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**PRIVATE PARTIES**

a screenplay

by

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INT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. DAY

Purple lips in the mirror after a lipstick. Lips part and a smear of lipstick on a tooth. Chrissy Hinds and The Pretenders are loud on the radio - "Human". PEARL, 20ish and gorgeous, wipes her tooth with a long tear of toilet paper. She finishes her eye makeup slapdash. There's a discernible bruise over left eye. We see another view of her from a full body angle. She's wearing cut-off shorts and a tight plum colored tank-top.

PEARL's calico cat jumps atop the toilet bowl and knocks over an open bottle of Corona.

PEARL

Shit!

The cat rubs herself between Pearl's ankles. Pearl looks at the bathroom clock and runs into the bedroom to pick up her cell phone, purse, classified newspaper section, and sunglasses. The apartment phone rings.

PEARL

Hi? What? Stop calling me, you dumb fuck turkey!

She throws the phone down and flies out of the apartment.

EXT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. DAY

She skips down the stairs of the building and gets to her very beat up VW bug. The car is missing a fender and a side window is cracked. She unlocks door, gets in, and tries to read the car directions written on the newspaper ads sheet. As she starts the car, her cell rings.

PEARL

Hi? What? You idiot! I'm off to buy a car.

She hangs up and races off. The VW sounds sicker than any car in the IC unit. Black smoke bellows from the exhaust.

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY.

The VW is speeding on the commuter lane and a cop is in pursuit of Pearl. She pulls over. The cop gets out and approaches the VW.

COP

You're in the commuter lane.

PEARL

I know.

COP  
I can't hear you.

PEARL  
I know, officer.

COP  
You're alone. You need a passenger  
to be in this lane. Do you know  
the fine?

PEARL  
No.

COP  
\$371.

PEARL  
I had a passenger but we had a  
fight. My ex-boyfriend. He just  
hopped out a mile back.

COP  
License and registration.

PEARL  
My dad's a sergeant with LAPD.

COP  
My mom's a hostess at Hooters.

Pearl shows a photocopy of her Dad's ID. This doesn't impress the cop. She then writes out her phone number on a slip of paper. She hands over license, registration and the number to the cop. He studies her face carefully. She smiles back like Ariel in "The Little Mermaid".

COP  
When can I call?

PEARL  
Tonight after 9. Unless you're  
married.

The cops smiles under his shades and hat.

COP  
Stay the fuck out of the commuter  
lane, lampchop.

EXT. SAN DIEGO FREEWAY.

Along the ocean drive, the VW passes the San Onofre nuclear reactors near the border of San Diego County. Camp Pendleton Marine base is just a little further south. Helicopters and tanks are doing routine maneuvers in the open sands along the highway stretch. Few cars are fighting for lane positions since traffic has thinned out. Pearl is listening to Smashing Pumpkins on the CD player.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAN DIEGO

Pearl is pulling off the freeway to gas up. She phones while the car is refueling.

PEARL

Hello. It's Pearl. I'm running a little late. About a half hour.

The gas hose pops out and she abruptly hangs up on the call. Inside her wallet are a stack of hundred dollar bills.

EXT. LA JOLLA

Ocean view is spectacular. Pearl cruises along winding coastal road among expensive Spanish style homes. She stops to read car directions. Some surfers holding their boards up high linger around the VW. She ignores them. Hangs a u-turn and finds her way to a precise address on Calle del Oro.

INT. VW CAR

Pearl looks at her rear view mirror to check her hair. She sees a classic blue convertible Ford mustang parked across the street. A tight smile crosses her face. She gets out of her car.

EXT. LA JOLLA'S CALLE DEL ORO

Pearl walks around the proud Mustang. The sunlight falls perfect on the new waxing. The street is quiet. Palm trees frame the car. Pearl is startled by a voice. She turns and sees LETI, late 30s and attractive.

LETI

Pearl?

PEARL

Yeah.

LETI

White Pearl?

PEARL  
That's right.

LETI  
Pearly white Pearl? You said you  
had red hair.

PEARL  
When the sun's out. Is that your  
home?

LETI  
No. I'm only visiting La Jolla.  
It's a friend's house. You know  
how it is.

PEARL  
What?

LETI  
Staying a day or two as a house  
guest. You become a goddamn  
nuisance. You're late.

Leti lights a cigarette and smiles like she's at a bar.

PEARL  
I phoned and left a message. Is  
the car sold?

LETI  
Would it break your heart?

PEARL  
I drove three hours.

