, cranks the engine and...

DARRYL  
No -- really?

EXT. SMALL HOUSE PORCH - NIGHT

...skids onto the road. We watch the RV go. The Man, teeth chattering, whimpering, steps to edge of frame.

INTERCUT INT. RV - NIGHT & INT. BATHROOM (MINUTES LATER)

She drives, lost in memory and fury. She forks a sardine into her mouth. Half-gags, dumps the sardine back into the tin, shoves it into the console. She forces herself off herself.

AMELIA  
I'm sorry I don't love your story.

DARRYL  
Please, not pity. It's pathetic enough when people aspire to things they're incapable of achieving.

His CELL PHONE RINGS again. He glances at his watch.

DARRYL (CONT'D)  
Having so much fun at the engagement party, they just noticed I'm not there.

AMELIA  
It rang 11 times while you were asleep.

DARRYL  
Hmph, I usually wake up every time someone farts on Mars.

EXT. STRIP MALL - NIGHT

She pulls in and around back.

INT. RV - NIGHT - BACK OF MALL

She opens the travel preventer.

AMELIA

Can you drive?

DARRYL

You save the cat?

She glances at him as she squats. She un-cuffs him. Glock in one hand, she stands and offers the other.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

How do I know where your hands have been?

He takes her hand; she pulls him up. He teeters...

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Whoa.

...leans on her...she skewers...and he spins her into him and rips the gun from her.

AMELIA

That was dirty, I was being nice!

DARRYL

Yeah, I feel terrible. Now, I'll debark here and you can --

She grabs for the gun, the gun flies into the galley.

CLOSE: The gun...each other, eyes to eyes...

They dive, collide, crawl, grab, roll, wrestle. The weapon squirts further away.

AMELIA

Stop! Let me...Don't make me hurt you!

DARRYL

Did I fail to mention that 3 times...

AMELIA

Cut it out!

DARRYL

...I was the last guy cut from my high school wrestling team?

AMELIA

I can't let you go to the...

They struggle up onto their knees...

DARRYL

And nobody's better on his knees. Top 5  
in the country senior year in groveling  
before inaccessible women.

He topples her, climbs on top, pins her. Her response to  
being powerless seems startlingly real.

AMELIA

Get off, you're scaring me. Please.

DARRYL

Yeah, right, I'm sure I'm scaring --

AMELIA

Please, let me go. You're suffo...

DARRYL

Stop fighting and I'll stop.

AMELIA

I'll stop. See, I'm not fighting. I'm  
trying not to...Just get...

She's terrified. She quakes and starts to cry quietly.

DARRYL

Talk about dirty....Okay, okay, sshh.

He dismounts her.

AMELIA

Sorry...Very sorry...I don't mean to...

DARRYL

No, no, that's...

AMELIA

But I...That was just...

DARRYL

...God knows what you've been...

AMELIA

....a little too familiar.

Their eyes lock and he thinks he reads a truth in hers.  
He steps back, giving her room. She gets to her feet.

DARRYL

I'll say bye-bye now.

AMELIA

You can't call the cops on me.

DARRYL  
You kidnapped me.

AMELIA  
No cops.

DARRYL  
No promises.

AMELIA  
That's not gonna work. I need a promise.

She takes a step toward him. He thrusts the gun at her.

DARRYL  
I can't guarantee, even if I aim for a  
flesh wound, I won't hit a vital organ.

AMELIA  
If you really might shoot, can I make a  
suggestion?

DARRYL  
Lemme hear it first.

AMELIA  
Take the safety off.

He glances at the Glock for what might be the "safety"...

The glance is time enough for her to snatch the weapon.  
Gripped two-handed, she points it at his face.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
Glock 17 has 3 safeties, Mr. Tripp.

DARRYL  
Truly, irremediably, I'm a gullible,  
gutless son of a bunny rabbit.

AMELIA  
I can't let you go. Drive.

Open handcuff dangling, he gets into the driver's seat.

DARRYL  
Dad wouldn't let me hunt. Only kid of my  
generation can't field strip a mule deer.  
Or tell a Glock from a water pistol.

AMELIA  
Seatbelt.

He buckles up. She cuffs his right hand to the steering wheel. She keys the ignition, head tilted toward him.

DARRYL  
Need to do your roots.

AMELIA  
Can you see the gray?

DARRYL  
No.

AMELIA  
You can.  
(buckling her seat belt)  
Foot on the brake?

DARRYL  
Yes, Ame, my foot's on the brake.

AMELIA  
Don't call me Ame. How do you know...

He presses the brake; she puts the shift in "Drive."

EXT. SMALL MALL - NIGHT

The RV pulls around the edge of the end of the building.

AMELIA  
Turn signal.

Darryl turns on the blinker and accelerates.

INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

The RV rumbles back onto the old road.

DARRYL  
I shouldn't have said that about your hair.

AMELIA  
Forget it. It's dumb to pretend I'm what I'm not anymore.

DARRYL  
How'd he scare you? Threats, or did he --

AMELIA  
Speed limit, please.

She punches on the CD player. "Serenade for Strings."

DARRYL  
Wouldn't take you for a Tchaikovsky fan.

AMELIA  
Stop showin' off.

DARRYL  
Identifying Tchaikovsky is --

AMELIA  
Yeah, and you know it.

DARRYL  
Fine, you're right!

AMELIA  
I am!

DARRYL  
I agreed with you!

AMELIA  
Reluctantly!

Like bickering spouses, they glare and retreat. Drive.

DARRYL  
You dance?

AMELIA  
Once. Why'd you say that?

DARRYL  
Well, first clue, you're playing famous  
ballet --

AMELIA  
That I don't look like the Tchaikovsky  
type. Why do people judge like that?

DARRYL  
Semiotics, signs. The unspoken  
linguistics of posture, apparel...

AMELIA  
More showin' off.

DARRYL  
Incessant compensation for my feelings  
of...What happened to the dancer?

AMELIA

Best laid plans of mice and men.

DARRYL

Always wanted to be the guy who lifts the ballerina over his head and makes it look like he's hefting a pencil.

AMELIA

Who said that -- Shakespeare?

DARRYL

Hefting a pencil -- I don't think so.

AMELIA

Best laid plans of mice and men.

DARRYL

I answer, you'll say I'm showing off.

AMELIA

You know the answer?

DARRYL

Yeah.

AMELIA

Liar.

DARRYL

Robert Burns. But Burns said "schemes." "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men"...Can I assume you formulated a well-laid scheme while I was sleeping?

AMELIA

Couple.

DARRYL

Any of 'em involve the disposal of what's-his-name back there?

AMELIA

Jack.

DARRYL

As a health care professional, I'm guessing you have a good idea when Jack's decomposing corpse will start to funk.

She stares out the window.

AMELIA

What's the rest?

DARRYL

Of?

AMELIA

"Best laid schemes..."

DARRYL

"The best laid schemes 'o Mice and Men  
oft go awry,/And leave us nothing but  
grief and pain,/For promised joy!"

AMELIA

Mm.

DARRYL

Husband or boyfriend?

AMELIA

Husband.

DARRYL

You know he wore a toupee when you met?

AMELIA

No.

DARRYL

Kids?

AMELIA

He had 2 kids by his first wife.

DARRYL

You break their mother and father up?

AMELIA

If not, I made it impossible for 'em to  
get back together.

DARRYL

Didn't want kids of your own?

FLASHBACK - EXT. DESERT PROPERTY - DAY

Amelia and Jack, a happier time, walking the land against  
the setting sun, she pointing, gesticulating, building.

AMELIA (V.O.)

We bought that piece of land back there  
to build our intended family a proper  
house...home.

FLASHBACK - INT. BEDROOM - DAY (SOME DAYS LATER)

Boxes on the bed, Amelia sorts JUNK.

AMELIA (V.O.)

Four years off the Pill, still no babies.  
Getting ready to move onto the land, live  
in the RV, start building...

She finds something folded several times; she unfolds it.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm cleaning out our rent house, I find  
Jack's medical records from back in the  
day.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

DARRYL

Vasectomy.

AMELIA

Two years before we laid eyes.

DARRYL

Should've left him.

AMELIA

Really? And gone where, Mr. Tripp?

DARRYL

Nurse shortage. Guatemala. Snake bite  
kit. No ties.

AMELIA

You think that's pretty appealing -- no  
ties?

DARRYL

Long run, no. Intolerable. What'd you  
do when you found out?

FLASHBACK - EXT. AMELIA/JACK'S FORMER BACKYARD - DAY

The house is pinned on both sides; their bare yard is in  
the lap of the house over the cinder block back fence.

Amelia holds that unfolded piece of paper in her lap.  
Jack stands in his uniform.

JACK

Figured I told you, you'd leave me.

AMELIA

It's fraud, Jack, what you did.

JACK

I couldn't not have you, Pooh.

AMELIA

And you couldn't've bought that property without my savings.

JACK

Are you suggesting...

AMELIA

Or gone to law school at night without...

JACK

You think I'd use you that way?

AMELIA

...our combined salaries and my great good will.

JACK

I, too, am a Christian, Ame, and you must not accuse me of that sorta chicanery, for that is not possible. Now, you ask me in the name of Christ Jesus to forgive you those thoughts.

He hovers, hulks, the threat altogether formidable. Stunned by it, she has no words...

JACK (CONT'D)

Ask me to forgive you, Amelia. Now!

AMELIA

Forgive me, Jack.

JACK

Of course, darlin'.

He hooks a forefinger into her bra and yanks her to him, holds it off a few inches, waiting for her to kiss him. After a moment, she takes the cue and leans to his lips.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

THUNDER rolls in the distance. "Serenade for Strings" plays on. LIGHTNING in the distance.

AMELIA

Go to the ocean.

DARRYL  
Sorry. You'll...

AMELIA  
I love the ocean. Take him there.

DARRYL  
Which ocean?

AMELIA  
Brownsville.

DARRYL  
Texas?

AMELIA  
Mm.

DARRYL  
Not to confuse matters, but Brownsville  
is the Gulf, and from where we started,  
the Pacific would've been closer.

AMELIA  
It's salty, isn't it?

DARRYL  
If it's salt you're after, let's buy a  
box of Morton's, fill the sink, give Jack  
absolution and dumpster him.

AMELIA  
You're very funny.

DARRYL  
Oh yes.

AMELIA  
I haven't laughed in a long time.

DARRYL  
You haven't laughed.

AMELIA  
I went there once -- the Pacific. Mama  
stood in line at 4 in the morning, got us  
tickets to that TV show.

DARRYL  
Those are hard to get.

AMELIA  
The guest that night was What's-Her-Name,  
the Spanish actress.

DARRYL

She's great.

AMELIA

Deserved better.

DARRYL

Won an Oscar, didn't she?

AMELIA

My mama.

DARRYL

What happened to her?

AMELIA

My father.

DARRYL

Men happen.

AMELIA

I made out a long time it was all my dad's fault that she...she rotted, because he had no ambition but pretended to be a great white missionary, living off Jesus and desperate, poor brown folks' faith. "Beloveds, if God so loved us that he gave his only begotten Son, oughtn't we also to love one another?" Yeah, right. But it was me too. More maybe -- me. She loved me best. And I...Strikes me at this moment that...

DARRYL

What?

AMELIA

...she embarrassed me, trying to ingratiate herself with white people. Worked at Dillard's ladies department 20 years...Mmph. She knew, didn't she?

DARRYL

Knew?

AMELIA

That I didn't esteem her, despite all her efforts. Because she put up with an abusive man who was on Earth the wrath of God. How could she be so shallow? There are diseases we call virulent, Mr. Tripp. My ole man was one and me, I'm another.

He glances at her, far away. He drives. Then asks...

DARRYL

Did you murder your husband?

AMELIA

Not sure. Tell you this for certain,  
though: I chose him.

FLASHBACK - INT. COUNTRY BAR - NIGHT

Jack is dressed in basketball uniform ("Law Dawgs").  
COUNTRY MUSIC throbs; COUPLES dance at their backs.

JACK

Well, Nurse, you're just gonna have to  
come to the court pret'near immediately  
and play me one on one, 10 buckets, make-  
it-take-it.

AMELIA

Oh now, I don't know. I hear tell you're  
a hoops hustler, Deputy Philips.

JACK

Oh now, not a hustler, Nurse, surely.  
Just a man knows what he can do.

He strikes a mighty man pose and gives her quite a smile.

AMELIA

I'm bowled over, sir.

JACK

But not in love yet?

AMELIA

Close, but then we've only just met.

JACK

I come dribblin' in here, behold you  
dancin' with some three-footed doofus.

AMELIA

Actually, deputy, he's an orthopedist.

JACK

Now, is that contagious mouth to mouth,  
or is that just folks talkin'?

She laughs a lovely laugh.

JACK (CONT'D)

So, I was to ask you to dance, I wouldn't be in some grave danger of catchin' nothin'.

AMELIA

Certainly not so long as you didn't put your mouth on me.

JACK

What if I did.

AMELIA

Don't.

The ORTHOPEDIST approaches with a drink for her.

ORTHOPEDIST

Excuse me, we're together.

Jack tosses the ball to the doctor and offers his hand to Amelia. She debates a moment, then takes Jack's hand...

THE DANCE FLOOR

He leads her onto the floor, turning her once, twice under her arm and into both of his. It's slow western style and his left/her right hand lock behind her back.

JACK

I apologize if I smell all manly and handsome...

He glides her around the floor. He can dance and, more, she can follow. But she's seen something and...

...pulls their locked hands out so she can display his.

AMELIA

A married man oughta wear a ring, deputy.

JACK

No, now, can't wear it when I play b'ball. Jam that finger, swell up, explode!

She is no longer amused. He fesses.

JACK (CONT'D)

I am married but I'm not attached.

AMELIA

I won't break up another woman's marriage.

JACK

It's broken. Papers been served. Now,  
we're dancin'. We're havin' a dance.

He spins her out again, twirls her and twirls  
her...before he reels her back in tight to his chest.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

They drive.

AMELIA

Why do we fall for that lie? That the  
way it starts will be the way it lives?

He has no answer, but chews the question. They drive.

DARRYL

You know what burial at sea involves?

AMELIA

Figure I need water and a boat for  
starters.

DARRYL

Have to wrap and tape the deceased in  
canvas or plastic. Weight him with lead  
or iron. You'll have to stake a claim,  
mine the ore, rent a forge. Whereas, a  
dumpster back of a Wal-Mart...

AMELIA

Now I've put pressure on you to make me  
laugh.

DARRYL

Curse of those who live to serve others.

In a small, spontaneous moment, their eyes meet and they  
smile simply at each other. And quit.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Faculty Christmas party 2 years ago --  
I'd been teaching all of 4 months -- I  
didn't think anybody knew I was there.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY (ALMA DE ARTES SCHOOL)

A DOZEN FACULTY mill about. Darryl arranges cupcakes.  
The BIOLOGY TEACHER is a woman about Amelia's age who has  
begun to go musty. She takes and peels a cupcake.

## BIOLOGY TEACHER

Mr. Tripp. You, my young friend, are an insufferable, nay, virulent goody-two-shoes? Your youthful ideals and optimistic plans to change the world as a teacher are wholly misguided. You have not been teaching a sufficient time to devolve into cynicism and until you have, I feel you should bag it in faculty lounge when I am on break.

## DARRYL

*Adde parvum parvo manus acervus erit,*  
Mrs. Mendez.

With that, Darryl pretends someone's hailing him across the room. He goes, leaving Mendez looking after him, caught momentarily in the fury of being Latin ignorant.

## RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

## AMELIA

You spoke Latin to her?

## DARRYL

Nothing clever of my own to call on.

## AMELIA

Nobody speaks Latin.

## DARRYL

I do.

## AMELIA

Why?

## DARRYL

My father's notions of a true liberal arts education.

## AMELIA

What'd it mean?

## DARRYL

"Add little to little and eventually there will be a pile."

## AMELIA

What did that have to do with her?

(he shrugs)

You were just showing off.

DARRYL

Reckon you've never done that.

AMELIA

*Ex modo prescripto cum cibos.*

DARRYL

"Take as directed with meals" -- I'm impressed.

AMELIA

Yeah.

DARRYL

What kind of nurse are you?

AMELIA

You say.

DARRYL

Pediatrics -- babies, joyous parents, pudgy cheeks, drool.

AMELIA

I'm a hospice nurse.

DARRYL

You sit with people while they die.

AMELIA

I try to do a little more than sit.

DARRYL

I didn't mean to imply --

AMELIA

I know.

DARRYL

You give them hope of heaven?

AMELIA

I don't throw a gospel tent over 'em and try to raise The Rapture, but...So what you said about the kids you teach, about them despising the hours of learning, that was lying.

DARRYL

Wrote it for a book I haven't started about a young goody-two-shoes teacher at war with an older, cynical biology teacher.

They have entered some treacherous arena of connection and find themselves staring into each other's eyes.

Jack's CELL PHONE RINGS. Amelia gets it, checks the I.D.

AMELIA

"Where are you, good buddy? Late for your shift, *hermano*. Ole lady finally get wise to Camille 'n put a bullet in ya?" Hahr-de-hahr!" What's great is everyone in the Sheriff's Department knows my husband's porking Camille Portillo and thinks I don't know. Pull off ahead, Mr. Tripp.

Unsure whether he's relieved or disappointed...

DARRYL

Gonna let me go?

EXT. RV - NIGHT

The RIGHT TURN BLINKER blinks. Go out of focus on it...

EXT. PHILIPS' HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

POLICE LIGHTS. Deputy Camille Portillo stands in the headlights of her patrol car beside Darryl's motorcycle.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

...Sheriff's Department in Deming found the Kawasaki 1600 Classic registered to unofficially missing person, Darryl Tripp, 24.

EXT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

A POLICE CAR cruises past. The RV is parked. All is quiet. The OFFICER glances at the RV without interest.

FEMALE DISPTACHER (V.O.)

That speed machine is on the property of Sheriff's Deputy Jack Philips and his wife Amelia Ontiveros Philips. Not the deputy nor his wife was to home.

Amelia and MELODIE SEMPLE, 29, exit and approach the RV. Melodie waves at the passing policeman.

MELODIE

Oh, I don't mind comin' out to the consumer. Get a breath of formaldehyde-free O2.

Melodie wears rubber apron, plastic head cover, goggles atop her head, a mask and stethoscope around her neck, as well as a collection of mismatched rings and bracelets.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

What's your mama sufferin'?

AMELIA

She's got the breast cancer awful bad; she wants to make her own arrangements.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Darryl is cuffed to the steering wheel. His cell phone RINGS. He can reach it, could answer. Doesn't.

EXT. RV - NIGHT

Melodie stops short of the door to snap on Latex gloves.

MELODIE

My ma passed 2 years ago. It sucked, like, big time. I was blessed by folks that cared. Except Rory -- who proved to be a major a-hole. Where you folks from?

AMELIA

Wyoming.

Amelia opens the door. As Melodie steps up.

MELODIE

I hear that's real awful purty up there.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Melodie glances around, spots Darryl.

MELODIE

Howdy there. I'm Melodie Semple.

DARRYL

Welcome aboard, Melodie. I'm Darryl, I'll be your hostage tonight. Hey, seen yourself in that hat?