LETI  
A cop put down a hundred to hold  
it. You know how cops are. The  
chubby ones with bushy moustaches  
and piggly warts. I kept the money  
but the car's still on the market,  
darling.

Leti eyes Pearl with enthusiasm. Pearl takes it Leti's  
eccentric skirt and open blouse. The colors clash, but Leti  
looks very sexy and decadent. Leti removes her sunglasses.

PEARL  
I'm serious about the car.

LETI

I know. I dreamt that I would end inside this Mustang. Flying off a bridge. Couldn't roll down the windows. Green water flooding lungs. Dying alone.

PEARL

Dying is a punishment.

LETI

Right. That's how Stephen King got hit by that car in Maine. He had a tax to pay. You write horror, horror writes you back. Polanski lost his wife to Charles Manson. You want this car badly, don't you?

PEARL

I like blue Mustangs. My boyfriend got me started on Ford muscle cars. T-birds, Cougars, the works.

LETI

(sings)

"Pony car, pony car.

Won't you be my pony car.

Don't say no, here we go,  
ride across the plain."

(hums a few more bars)

Nothing cooler than a vintage Mustang. What does your boyfriend drive?

PEARL

Nothing.

LETI

Oh?

PEARL

Not even a bicycle. DMV revoked his license. Three DWIs and they crucify you.

LETI

Jail time?

PEARL

Six months at Taft Correctional.

LETI

He got off light.

PEARL  
 Nearly broke up his band.

LETI  
 What's the band?

PEARL  
 "Pissin' in the Wind". Blue grass  
 with a twist of . . .

LETI  
 Lyle Lovett.  
 (Pearl laughs)  
 How did the band sound?

PEARL  
 Like pissin' in the wind. Can I  
 test drive the car?

LETI  
 Bring cash?

Pearl nods her head to say yes. Leti, all too feral, comes in a closer. Pearl won't take off her sunglasses. Leti produces a set of car keys.

LETI  
 You're serious.

PEARL  
 About a lot of things.

LETI  
 Let's truck.

She unlocks the door and throws her pack of cigarettes onto the passenger seat.

PEARL  
 Nice interior.

LETI  
 You're about 10 years my junior.

PEARL  
 So?

LETI  
 I can guess your weight too.

PEARL  
 You and my boyfriend.

LETI  
The car's got a soul of its own.

PEARL  
Don't see many ads like yours.

Leti crosses to the passenger side door and unlocks it.  
She's about to climb in.

LETI  
A fading muscle car deserves  
respect. Lithe and agile. The car  
that made America great.

PEARL  
Just a short test drive. Up the  
freeway and down the coast.

LETI  
What happened to your face?

PEARL  
Nothing.

Pearl adjusts her sunglasses. Opens the driver side door.

LETI  
Some fucked-up guy in a band?

PEARL  
Skip it.

LETI  
I'd report the asshole.

PEARL  
I did.

LETI  
Did you hear that the 'NRA' Senator  
from Texas was shot inside a car  
wash? The shooter got away.

PEARL  
What's Charlton Heston gonna say?

LETI  
Car washes used to be safe.

PEARL  
Except for hydrochondriacs.



LETI  
 (climbing into car)  
 You mean hydrophobics.

PEARL  
 Hydroponics. Whatever.

Leti sits. Puts arm around the driver seat. She's still  
 owning the car in all its glory.

LETI  
 I'm moving to Mexico. Cabo San  
 Lucas.

PEARL  
 Cool. I've been there.

LETI  
 Selling everything I own and  
 starting a new free life.

PEARL  
 Money is freedom. That's my dad  
 talking. How much will you take  
 for the car?

LETI  
 Didn't I say over the phone? If I  
 really like you - three grand.  
 Better than blue book. I paid more  
 and rebuilt the goddamn engine.

PEARL  
 Mileage?

LETI  
 Odometer's busted. Look at the  
 body. Not an ounce of rust for a  
 '67.

PEARL  
 Got the title?

LETI  
 Of course, cup cake.

PEARL  
 Look, Leti. I need to test drive  
 this alone otherwise . . . you  
 understand.

LETI  
 Sure.

Leti gets out. Smiles aggressively. Lights up another cigarette.

LETI

I'll just make you nervous. You don't need to crash into an eucalyptus all because of me.

PEARL

I'll be back in a flash.

LETI

License, Pearl?

Pearl finds her license for Leti. Leti studies it.

LETI

Next month's your birthday. I'll just hold on to this, OK?

PEARL

My Dad's a cop.