MELODIE

Ha..? Oh -- I know, Cynthia says it's the gooniest look since nose rings. I mean, our clients are dead -- not like we're gonna contaminate 'em.

DARRYL

If they're dead, how come you're wearin' a stethoscope?

MELODIE

Oh, I know! Cynthia thinks I'm daft, but I just like to make extra special sure. How come you're handcuffed? Are you kids, like, into, you know...

DARRYL

Yes, we are, Mel. How's 'bout you?

Melodie decides not to answer that one. She looks around and sees the heap on the floor in the back.

MELODIE

Is that your dear Mama on the...

No. What that looks like...

Melodie turns and finds herself staring at a gun. She screams in abject fear, fiercely short of breath.

AMELIA

Sshh, be quiet now, Miss Semple. Don't scream again, please.

MELODIE

Oh Jesus, oh Jesus.

AMELIA

Shush now.

MELODIE

Okay, I am, but I'm just telling you -- I'm not warning you --

AMELIA

Sshh-sshh-sshh, it's all right.

MELODIE

-- I'm prone to tachycardia when I get real activated.

AMELIA

You go into arrest, I can deal with it.  
Now, sit. Would you like some water or a  
soft drink?

MELODIE

Do you got any pot?

AMELIA

I'd say you've smoked enough dope for  
tonight.

MELODIE

It so happens it's medicinal and...  
and...and I have a prescription!

AMELIA

Tell me about cremation.

MELODIE

Cre...Oh. Cremation. Uhm, well, right  
off, the law, you know, requires, like, a  
death certificate and a doctor's permit  
plus notarized authorization from the  
next of kin.

AMELIA

I'm the next of kin; I authorize you to  
reduce him to ashes.

MELODIE

Yeah, well, remember how I said about the  
death certif --

AMELIA

That's all I can offer.

MELODIE

You're asking me to do something illegal.

AMELIA

Other than the pot, will this be your  
first experience with wrongfulness?

MELODIE

Oh, I've done a thing or two I'm not,  
like, real proud of. But I've never got  
officially crossways with the law cuz  
Lord help me if I was to fault for Daddy  
losin' his license.

DARRYL

And friend Cynthia would be disappointed  
in you.

MELODIE

She'd spank the crap outta me.

DARRYL

And that would be good or bad?

AMELIA

Try to be quiet, Mr. Tripp.

DARRYL

(quietly)

Would a spanking be good or --

Off her look, he indicates that silence is forthcoming.

AMELIA

I see your predicament, Miss Semple...

MELODIE

Oh, good.

AMELIA

...but I hope you see mine.

MELODIE

So I guess the gist of the deal is whose need's greater.

AMELIA

How 'bout I go first.

MELODIE

Okay.

AMELIA

One way or another, the man there's gonna be cremated here, tonight. Where's Cynthia?

MELODIE

She's not here.

AMELIA

Till when?

MELODIE

The afternoon shift tomorrow. Two o'clock.

AMELIA

Your dad asleep?

MELODIE

He's at a mortician's convention in Miami.

AMELIA

So you'll explain you had no choice. I had a gun. You didn't want to get shot. You got things to live for.

MELODIE

Yeah, hmm, I do see but, okay, yeah, like, see, you're askin' me to risk a whole heck of a --

AMELIA

Is money an issue here, Miss Semple?

MELODIE

Well, I couldn't help noticin' the deceased has a hole in his chest...

AMELIA

I can't use my credit cards, I got no cash to speak of, and I don't think this is something to charge to Mr. Tripp. What I do have is this gun and a deep desire not to go to prison.

MELODIE

Like, how much cash is no cash to speak of --

AMELIA

¡Maldígalo! You think, pushed to the wall, I won't --

DARRYL

Hey, Melodie...

AMELIA

Mr. Tripp, stay outta this!

DARRYL

Quiet, Ame.

AMELIA

What'd I tell you about callin' me Ame?

DARRYL

Who cares! Mel, so you graduated from Stanford in '89, huh?

Melodie looks at the rings on her fingers.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

That one.

She locates the Stanford ring.

MELODIE

Oh -- yeah, no, someone...a friend gave me that.

DARRYL

Right. Safe to say you steal from the corpses what the relatives of the deceased expect you to burn with their beloveds.

MELODIE

How dare you --

DARRYL

Know what else I think?

MELODIE

No.

DARRYL

I think you and Cynthia do some funny stuff during the afternoon shift with the stiffs after you strip them of their valuaables.

MELODIE

How...What?

DARRYL

How 'bout, don't ask me to repeat myself when you hear me the first time.

MELODIE

What sort of funny stuff?

DARRYL

Smoke a bowl, get naked, get funky with the corpses.

MELODIE

Are you sayin' we're like necrophiliacs? That's, like, totally --

DARRYL

Know how I know? Because I'm a philiac myself and we know each other on sight.

MELODIE

What kind are you?

Biblio. DARRYL

Bib -- MELODIE

DARRYL  
I have books everywhere and I cannot get rid of them.

MELODIE  
That's not anything like my philia --

DARRYL  
Yes, it is, trust me. Now, don't talk. I feel we should cut a deal here, and the deal I think we should cut is you fry Jack up and I won't out you and Cynthia when I talk to the cops, which eventually I will. Talk now, Melodie.

Melodie is between a corpse and a hard place.

MELODIE  
The gentleman wearing a pacemaker?

AMELIA  
The deceased had no heart. How long's it gonna take?

INT. RV FRONT WINDOW - NIGHT

We watch Melodie and Darryl carry Jack toward the front door of the mortuary, Amelia following with the gun.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)  
Sheriff's Deputy Philips is reported absent without cause. Best guess is the proximity of Tripp's motorcycle to the Phillips' property ain't a coincidence. Let's do some police work, people, life is precious!

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT

Jack stares up from a WAXED CARDBOARD COFFIN in the BODY TRAY, toupee hanging. Melodie spits on her palm, moistens the glue on Jack's rug, sticks it to his head cockeyed and closes his eyes.

Amelia stands back as far as possible.

DARRYL

So, Mel, what're we gonna end up with here?

MELODIE

Oh, 4 to 6 pounds of ashes and maybe, like, a coupla organic bone fragments and non-consumed metal.

AMELIA

Let's stop talking now.

She flips the lid of the cardboard coffin shut.

Melodie throws a lever and the crematorium door trundles upward and Jack rattles into the maw.

EXT. MORTUARY STREET - NIGHT

All is still on the street, seen from the front bumper of the RV. From inside...

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

...2001 35 foot Stratocruiser registered to Amelia Ontiveros Philips, New Mexico tag number SJM 416, Santa-Jimbo-Marvin 4-1-6...

That POLICE CAR is about to pass again...but stops, backs up and slides into the parking lot. The OFFICER shines his floodlight on the Wyoming license plate of the RV.

DARRYL (V.O.)

I can only imagine what would have gotten Cynthia tossed into the county jail?

INT. MORTUARY KITCHEN - NIGHT

An EGG TIMER quietly beats the seconds until Jack is done. RACK TO Melodie on the counter and Darryl at a cupboard getting pepper, garlic salt, oregano.

MELODIE

Oh, she's not like in the slam. She's a guard in the women's wing.

DARRYL

Prison guard by night, mortician's assistant by day -- life is good.

MELODIE

She lives to kick the stuffing out of bad girls.

DARRYL

Bullwhip, pearl handled six-guns...

MELODIE

Rubber clubs.

DARRYL

Sounds like rewarding work.

Amelia isn't here. Microwave dings. Darryl gets the bag of popcorn out. He passes the door to...

INT. CASKET ROOM - NIGHT

FROM ABOVE, we FIND Amelia lying in an open display coffin, staring upward.

MELODIE (O.C.)

My stupid brother has a gun.

DARRYL (O.C.)

What's he do, travel the neighborhood making dead bodies for you and Dad to flame broil?

JIB DOWN and look past Amelia into THE KITCHEN at...

MELODIE

Oh no, he's on the rodeo circuit.

DARRYL

Get outta here.

RESUME - INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Darryl doctors the popcorn. Past him, we can see Amelia's coffin.

MELODIE

Honest Injun.

A KNOCK. Front door! Darryl and Melodie freeze.

Amelia jumps out of the casket and heads this way.

AMELIA

Who is that?

She grabs a cookie jar, opens it, reaches in as...

MELODIE

Kinda have to answer the door to find out. Best guess is Officer Gummy.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT - MORTUARY

Door opens a crack. Melodie grins at OFFICER "GUMMY," 30, so named for the Gummy Worm hanging out his mouth.

MELODIE

Gummy, what's the haps, dude?

Gummy twirls a Gummy Worm and looks through the crack.

OFFICER "GUMMY"

Got my sammidge?

MELODIE

I sure do, "Gumster."

She holds a baggie of marijuana between two pieces of white bread through the crack.

Officer "Gummy" passes her 4 twenties and a Gummy worm.

OFFICER "GUMMY"

Thanks, Mel.

MELODIE

Anytime, cocka-doodle-dudester.

INT. DOOR - NIGHT - MORTUARY

Amelia is pressed to the wall just to the side of the door. Darryl is beside her. Melodie shuts the door.

AMELIA

What was that sandwich?

MELODIE

Liverwurst and provolone.

Amelia stares at her.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - MORTUARY

Darryl and Melodie enter.

DARRYL  
So your brother, what's his specialty?

MELODIE  
Bull-riding. His gonads are about the size of B-B's.

Darryl resumes doctoring the popcorn. Melodie plops.

DARRYL  
Did a little bull-riding myself. Plays havoc with your package.

MELODIE  
Yeah, well, he's like a major moron in all departments. Like, check it out: he shot a turtle once.

Amelia backs in, listening for the police car to leave.

DARRYL  
Folks out here big-game-hunt turtles, do they?

MELODIE  
It was a little Snapper, 'bout like this. Daddy, you know, was a fine shot, and Jason got so mean 'cause he couldn't hit a damn thing, so one day I'm with him and he's like razzing me real mean about my brassiere --

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Amelia faces the wall, tapping her forehead on the wall.

MELODIE  
-- except he called it a bral-siere and I mention accidentally on purpose how stinky a shot he is and he's like, "Oh yeah," and I'm like, "You are so not *macho*"...

EXT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

Officer "Gummy" plays a gummy worm between his teeth as he rolls a FATTY and stares at the RV.

MELODIE (V.O.)

...and he swings the .22 around and like shoots the snapper, and I tell Daddy and Daddy knows I wouldn't lie -- even though I did later, about my...never mind...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

MELODIE

...and Jason got his butt pounded with the strap, and he goes, "Yo, Mel, you're a total a-hole -- I never want to talk to you again," and I'm like, "Good," 'cause he always treated me like dukey 'cause I didn't have that l'il sausage swingin' 'tween my legs, and he's like, "Oh yeah"--

DARRYL

Popcorn?

MELODIE

Yes, please.

KNOCK on the door. Amelia swings around the doorway, gun raised at Melodie.

INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Amelia at the back of the door as Melodie opens it.

I/E. DOOR - NIGHT

Officer "Gummy" still works a worm even as he takes a hit of his fatty and speaks through held breath.

OFFICER "GUMMY"

Who's RV?

MELODIE

Oh, that...They...She...His father died on the road and he...I'm cremating the deceased.

OFFICER "GUMMY"

He in there with you?

MELODIE

Sleeping in the RV. Waiting for the ashes.

Officer "Gummy" looks at the RV, looks at Mel. Exhales.

OFFICER "GUMMY"

Hit?

MELODIE

No thanks. How is it?

OFFICER "GUMMY"

Primo Carnera.

He stares, appears as if he might spend the evening.

MELODIE

Gotta go. See you next time, Gumbo.

She shuts the door.

EXT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

"Gummy" stands, takes a hit, looks at the RV. A CURTAIN moves at a Mortuary window and Amelia watches as...

"Gummy" walks toward the RV...exhales...does a strange RV-humping gesture, turns away, gets in his car and goes.

MELODIE (V.O.)

Oh, that's good popcorn.

DARRYL (V.O.)

Appreciate it. Hey, know what I always wanted to ask a mortician...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

FROM HERE, we SEE Amelia at the front, peeking out the window. Darryl and Melodie share popcorn.

DARRYL

Why don't folks who bury their dead guys in the earth just buy the plain wood coffin and save themselves *mucho dinero*?

MELODIE

Reverence for the deceased.

DARRYL

What chucklehead told you that?

MELODIE

My daddy.

AMELIA (O.C.)

Like what?

MELODIE

Huh?

Amelia enters the kitchen, a baleful eye on Melodie.

AMELIA

Are you not real proud of?

MELODIE

Huh?

AMELIA

Earlier. You said you'd done things you weren't real proud of.

MELODIE

Do I have to tell you?

AMELIA

A man?

MELODIE

I guess he's a man.

AMELIA

Guy you mentioned wasn't supportive when your Mom died. Rory.

DARRYL

Hold it now, who's Rory?

AMELIA

Some massively inconsequential piece of hormone driven gunk who pretends he's a man but is a boy.

MELODIE

How'd you know?

AMELIA

Dated him coupla times myself.

MELODIE

Rory?

DARRYL

Figuratively, Mel. She's drawing a correlation between the --

AMELIA

He get you into the drug selling business or Cynthia do that?

MELODIE

What?

AMELIA

"What?" "Huh?"

Amelia rips the WIG off and beats Melodie with it.

MELODIE

Ouch! Don't! What are...That...

DARRYL

(restraining Amelia)

Hey, hey...You read the tag on that thing? There are restrictions what you can use it for.

AMELIA

For the love of God, stop saying "I mean" and "you know" and "like"! You sound like an ignoramus! And so much like me at your age that I would like to put both of us in that oven to save you from --

DARRYL

Stop it, Amelia, I mean it!

She takes a swing at Darryl with a closed fist; he ducks. Amelia collapses into a chair.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

How 'bout some popcorn?

MELODIE

(offering the bowl)

It's awful good.

Amelia takes a kernel, eats it. Darryl and Melodie pop some. All 3 crunch a moment.

AMELIA

Your dad good to your mama?

MELODIE

Mostly, I think. I mean, you know -- not "you know," not "I mean" either -- they were married a million years, but they still held hands sometimes and he held the car door and her chair for her.

Melodie smiles at the memory of her parents and Amelia stares at her smiling. The EGG TIMER DINGS.

DARRYL

Nurse Amelia, your order is ready -- pick up.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT

Melodie bears THE WOODEN BOX box in both hands to Amelia.

Amelia, though, doesn't want it. So Darryl takes it.

MELODIE

Well, it was sure nice meetin' --

AMELIA

Where's your dope money, Miss Semple?

MELODIE

What -- not what -- What?

Amelia waits. Melodie points. Amelia opens a BACKPACK. She exhumes a fistful of candy wrappers, a shoehorn, a pair of chopsticks...and a FAT ROLL OF MONEY.

MELODIE (CONT'D)

Cynthia's gonna...Do you gotta --

AMELIA

Listen to me, you.

Melodie does as she's told.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Your father's lucky. To have his daughter working with him. And you're luckier, to work for a dad who used to hold your mama's hand. Try to get your head outta your rear end so you don't live an adulthood of regret. You hear me?

Melodie's eyes go moist, whether from acknowledgement or fear of Cynthia it's hard to know.

EXT. MORTUARY - NIGHT - (MOVING)

Amelia and Darryl head for the RV, Darryl with the ashes.

DARRYL

She does you a favor and you rob her?

AMELIA

She's a drug dealer.

DARRYL

All that phony virtue -- don't say "Jesus Christ!" Dios querido, don't you dare use profanity around righteous l'il ole --

AMELIA

Because I don't like profanity or taking the Lord's name in vain --

DARRYL

Yeah, you're clearly an avid practitioner of the five or six Commandments.

AMELIA

What five or --

DARRYL

The originals ten minus, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, steal, disdain mom and pop...and, lemme see, what else? Kill!

AMELIA

I killed him -- you're sure of that?

He heaves the RV door open, jumps up the steps...

INT. RV - NIGHT

He grabs the upside down New Testament with its harsh pen line. He rattles it off...

DARRYL

"But if the slayer shall come outside the city of his refuge, to which he has fled; and the revenger of blood find him without the borders of his refuge, and kill the slayer, the revenger shall not be guilty of blood." [Numbers 26-27]

From outside, below the steps, she stares up at him, he down at her. Up, down.

INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

CLOSE ON Jack's ashes, on the console between them.

AMELIA (O.C.)

I'll send her money back. If I can.

AT THE WHEEL, Darryl glances in the MIRROR at her, at the galley sink, WASHING DISHES.

## THE GALLEY

Amelia scrubs Jack's last meal off a plate ferociously. The scanner crackles.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

All units, ears on. Word from Deming is if Tripp was dallying with Deputy Phillips' wife, Amelia, Tripp might be in sections somewhere.

IN THE GALLEY, Amelia manages a small, cynical laugh, grabs up another plate. Scrubs.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)

(CONT'D)

So let's be lookin' left 'n right as well as straight ahead as we keep safe the highways and biways of the great southwest.

DARRYL

What's amusing?

IN THE MIRROR: she doesn't seem to hear him. Suddenly, she dumps the plate and erupts at the bed.

## INTERCUT INT. SLEEPING AREA AND INT. COCKPIT

She yanks the sheets off the bed. In doing so, she finds a mostly-eaten apple. She studies it.

AMELIA

"Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings."  
[Psalms 17: 8] What a monumental crock.

DARRYL

Are you talking to me?

AMELIA

How do you get blood out of cotton?

DARRYL

Don't bother. Burn 'em.

AMELIA

This is the only set I got. You know or you don't?

DARRYL

Got an effervescent denture tablet?



DARRYL  
They were polite but indicated I was 500  
years too late.

AMELIA  
First great love of your life?

DARRYL  
Injuns or Helen?

AMELIA  
Guess.

DARRYL  
Coupla rehearsal loves-of-my-life, but  
yeah. I guess.

AMELIA  
You guess or you know?

DARRYL  
Thought about the priesthood at one  
point.

AMELIA  
You Catholic?

DARRYL  
That was the first impediment. I think I  
understood at some level the arguments in  
favor of celibacy.

AMELIA  
What about castration?

DARRYL  
That too. You grow up out here?

She shoves the sheets in the WASHING MACHINE as...

AMELIA  
Mexico till I was eight. Then Dallas.

DARRYL  
How'd you end up in an attractive place  
like Deming?

AMELIA  
Relationship with the fifth or sixth love  
of my life ended, got in my car, car  
broke down, stayed. Met number seven.

FLASHBACK: EXT. DESERT PROPERTY - DAY

Amelia is hosing down the foundation slab as Camille skids to a stop, Jack gets out, and Camille peels off.

JACK

Wha'cha doin' there, Pooh Bear?

AMELIA

Figure if I water it, maybe it'll grow walls. Where you been?

JACK

Fighting crime, Pooh. You're a doer of good, you know the time doin' good takes when you're doin' good good.

AMELIA

Where's my car, Jack?

JACK

Sold it. Had to. Offer was too good.

AMELIA

Oh, Jack...

JACK

Hundred above Blue Book! Gonna buy a skill saw, loada lummer, we'll finish fram'in' up our dream house.