LETI

Then absolutely no harm shall come to you. Amen.

Pearl drops into the bucket seat. Starts the engine and floors the car. Leti looks at the car trail away into the distance.

EXT LA JOLLA OPEN ROAD

The Mustang is taking fast turns around the coastal hills. Pearl is driving as if she's not planning to turn back. There is sheer ecstasy on Pearl's face.

INT LA JOLLA HOUSE

Leti prepares herself for a bubble bath. The tub is nearly full. Carelessly, she tosses off her clothes and slips into the tub. Perhaps there is a subtle suggestion that Leti is about to masturbate.

EXT LA JOLLA'S MT. SOLEDAD

The Mustang is parked at the top of a mountain. Pearl is content just sitting and taking in the near 180 degree panorama of San Diego. There seems to be an open question on her mind. Some school children run by the car. Pearl steps out of the car and tries to open the trunk. The keys don't work.

EXT LA JOLLA HOUSE

Pearl drives up to Leti's house. She honks the horn. No response from Leti. Pearl honks a second time. Finally, Leti shows up in a house robe at the front door. Leti steps outside and calls from the door.

LETI  
Stop the fucking honking.

PEARL  
I love the car.

LETI  
Took you a fine freaking hour to figure that out?

PEARL  
Yeah. Time flew.

LETI  
Where did you go?

PEARL  
Here and there.

LETI  
Hope you didn't change the radio stations.

PEARL  
I did.

LETI  
Those were my stations, baby.

Pearl gives Leti a sharp look. Leti, barefoot, saunters to the car. Pearl removes her sunglasses.

PEARL  
I'm buying the car. I've cash.

LETI  
Do you want me to wrap it in a pink bow?

PEARL  
Sure.

Pearl gets out of the car. Counts out cash. Leti isn't paying attention.

LETI  
Not taking it to a mechanic?

PEARL  
Car sounds fine.

LETI  
Funny. I thought you were about to steal the Mustang.

PEARL  
I don't steal.

LETI  
We all *borrow* sometimes.

PEARL  
I've tried to open the trunk.

LETI  
Sometimes the lock sticks. Just go to a 7/Eleven or a Rubios. They'll fix it.

Pearl hands over the cash. Leti has the title in her right hand.

PEARL  
You can scratch out a bill of sale too.

LETI  
Is that necessary?

Pearl says nothing. Leti finds a dry cleaner receipt in the back seat and writes out an informal bill of sale.

LETI  
How do you spell your name?

PEARL  
Like an ocean pearl. Last name Campbell.

LETI  
Like the soup can?

PEARL  
My license?  
(Leti hands it over)

LETI

I wish you a lot of luck with this blue beauty, Pearl Campbell.

PEARL

Anything you need to get from the car?

LETI

If you find any tapes or CDs in the glove compartment, they're yours. Including any Pretenders.

PEARL

Thanks.

LETI

I love Chrissy Hinds, you know. Keep the dream catcher from the rear view mirror. Maybe a year from now we can phone each other and celebrate an anniversary.

PEARL

Sure. Whatever.

LETI

What are you going to do about your VW?

PEARL

It's my boyfriend's car. He'll come to get over the weekend.

LETI

Are you sure that's OK?

PEARL

Yeah. This is a safe street.

LETI

Cool.

(Staring at the VW)

So we're all done.

Leti hugs Pearl strangely and steps away from the car. Pearl gets in and starts the Mustang. Leti blows Pearl a kiss. The Mustang tears away.

EXT LOS ANGELES FREEWAY.

Pearl enjoys hard driving radio music and the sweet blast of air against her face. She pulls off freeway and takes surface streets to her apartment. She parks car.

INT LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. EVENING

Pearl enters and throws down her jacket and purse. She opens the fridge to grab a beer. There's crying baby noise from the upstairs apartment. Pearl flips on the radio and starts the shower. She disrobes and jumps in.

INT. LA JOLLA HOUSE.

Leti is painting her toe nails while flipping TV channels. We see a clip of THELMA AND LOUISE (the scene blowing up 18 wheel truck). Leti flips channel and gets a Victoria's Secret style commercial. Flips again and Leti sees Ellen DeGeneris' talk show. She turns off the TV. On the coffee table is a photo of Leti leaning against the blue Mustang.

INT. LA JOLLA HOUSE. NEXT DAY

A car horn is blasting. Leti wakes from her bed. She looks out the bedroom window.

EXT. LA JOLLA HOUSE

Pearl gets out of the Mustang. She honks the horn again. Leti opens the front door and exits the house. Slouching against the tree, Leti calls to Pearl.

LETI

You're waking up the neighbors,  
doll face.

PEARL

Don't give a shit.

LETI

What a hot morning. You're pissed  
at me?

PEARL

Ahuh. Do I look like some frickin'  
idiot?

LETI

Why don't we go out for some  
breakfast?

PEARL  
I opened the trunk.

Leti smiles and steps toward Pearl. The two women share a look of recognition and discovery. Leti lights a cigarette.

LETI  
When?

PEARL  
This morning.

LETI  
You found the key under the floor mat?  
(Pearl nods)  
And you thought it was a halloween prank?

PEARL  
There's nearly seventy thousand in the trunk?

LETI  
Money is freedom, Pearl. Take it.

PEARL  
I don't want your money.

Leti is a few inches away from Pearl. She caresses Pearl's hair. Pearl recoils without flinching.

PEARL  
You're a murderer.

LETI  
Don't presume things.

Pearl goes to trunk and pop's it open.

PEARL  
Who's body is that?

LETI  
It's Ralph.

PEARL  
Ralph who?

LETI  
Ralph Kroeger. K R O E . . .

PEARL  
 Why did you put him inside the trunk?

LETI  
 He fell asleep. He's my ex.

PEARL  
 Ex-husband?

LETI  
 Ex-boyfriend.

PEARL  
 You killed him.

LETI  
 No, I swear to you. It was his mother who did this.

PEARL  
 His mother?

Pearl paces around the car. Leti looks into the trunk. We see a body wrapped in a blanket, perhaps showing feet. Leti closes car trunk.

LETI  
 His mother. A vicious, unfeeling Neanderthal woman.

PEARL  
 You're so full of it.

LETI  
 I don't lie about death.

PEARL  
 Why risk bringing me into this crap?

LETI  
 The color of your hair. I like your hair.

A long view of the two women seen from the inside window of a nearby house - Ralph's mother's home. The dialogue is heard from this distance.

PEARL  
 You're insane You chose me.



LETI

You chose the car ad. A sale between private parties. No go-between. That's not my house, Pearl. It's his mother's. She's sleeping in the second bedroom. This woman could give head to a rhino. You know what I mean? She's damn fearless.

PEARL

Why would she hurt her own son?

LETI

Maybe it's sort of a Norman Bates' Mom in *Psycho*. She never grew to like me. Maybe because I'm older than her boy?

PEARL

I could go right now to the cops.

LETI

Would that make you feel better?

PEARL

Yes.

LETI

What if I told you he had a coronary?

PEARL

Young guys don't go that way.

LETI

Okay, would you accept GHB? Gammahydroxybutrate.

PEARL

I'm not a frickin' chemist.

LETI

Date rape drug, right into your Coca Cola.

PEARL

You doped your boyfriend?

LETI

Had no choice. He wanted to get married in the worst way. Come on, I'll drive us to Starbucks.

Leti opens car door and sits in the driver seat. Pearl takes out her cell phone.

PEARL  
I'm calling the cops.

LETI  
Come on, I'll drive us to police station. And all I ask is that you let me talk for three minutes.

Pearl reluctantly gets into car. The Mustang speeds off.

LETI  
Ralph's mixed it up with some trashy gang goons. He makes money like a fucking criminal. Mostly from drugs and that sort of shit. I found out after two months with him. He wanted to get married in the worst way. He proposed at a Tony Roma's! He wanted me to wear his mother's gown. He was beating me, Pearl, when things went bad at work or between us. Sometime weekly. And he was doping chicks he would meet at the bars. I went through his things at home. And I heard from a bartender. So two days ago I gave him six pills during a bad night. I had no intention of killing him.

PEARL  
You could have dragged his ass to the hospital.

LETI  
I did. But on route I checked his vital signs it was too late.

PEARL  
So you shoved him into the trunk?

LETI  
I stayed in the hospital parking lot for an hour deciding what the hell to do. I swear I didn't want this to happen.

PEARL  
Drive to the cops, Leti.

LETI

OK.

PEARL

I pity you.

LETI

Don't want your pity. But I can help you. Read my mind. I can take care of your bad boy Freddy. Just four or five pills. You'll get over it after a couple of hours. I know you've tried to quit him. He stalks you after you had a fight. He comes inside drunk and bolts the door. Ten years ago, I was just like you. Slept with lots of under aged boys.

PEARL

Enough.

LETI

After I make this turn, we're at the precinct. I'll keep my word.