AMELIA

We haven't worked on the house in 3 months.

JACK

Surely not that long, Pooh. Lummer -- gonna get a load, hammer, wham 'er!

AMELIA

You're too busy gobbling that poison --

JACK

Whoa! Don't, don't you, do not speak!

Jack hovers massively above her, his shadow consuming.

EXT. RV - NIGHT

The RV rolls along under an incredible sky full of stars.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

The WASHING MACHINE's in spin cycle. PAN TO COCKPIT: He drives. She stares out the front window at the sky.

AMELIA

Know how many stars in the Milky Way?

DARRYL

Only a guess, but maybe as many as 10.

AMELIA

I could lay on my back on the foundation of our never-gonna-be-finished home and pretend to rise up on the wings of my good deeds right into those stars. When, in fact, you're right.

DARRYL

About?

AMELIA

The 5 or 6 Commandments. Up there, where's heaven, you figure?

DARRYL

I figure it's between Jupiter and Uranus.

Amelia smiles at him.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

I don't figure it's a place. State of mind.

The WASHING MACHINE stops. She goes to it and, through the following, unloads the sheets.

AMELIA

Helen gonna figure you got cold feet?

DARRYL

Nah, she knows I adore her.

AMELIA

Dang, Cowboy, you missed your engagement party, and you don't know whether to cuss or thank me. How long you been havin' second thoughts?

DARRYL

I'm not having second --

AMELIA

Sure ya are.

DARRYL  
So why'd you ask me?

AMELIA  
See if you'd lie.

DARRYL  
I'm an habitual liar. Turn pro if there was a league. But in this isolated instance, I happen to be telling the truth.

AMELIA  
Like I said, you don't know zip about women, or you'd know she knows you're having second thoughts 'cause she is too -- how can anybody in their right mind not? -- but like the rest of us, you think you can make the other person over in your image inside the bonds of holy matrimony.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RV - DAY

Jack's in a lawn chair, drinking, whacked. She stands.

AMELIA  
I don't know what else to do for you.

JACK  
Want me to tell you?

AMELIA  
Yes.

JACK  
I'll tell you: Nothin'!

AMELIA  
You could have finished law school...

JACK  
I cannot live up to your expectancies...

AMELIA  
...made the FBI, become what you dreamed to --

In a flash he snaps his Glock to his head.

JACK  
This what you want? --

AMELIA

Where's the money from the sale of the --

JACK

-- Put Jackie-boy outta your misery?

AMELIA

-- money from the sale of my car.

JACK

-- Worth it, never hear you pound and pound.

AMELIA

If I let you keep the money, you'll --

JACK

Can't give you the money from the sale, Pooh-Pooh. 'Cause I didn't sell it.

AMELIA

Where's my stinking car, Jack?

JACK

Lost it in a hoops contest.

AMELIA

You...

JACK

Yep.

AMELIA

A basketball game? You --

FLASHBACK - EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

We don't get a good look at THE GUNNER, just quick pieces of him and his elegant shooting, as described -- swish, swish, swish. Jack, playing in uniform pants, boots, shades, is provoked just short of irremediable violence.

JACK (V.O.)

Some cream-puff wouldn't drive on me, Pooh. Parks out at the 3-point line, J's soaring outta the sky like guided missiles. Wasn't me on the losing end, I'da been in awe.

RESUME FLASHBACK - INT. RV - DAY

AMELIA

You lost my car playing one on one.

JACK

Community property, Pooh. You only lost half.

AMELIA

That's funny, Jack. Nothing like the humor of a drug addict without the courage to do anything about it.

JACK

Get a few bucks, I go back de la mañana, win it all --

AMELIA

You're 40, Jack, you can't play basketball with a 20 year old anymore.... Can we...We have to try rehab again.

JACK

"We"? You go, I'll stay here!

Amelia has bent close. Jack grabs her by the bra, hits Amelia, knocking her into the dirt.

Jack rumbles up and inside in a whacked out fury, leaving Amelia, mouth bleeding, eyes seething.

EXT. RV - DAY - WIDE

AMELIA

Don't you ever hit me again! If you do, I'll kill you!

The words seem hollow, bellowed against the enormous landscape and sky around her.

RESUME - EXT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

Small beneath the mammoth sky, the RV comes at us...

INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

He drives. She's at the washer, studying the sheets.

DARRYL

Jesus. Not Jesus. Gosh.

AMELIA

What?

FLASHCUT - EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

The Gunner is Darryl, rising in SLO MO, releasing a jump shot that soars through the air and hits nothing but net.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

DARRYL

I told him I didn't want his car.

AMELIA

What?

FLASHCUT - EXT. PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Darryl, in his teaching clothes, motorcycle at the curb.

JACK

You won it, shitbag, take it.

Jack holds the keys out.

DARRYL

I thought you were kidding -- your car against my motorcycle.

JACK

I wasn't kiddin', asshole.

Jack slams the keys into Darryl's chest.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

AMELIA

You're the guy who beat him?

DARRYL

I thought he looked familiar. I parked the car outside the sheriff's office, left the keys with someone inside. So, he came home, minus your car, and...

He goes silent. Amelia stares at the sheets.

AMELIA

Hmph. No blood.

DARRYL  
I'm sorry if I --

His phone RINGS. She snatches it up.

AMELIA  
Hello.

INT. DARRYL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The remnants of a party never celebrated look stale.

HELEN  
This is Helen Kaufman, who the fuck's  
this?

INTERCUT INT. RV AND INT. LIVING ROOM

AMELIA  
Don't use that language with me.

HELEN  
Kiss my ass, lady! Where's Darryl?

AMELIA  
I'm not going to talk to you if --

HELEN  
Put Darryl on the goddamn phone, and I  
mean now!

AMELIA  
(shoving him the phone)  
I can't talk to someone with a mouth like  
that.

DARRYL  
Hey, Hel.

HELEN  
Who was that?

DARRYL  
That wa --

HELEN  
Hold it! It's a two-part question: Who  
was that and where are you?

DARRYL  
That was the person --

AMELIA  
Do not tell her my name.

DARRYL  
Can't tell you her name but we're about --

AMELIA  
Don't tell her where we are.

DARRYL  
I'm alone, God knows where.

AMELIA  
Just say you're --

DARRYL  
(to Amelia)  
For God's sake, shut up.

HELEN  
I really hope you're not telling me to  
shut --

DARRYL  
Her -- the woman I'm not with!

HELEN  
Is that the cop's wife?

DARRYL  
It might --

HELEN  
I don't know what I did that you'd run  
away with another woman the day of our --

DARRYL  
I didn't --

HELEN  
How did you meet her?

DARRYL  
The wind was --

HELEN  
Don't you know better than to boff a  
cop's wife? If you changed your mind,  
why didn't you just say so? Why?  
Because you prevaricate, masturbate, and  
circumambulate. Talk, Bumby, I'm  
listening.

DARRYL  
I did not change my --

HELEN  
Christ! Surely not Rivera again.

DARRYL  
It has nothing --

HELEN  
Liar! Rivera! Again!

AMELIA  
Who's Rivera?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The RV passes. We HOLD. And a SHERIFF'S PATROL CAR flips on its headlights, pulls out and pursues the RV.

HELEN (V.O.)  
It's all right for you to look at every bellybutton that passes, every ass packed into painted jeans.

RESUME - INTERCUTTING RV AND DARRYL'S LIVING ROOM

DARRYL  
I have no power in the world of fashion, Helen, I do not dictate to women that they should dress like prosti --

The light in the RV is suddenly abetted by the unmistakable FLASHING LIGHTS of The Law.

AMELIA  
(rear side mirror)  
Cop coming up behind us. Speed limit.

Darryl eyes the cruiser in the REARVIEW AND SIDE MIRRORS as Amelia quickly un-cuffs him from the steering wheel.

HELEN  
But if I so much as glance at another guy, it threatens your rickety manhood.

DARRYL  
It was more than a glance, but I told you I understood -- rich Republican family, your political future, I forgave.

HELEN

You say so, but you're a man and you're incapable of forgiving a woman making the sort of transgression men take as a birthright.

Amelia ducks down, slips the WIG back on, rises up...

SIDE MIRROR

...and follows the cop car in her side mirror.

EXT. OLD HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The cruiser gains rapidly on the RV.

AMELIA (V.O.)

That cop pulls us over, I'll hurt him.

HELEN (V.O.)

What's she talking about?

DARRYL (V.O.)

Nothing.

RESUME INTERCUTTING: INT. RV AND INT. LIVING ROOM

AMELIA

I'm not going to jail.

HELEN

We waited 3 hours for you, which was 2 hours after I ran out of excuses why you'd stood me up.

DARRYL

Helen, there was a time-space continuum problem that precluded my appearing as scheduled! Now tune the fuck in!

(to Amelia)

Don't! I have to use language she understands!

AMELIA

Tell her there's nothing between --

DARRYL

(to Helen)

I did not run off with the cop's wife.

In the MIRROR, Amelia watches the cruiser closing.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

I have been kidnapped, taken against my will from point A to point B! I am handcuffed -- okay, I was, I am not now -- but I was, to the steering wheel of an...

AMELIA

No, no, no.

DARRYL

...of a...thing! I did not know this woman before 3 PM this afternoon.

EXT. RV - NIGHT - COUNTRY ROAD (CONTINUOUS)

The cop car swings out into the left lane.

HELEN (V.O.)

Then why'd you ride that motorcycle 90 miles away from me?

RESUME INTERCUTTING: INT. RV AND INT LIVING ROOM

The cop's lights flash off every reflective surface.

AMELIA

Pretend we're going camping.

DARRYL

(covering the mouthpiece)  
How do we do that -- build a fire on the dashboard?

HELEN

I asked you a question.

DARRYL

You break up the kitchen table for firewood.

AMELIA

That is so funny.

HELEN

Silence is so cowardly, Darryl.

Amelia explodes in forced, gay laughter for the benefit of the cop car along side now. Darryl smiles, lifts a genial hand to the COP even as...

HELEN (CONT'D)

What's so damn funny, Darryl?

Darryl joins Amelia's laughter. Gaiety reigns.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Stop that!

The cop car accelerates ahead.

AMELIA

Pull over, let him go.

HELEN

Are you laughing at me?

DARRYL

No, that's the person I'm not with who didn't kidnap me laughing a fake laugh she thinks doesn't look fake!

EXT. FRONT OF RV - NIGHT

Darryl pulls over and stops. He and Amelia are visible in the front seat in the moonlight.

HELEN

Put her back on the phone.

DARRYL

No.

RESUME INTERCUTTING: INT. RV AND LIVING ROOM

HELEN

Come on! According to you, you're helpless. Which makes you a putz and I can't believe you're doing this to me when I entered this relationship with the assumption we'd be honest with each other.

We go TIGHT ON DARRYL'S EYES...

FLASHBACK - INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - BIG HOME

The banner: "RIVERA: PARA TODA LA GENTE!"

A rally for Republican State Senator, Esteban Rivera. Darryl roams the CROWD of drinking, canape-eaters. Darryl's looking for Helen. He catches a glimpse of black pants suit. He moves after the pants to...

SWINGING DOOR TO KITCHEN

HE catches the door as it swings and SEES...

DARRYL'S POV

RIVERA kiss HELEN. She offers no resistance.

DARRYL

Debates hesitates...and steps to the side of the door,  
facing into the babbling crowd in the dining room.

THROUGH THE BABBLING CROWD

He looks small and ordinary.

RESUME INTERCUTTING: INT. RV AND INT. LIVING ROOM

DARRYL

You know what, Hel? We'll toss this  
around in person as soon as you pay the  
ransom.

AMELIA

(whispering)

What?

HELEN

What ransom?

DARRYL

That I hadn't mentioned because we were  
too busy whackin' off to our own personal  
bullshit. The 45 thousand the person  
pointing the gun at me demands for my  
safe return.

Dumbfounded, Amelia is speechless.

HELEN

What does the gun look like?

DARRYL

Why does that seem like the wrong  
question, Hel?

HELEN

Darryl, that's every cent we have.

AMELIA

(whispering)

Gimme that phone.

HELEN

That's the down payment on a house.

DARRYL

Mm.

HELEN

Will she take less?

DARRYL

Do you really want to reinforce the cliché that Jews are cheap?

HELEN

How dare she!

DARRYL

That was me, not her. She's a Christian.

HELEN

Oh, that's impressive.

AMELIA

Why are you doing this?

DARRYL

Helen, just get the money!

HELEN

Right, yeah, of course. If you're in danger, that's...But it's almost midnight on a Friday night -- Skip it, lemme...

DARRYL

She's making me hang up. I have faith in you, Helen.

Darryl flips the phone shut.

AMELIA

Ransom?

DARRYL

Popped out.

AMELIA

Just came to you in a --

DARRYL

Second or third spontaneous act of my life.

AMELIA

It makes me seem like...

DARRYL

Like what, Amelia? A woman who might  
take money out of desperation from  
others?

EXT. ROADBLOCK - NIGHT - AHEAD SEVERAL MILES

That cruiser that passed pulls up. TWO LOCAL POLICE CARS  
block a crossing. TWO COPS search several vehicles  
heading east.

RESUME - INT. RV - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Amelia stares at Darryl in silence. He deflects his gaze  
and stuffs his mouth with popcorn.

AMELIA

Know what I think? You're not doing it  
for me. You're doing it to hurt her.

DARRYL

Why would I want to hurt her?

AMELIA

I don't know the answer to that. I just  
know I'm...Go home, Darryl.

DARRYL

Go...

AMELIA

...home.

DARRYL

I'm your hostage. I have obligations.

Amelia

I don't want you anymore.

She opens the door.

EXT. RV - NIGHT

She steps down. Darryl follows into the doorway.

DARRYL

Wow, rejected as a hostage.

AMELIA  
Get your coat.  
(he doesn't move)  
Out.

DARRYL  
What are you going to do?

AMELIA  
Not your problem -- lay low, think.

DARRYL  
Always love it when criminals lay low.  
Let's think: Where can you hide a 30'  
tin can with a dead guy in a cigar box?

AMELIA  
Vayáse!

DARRYL  
No.

AMELIA  
You don't get to decide that, Darryl.

DARRYL  
Then don't call me Darryl.

AMELIA  
Mr. Tripp --

DARRYL  
Trust me.

AMELIA  
Está loco -- I'll never trust another one  
of you!

DARRYL  
You can't go the rest of your life  
thinking every man is going to be what  
all the others have been!

AMELIA  
Then make me wrong!

DARRYL  
What?

AMELIA  
Defy me!

DARRYL  
How?

AMELIA

Help me! 'Cause I'm scared and I got no  
clue where to go or what to do!

This turnabout is so stunning that Darryl is totally  
disoriented. Wholly vulnerable, she stares at him...

DARRYL

I don't know what you should do, Amelia.  
But I know where to go.

EXT. RV - NIGHT - COUNTRY ROAD

Darryl turns the RV around and heads back west.

EXT. ROADBLOCK - NIGHT - AHEAD SEVERAL MILES

The searching of vehicles continues.

EXT. ORGAN MOUNTAIN - NIGHT (LAS CRUCES)

The MOON over the silhouetted mountains to the east.  
PULL BACK to hundreds of pecan trees that fill frame.

EXT. PECAN ORCHARD - NIGHT

The trees are old, lush, the orchard a canopy that puts  
everything below the tree line in spackled shade.

Darryl and Amelia stand outside the RV.

DARRYL

Even if the cops check the main house, no  
one will think to bring them down the  
irrigation canals this far out.

AMELIA

Whose orchard is it?

DARRYL

My family's. Oldest pecan orchard in  
Texas.

AMELIA

You said you were from New York.

DARRYL

No, you said I was from New York. I grew  
up here.

AMELIA  
Your family farms pecans?

DARRYL  
Mom's family. Since the mid-1600s. She runs the business; my sister's prepping to take over.

AMELIA  
I confess I'm...

DARRYL  
Yeah, gotta hurt.

AMELIA  
The 1600s?

DARRYL  
Spanish Jews fleeing the Inquisition through Mexico.

AMELIA  
What happened?

DARRYL  
The decent, god-fearing Catholics decided to rid the world of --

AMELIA  
I mean, what did she do -- Helen?

DARRYL  
She kissed a local politician who thinks if his hair holds out, he'll be the first Latino president.

AMELIA  
Why'd she kiss him?

DARRYL  
I didn't ask.

AMELIA  
Why not?

DARRYL  
Why'd it take you half a decade to confront Jack's abuse?

They are locked eye to eye, and perhaps without considering the ramifications, she takes his hand.

AMELIA (cont'd)

We're just...we're so...crunchy, aren't we? All shattery and crumbly.

Their hands remain together, she nurse to the dying, he grateful for her comfort...

DARRYL

There's a Lily pond through the trees there. Nobody can see you between here and there. You're welcome to spread Jack's ashes.

AMELIA

Too nice for Jack. But I apprec...

They crash together -- lips mashing, hands stroking and groping, emitting the furious sounds of human animals gone wild and sore.

They crash back inside the RV.

INT. RV - NIGHT

They bounce off the furniture and walls, hit the bed, begin to haul at each other's clothing.

It's hard to know who slams on the brakes first. But they stop, mirroring not pride in self-control but regret in not having lost it.

EXT. RV - DAY - SOME TREES OUT OF FOCUS

A STATE POLICE OFFICER moves along the side, his weapon held two-handed. At the door of the RV, he listens. All is quiet inside. He reaches for the door handle, turns it slowly, quietly, then hurls the door open and steps...

INT. RV - DAY

...inside, automatic sweeping form the cab to the galley and bed area. In the bed, erupting from sleep, an ELDERLY COUPLE, who unbeknownst to them, have someone else's license plates on their RV.

EXT. PECAN ORCHARD - DAY (DAWN)

All is still.

INT. RV - DAY (DAWN)

We find them in the bed, she under the covers, he on top, her head buried in his chest, his mouth in her hair. She stirs. He too. Each remembers. Neither moves.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LAS CRUCES BANK - DAY

Saturday morning, the Farmer's Market is going on in the street adjacent to the bank.

Helen pulls in between the bank and the market. She heads for the doors of the bank. A MAN in casual clothes waits at the door for her.

BANKER

I wouldn't do this for anyone.

Helen bestows a thousand watt smile on the Banker.

EXT. PECAN ORCHARD - DAY

Amelia and Darryl walk beneath the canopy of trees.

AMELIA

Second time we met, he brought someone in from a traffic accident and I'm in the ER on a dislocated patella -- knee cap -- I hadn't gone over to Hospice yet.

FLASHBACK. INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

AMELIA (V.O.)

He goes on break with me to the cafeteria.

Across each other, she has a salad, he the brisket, mashed and Cole slaw.

JACK

Well, you wouldn't go home with me t'other night, so I told the sheriff I got to bring in anyone during your shift.

AMELIA

I don't know that I'm ready for a relationship.

JACK

'Cause a my allergies?

AMELIA  
Allergies? How would I --

Jack does that thing where you know somebody's going to sneeze. That ach... ach...ach and when he does the chu, a string of substance comes out from his nose. Jack holds a hand to his nose, the substance hanging down.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
Oh my God, Jack, you have...Let me...

She reaches but he pops the mess into his mouth, chews. She's horrified. Then begins to laugh helplessly.

JACK  
What?

AMELIA  
Oh, that was good.

JACK  
You liked it?

AMELIA  
Oh, Lord: cole slaw!

She laughs very hard...

RESUME - EXT. POND - DAY

...though now there is only a small smile at the memory.

DARRYL  
You're beautiful smiling.

The smile goes, something more serious takes its place.

AMELIA  
I haven't been completely honest with you.

DARRYL  
I'm surprised. People usually seek me out specifically to be a receptacle of truth.

AMELIA  
Shush now.

FLASHBACK - EXT. DESERT - DAY

A rooster tail through that DUST STORM in the beginning.

EXT. RV - DAY

Camille roars up, lights flashing, siren wailing. Twenty foot skid. Jack gives Camille a salute.

Amelia steps out of the RV onto the steps.

Camille spins out. A marriage in the toilet viewed through a curtain of yellow dirt.

Jack howls like a deranged dog as he bumbles toward Amelia, high on Oxycontin.

JACK

Pooh Bear!

INT. RV - DAY

Wildly devouring an apple, Jack takes a leak, the bathroom door open. His Sam Browne and weapon are on a chair, beside which Amelia waits. Jack flushes, zips.

JACK

I gotta play him a rematch. Gimme the money you got stashed.

AMELIA

What money?

JACK

I know you squirrel it away.

AMELIA

That's for the house, I'm not --

JACK

I order you not to say a word! Not a syllable-labble-luh-bull. I can take the guy. Where is your stash?

AMELIA

In the bank, where you can't --

Jack hits Amelia, knocking her against the galley table.

He lifts the mattress, turns to a cupboard, then...

JACK

Okay, one way or another, you're...

...comes at her, but finds his weapon aimed at his chest.

AMELIA

I told you not to hit me again.

JACK

I did, though, and I'll continue till...

AMELIA

I told you what would --

JACK

...you stop your clawin', preachin', your  
infernal self-righteous blabbin'.

AMELIA

You remember what I --

JACK

Blabedy-blab-blab! Come on, you warned  
me, you soft-boiled scaredy-cat.

(suddenly calm, rational)

Some of us, Nurse, are flat  
irretrievable. What's wrong with you,  
Pooh? Love 'a God, leave me.

Rattlesnake quick, he has her gun hand, yanks her to him.

With his free hand, he chokes her. She permits it, as if  
her inability to cure him mandates her own death. Yet,  
another part of her tries to shift the Glock.

JACK (CONT'D)

Come on, A-mel-ia, come on, come-a-come-  
on! Shoot me, Pooh! Put me down like a  
daffy dog. Frothin' whacked out Pit Bull  
Pekingese Cockapoo.

He puts the weapon to his head. Her hand shakes.

JACK (CONT'D)

You had any guts, even one gut, a single  
gut'd get the job done, Pooh. Pull that  
trigger!

BANG! Jack stares at her a moment, then bounces off the  
galley table, off a wall. He howls like a deranged dog.

JACK (CONT'D)

Aaaaarroooooooooooooooooo!

He crashes on the bed. Silence but for the dust storm  
raging outside the RV.

RESUME EXT. PECAN ORCHARD - DAY

DARRYL  
It was self-defense.

AMELIA  
Was it?

DARRYL  
Or suicide.

AMELIA  
I don't know.

SAME - HIGH ANGLE

They're small below. The trees are huge in the background. TILT UP TO THE MOUNTAINS. The sun is up.

INT. RV - DAY

Amelia studies the cremains of Jack in the wooden box.

AMELIA (cont'd)  
Stupid, awful, vile notions that fool all  
yawl little boys about what you're  
capable of or should aspire to.

She goes to the commode. As Darryl watches, she pours Jack down into the toilet.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
One day, poof. All those ballet and tap  
lessons. Tutus. Your first toe shoes.  
Lord: silk and satin. Wow. Recitals.  
Hi, Mama, look at me! Oh, mija, tu me  
hace tan orgulloso....Surely, He sent His  
only begotten Son for some real good  
god...damn...reason.

She flushes the toilet, turns to Darryl.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
At some point, some instant while life is  
happening to us, surely we got a say so  
about it, don't you figure? Become  
whoever the heck it is we wanna be and  
quit bitching about having to be whoever  
the heck we think we're supposed to be  
for another person! You don't have to be  
a victim, Darryl. You can change.  
Change, man!

Darryl's cell phone rings.

DARRYL  
(answering)  
Hello, Helen.

EXT. FARMERS' MARKET - DAY

Helen picks out some fruit.

HELEN  
I have the money. What do I do with it?

INTERCUT INT. RV AND EXT FARMERS' MARKET

DARRYL  
She has the money.

AMELIA  
I don't want it.

DARRYL  
Take it. Pay it back 10 bucks a month.  
(to Helen)  
Who knows about the money?

HELEN  
Banker. Me.

DARRYL  
No cops?

HELEN  
I am a cop, Darryl. I am the law. Tell me where to go and I'll handle it from there. It's me, Bumby.

DARRYL  
How do we know we can trust you?

HELEN  
"We"?

DARRYL  
How do we know?

HELEN  
Sorry, I'm a little confused: Playing the Stockholm Syndrome card -- sorry, good, got it. Tell her I'll come alone because I don't want the embarrassment and public attention this will bring.

DARRYL  
You have to really come alone.

HELEN  
And I will.

DARRYL  
I mean really.

HELEN  
Get the shit out of your ears, Bumby -- I said I would.

DARRYL  
(to Amelia)  
She says she'll come alone.

AMELIA  
If you trust her, I will.

DARRYL  
Helen, she wants you...Hang on, lemme get this straight.

He puts his hand over the phone.

AMELIA  
Why are you doing this?

DARRYL  
Better question is what are you going to do without me?  
(phone)  
She wants you to put the money in the ugly briefcase I gave you last Chanukah.

HELEN  
I love that briefcase, Darryl.

DARRYL  
Not really. You mostly use your beat to crap satchel with the Standford Law logo so people will know...Petty, strike that.

HELEN  
You think I carry my Stanford satchel --

DARRYL  
Yeah, but now's not the...She wants you to leave the briefcase where the new grove was planted last winter at the northwest corner of the west orchard.

HELEN

Grove -- what gro...Are you...Your mother's pecan orchard?

DARRYL

Yeah.

HELEN

The cops think you're way the hell into Texas or Arizona --

DARRYL

She wants you to leave the briefcase on the ditch bank that separates the orchards...

(his watch)

...at 11 AM sharp. Then you are to go back to our house. She'll call you there on our home phone when the money is delivered to her.

HELEN

Why can't I just hand her the...Who else is involved? Is her husband involved?

DARRYL

In a way.

HELEN

Did the two of them set you up?

DARRYL

Gotta go.

He hangs up.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

What are you going to do without me?

AMELIA

Reinvent myself.

DARRYL

Grow a mustache?

AMELIA

Got one. I'll just quit waxing it.

DARRYL

Clinics all over Mexico need nurses.

AMELIA

How do I get there from here?

DARRYL

I'm going through the trees to the barn.  
Get an ATV. Collect the money. Make  
sure I'm not being followed. Meet you  
here and take you to the river. You'll  
cross into Mexico in the dark. Walk into  
Juarez. Buy a car, disappear.

(his watch)

Fifty minutes.

What to do while waiting, short of losing it to each  
other again. She punches on the stereo: "Romeo and  
Juliet." She opens her arms formally.

They dance, a junior high date, space between them...

DARRYL (CONT'D)

What happened to the dancing?

AMELIA

What happens to dreams? Always blamed  
Mom and Dad. But, know what I think: I  
wasn't good enough.

DARRYL

Occurs to me, might be all that separates  
those who can from those who can't is  
pretension, lies, and outright burritos.

They dance...he dips her backward, crouches...

AMELIA

No.

DARRYL

Got to.

...and lifts her, one hand between her shoulders, the  
other at the base of her spine. What it lacks in grace,  
it gains in conviction.

AMELIA

Wow.

DARRYL

Indeed.

She arches her back, bends one leg inward, toe to knee,  
extends the other out, toes pointed in classical beauty.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Big finish.

AMELIA

What?

He flips her and catches her. Lowers her down his chest. His chin rests on her head, her head against his chest.

EXT. BARN - DAY

An ATV screams at us, Darryl driving, as...

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)  
 Breaking news, folks: Deputy Philips lost his wife's car in a roundball classic, then assaulted a drug dealer and took the young man's stash of cash and Oxycontin.

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

Darryl flies through the orchard on the ATV and onto a wide irrigation ditch.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)  
 He then purchased a turquoise bracelet for Sheriff's Deputy Camille Portillo, whom Deputy Philips was reputedly boinking against departmental regs.

EXT. IRRIGATION DITCH BANK - DAY

Empty of humans...until Helen appears out of the trees carrying the briefcase Darryl gave her. She looks around, sees no one, and leaves the case as instructed.

She turns and heads away into the trees. As she goes one way, we PULL BACK far enough to find Darryl crouching behind the trunk of a mature tree.

Sensing SOMEONE, he turns abruptly.

WORKER  
 Señor Darryl, como esta? Que pasa?

Darryl puts finger to his lips.

INT. RV - DAY

Like a little girl waiting for her bus, Amelia sits with a stuffed back pack on her lap, eating orange sections.

SOUND OF ATV pulling up O.C. She slips into the bathroom, the Glock at her side.

EXT. RV - DAY

Darryl pulls up, kills the engine, looks around.

INT. RV - DAY

Darryl closes the door. Looks out several windows. Then turns around to find her gone.

DARRYL

Aw, no.

She steps out of the bathroom.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

I thought you...

AMELIA

No, I trust you with...

Keeping it business-like is the best plan.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Point me to the river.

DARRYL

I'm going with you.

AMELIA

I can find...To where?

DARRYL

To wherever you'll let me go with you.

AMELIA

You have students, you have a relationship...

DARRYL

I'm replaceable.

AMELIA

Don't be! Be indispensable!

DARRYL

I like being with you!

AMELIA

Darryl...

DARRYL

I know it's --

AMELIA

...we've known each less than twenty-four hours -- that's ridiculous!

DARRYL

Peculiar, maybe, but not ridic --

AMELIA

You need a mother...

DARRYL

That's it?

AMELIA

...and I'm past my child-bearing years!

DARRYL

You're not, though!

AMELIA

You're a kid!

DARRYL

I'm going to grow up, change, like you said!

AMELIA

I don't want you, Darryl! We are not available to each other.

The devastating finality of that hardly lands before...

HELEN (O.C.)

But, hell, you could be.

Helen in the doorway. Amelia levels the Glock at her.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Available. To each other.

DARRYL

Helen, Amelia. Ame, Hel.

HELEN

Weird what happens to people stuck in close quarters on a road trip. *Shalom*, Mrs. Philips. Where's Deputy Philips?

AMELIA

Not with us.

HELEN  
Not with you where?

AMELIA  
Outta the picture.

HELEN  
Mexico, I'm guessing. Before you run off, Bumby, know who you got here?

AMELIA  
He doesn't need to know. And I don't want to hurt you.

HELEN  
Don't want to hurt you either, Mrs. Philips. Might if I knew you -- know a lotta folks could do with a good hurtin'.

DARRYL  
But she isn't one of them.

HELEN  
No?

DARRYL  
You don't know what happened between Amelia and her husband.

HELEN  
Between them, not you and them, you and her?

DARRYL  
I told you I didn't know her be...They wrestled over a gun, the gun went off.

HELEN  
So, when you say your husband is out of the picture, you mean...

DARRYL  
...that it was justifiable homicide. He hit her. She was defending her life. Tell her she won't go to jail.

HELEN  
I got no promises to make at this juncture.

DARRYL  
If some guy hit you and verbally abused you, you'd kill him.

HELEN

Hell I would. I'd file charges against him under the law, and put his ass in jail, just like I would any evildoer.

DARRYL

Amelia is not an evil --

HELEN

I've got 30 cops are out there, Mrs. Philips.

DARRYL

You said you'd come alone!

HELEN

Darryl, how did I know you actually wanted me to come alone so you could run away with your captor and our life savings! Think before you blather! Mrs. Philips, give yourself up to me and I'm prepared to say you chose to trust the law to take its --

AMELIA

My husband was an officer of the law.

HELEN

Let me finish --

AMELIA

He was no better than the worst of us.

HELEN

Damn it, let --

AMELIA

I have no reason to figure you're much higher up the ladder.

HELEN

I get it! Now shut up and listen to me! You try to run, the cops out there will kill you. Then it won't matter what happened because you will leave it to morons to decide that for you and they will feast on you like carrion birds.

AMELIA

I can't go back to jail.

DARRYL

Back?

HELEN

Neither you nor her deceased husband are the Widow Phillips' first victims, Bumby.

AMELIA

That's her view, Darryl, who's the victim. I injured a man in Dallas some years ago.

HELEN

She put him in a wheelchair for life with an aluminum baseball bat.

AMELIA

Only because I was too inept to kill him. Step aside, Miss Kaufman.

Darryl stares at a fixed point far out a window.

DARRYL

Amelia, there's nobody out there. She wouldn't bring help.

HELEN

What are you doing, Darryl?

DARRYL

She wants to walk you into the police station herself in front of the media.

HELEN

Gee, Darryl, am I a different person than the one you woke up beside yesterday morning?

DARRYL

Maybe you're the same but I'm --

HELEN

Enlightenment under duress -- do you know what a cliché that is? Oh, you haven't changed, baby.

DARRYL

Who am I?

Helen snaps on a pair of Latex gloves as...

HELEN

You are the same sweet, intelligent, erratic, neurotic, impractical, childishly romantic manchild you've always been despite all my efforts to help you to a viable reality. If I made a mistake there, please correct me.

AMELIA

What about Black Dog?

HELEN

What black dog? We don't have a dog.

Amelia looks at Darryl: Helen doesn't know he has written a book.

AMELIA

Medication?

HELEN

Believe me, I don' need...What are you talk...Give me the weapon, Mrs. Philips.

And she doesn't know Darryl's on an anti-depressant.

AMELIA

Are you sure no one's out there?

DARRYL

Yep.

HELEN

Okay, I'll just let them know they're not out there.

Helen calls out the door...

HELEN (CONT'D)

Got to take her by force, gentlemen!

...and Darryl grabs her, hand over her mouth.

DARRYL

Cuffs!

AMELIA

What -- no -- really?

DARRYL

Best idea among many bad ones.

Amelia snaps the cuffs on Helen.

HELEN

Darryl, you are now an accessory to --

DARRYL

Bathroom!

They push her in the bathroom, lock the preventer.

HELEN

Darryl, at least indicate to me that you are aware what you're doing, so when I bring charges --

DARRYL

Helen, one minute, then let the recriminations begin. Please!

He holds out Amelia's backpack. She slides into it, turns to him, takes him by the shoulders.

AMELIA

You...

DARRYL

Yeah, I will, I'll try.

She hugs Darryl, kisses his cheek, and starts to go. But he holds on to her, the gun pinned between them.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Don't go out there.

AMELIA

You're the one who --

DARRYL

What if I'm wrong? Other people must know how he treated you. They'll...

He clutches her until, exhausted, she surrenders to his embrace. The automatic drops to the floor.

AMELIA

I love the way you say my name. First time you said it, I felt it all the way to a place I forgot I had. When you kissed me, I was thirteen again and everything was possible.

INTERCUT INT. AMELIA/DARRYL AND INT. BATHROOM/HELEN

HELEN

You kissed her?

DARRYL  
Minute's not up, Helen.

AMELIA  
I gotta go.

DARRYL  
Stay. If you go to prison, I'll come see you. I'll be the guy delivering the cookies every Friday.

AMELIA  
I don't eat sweets.

DARRYL  
Hummis!

AMELIA  
We're not in love, sweetheart. We're in empathy. And maybe that's better. If I make it out the door, I'll let you know where I am, and maybe we'll see each other again one day. If you promise to write me a story. A good one. Real. And funny. If you'll promise to do that.

DARRYL  
Don't think I know how to do that -- write a good and real and funny story.

AMELIA  
Yes, you do! Now, listen to me. You start with some words, and little by little, you make a big pile.

She throws the door open. She's a big target. No voices, no shots.

EXT. RV - DAY

She tramps away from the RV. Seems safe. But now a sound -- something! She turns, a snap underfoot -- twig? She looks to the trees.

DARRYL, on the steps, looks.

Her FACE. His FACE. The end, here, now. Her eyes go for Darryl's.

A great clatter as a FLOCK OF DOVE battle to the air all around her.

And silence. There's no one. Her eyes hang on Darryl's. She mounts the ATV, fires it up.

A last look and she accelerates away.

Darryl watches her go.

She disappears into the trees.

HELEN

Darryl...

DARRYL

Mm.

INTERCUT: INT. RV/INT. BATHROOM - DAY

He steps back inside.

HELEN

What in the world is this in the toilet?

DARRYL

Jack.

He picks up his manuscript.

AMELIA

Did you kiss her, Darryl?

DARRYL

Yeah.

HELEN

Good.

DARRYL

Because we're even now? You kissed someone, I kissed someone. I think we need serious pre-marital counseling.

HELEN

I agree.

DARRYL

Starting with: What do we see in each other, other than a dearth of other choices in town?

Standing at the galley counter, he turns the novel upside down...and starts to write on the clean backside surface.

HELEN

Bumby?...Darryl! Let me out. I need to tell you something face to face.

DARRYL

Tell me from there.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Amelia pulls up. Dismounts. She looks back into the trees. The RV isn't visible. She hefts her backpack, turns to the water and wades in.

INTERCUT: INT. RV/INT. BATHROOM - DAY

HELEN

I only put twenty-two-five in the bag.

Writing intently, it takes a few seconds for...

DARRYL

What?

HELEN

I put your half of our savings in the bag. My half is now in another account. In my name. I was angry at you because I knew you weren't...that neither of us was the other's...And then I felt so guilty for feeling that, I pretended to forget what I knew.

Darryl resumes writing, the speed of his hand increasing.

DARRYL

How much time?

HELEN

How long did I pretend not to know we --

DARRYL

Time if she's caught and convicted?

HELEN

Depending how credible she is on the stand, could be suspended involuntary manslaughter. Now, let me out of here.

DARRYL

Okay.

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)  
All units, ears on. On that APB for  
Amelia Ontiveros Philips, Deputy Jack  
Philips, and one Darryl Udell Tripp.

HELEN  
Darryl, I mean it!

DARRYL  
Second.

EXT. RV - DAY

Writing, Darryl comes outside, sits on the steps in the  
doorway. We PULL BACK WIDE AND HIGH.

ABOVE THE TREES, we can SEE Darryl as he writes...and  
AMELIA as she climbs out the other side of the Rio  
Grande, and takes off. This as...

FEMALE DISPATCHER (V.O.)  
Las Cruces P.D. reports a woman matching  
Mrs. Philips I.D. committed assault with  
a deadly weapon and grand larceny on a  
mortician's assistant, as well as one --  
and we could be trailblazing here, people  
-- one... repeat, one forcible cremation.

Darryl writes, Amelia runs...and we FREEZE FRAME.

AND ROLL END CREDITS.