The car slows down, negotiates a turn at a traffic light, pulls up to the police station.

PEARL

You've been here before?

LETI

What do you think?

PEARL

I did dream about you last night.

LETI

I know.

Two cops walk by their car window and Leti waves seductively to them. Pearl is startled by Leti's outrageousness.

LETI

Do you believe in a supreme being?

PEARL

Sometimes. I used to believe in the Rapture.

LETI

God is a wonderful woman in the sky.

PEARL

How do you know?

LETI

I just know. Come with me to Rosarito Beach for one night. Twenty minutes over the border. Pretend you just won a vacation.

PEARL

What, with all those gnarly Che Guevaras in low riders?

LETI

Che wasn't Mexican, honey. Where does Freddy work?

PEARL

At the Sears car repair shop in Van Nuys.

LETI

Okay.

PEARL

Okay?

LETI

Go home tonight. Drive back in your VW. Pack some nice things and a swim suit. Don't see Freddy. We'll meet tomorrow at five. I'll clean out the trunk and use Pine Sol. I'm not going to turn myself in. Okay?

The two women study each other quietly. Leti gets the clue from Pearl that Leti need not go to the cops. Leti drives off and we hear another Pretenders song "Brass in Pocket".

EXT LA JOLLA HOUSE

Pearl leaves Mustang and gets into her VW. VW drives off. Leti enters house. Ralph's mother confronts her in the foyer.

RALPH'S MOTHER

I thought you sold the car?

LETI

I did.

RALPH'S MOTHER

To that girl?

LETI

Ahuh.

RALPH'S MOTHER

You look like the cat that  
swallowed the canary.

LETI

You always say that to me, Ma.

RALPH'S MOTHER

Don't call me, Ma. And I don't  
know why you got to be a guest in  
this house. Ralph can't think  
straight these days.

LETI

You want to see a movie tonight?

RALPH'S MOTHER

Isn't he coming home?

LETI

Not tonight and not for the rest of  
the week. Fishing trip. Can't you  
remember anything?

RALPH'S MOTHER

My memory's fading since I'm  
perimenpausal.

Ralph's mother trails off into the kitchen.

LETI

(to herself)

You were perimenapausal 25 years  
ago.

RALPH'S MOTHER

I'm not cooking tonight.

LETI

I'll cook.

RALPH'S MOTHER

You'll poison me.

LETI  
Stop saying that.

RALPH'S MOTHER  
Everything you whip up has all that  
spice crap.

LETI  
Okay. I'll order Chinese.

RALPH'S MOTHER  
No wonton soup! It's got MSG and  
that will kill me.

Leti picks up the phone and orders Kung Po Chicken, pot  
stickers and a gallon of wonton soup.

INT LOS ANGELES APARTMENT NIGHT

Pearl, in bra and panties, paints her toe nails while  
watching a music video. Her cat nuzzles up to her.

PEARL  
Hi sweet angel. I fed you.

She sees a silhouette past her front window curtain. There's  
a knock at the door. Pearl goes to answer.

PEARL  
Freddy?

FREDDY (O.S.)  
Yeah.

PEARL  
Go away. I told you to call before  
coming by.

FREDDY (O.S.)  
Got to see you.

PEARL  
I'm not dressed.

FREDDY (O.S.)  
Open up, Pearl.

She opens the door half way. He smiles warmly. She doesn't.

PEARL  
You smell like booze.

FREDDY

So? I brushed my teeth in the car.

He reaches for her and pushes the door wider.

FREDDY

Kiss kiss.

PEARL

Ten minutes and then you go.

FREDDY

I don't have a watch.

PEARL

Alright. Five minutes. Pronto.

FREDDY

Did you buy the Mustang?

INT LA JOLLA HOUSE

Ralph's mother is unconscious on the living room couch. Leti pours herself scotch neat and eats Chinese food with chop sticks. Her eyes are drawn to the large aquarium. She shovels the remaining Chinese food into the tank.

LETI

Goldfish so gold, Slippery fins,  
Eyes like marbles, Mouths that  
mourn, Silently suffering, Kissing  
glass walls ever so cold.

INT LOS ANGELES APARTMENT

Pearl throws a robe on and returns to living room.

PEARL

What now?

FREDDY

I'm going to make popcorn.

PEARL

No. Time's up.

FREDDY

Don't be such a bitch.

PEARL

I'm no bitch.

FREDDY

All the guys in the band think you  
are, honey.

She opens the front door and points the way for Freddy.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAN DIEGO. LATE EVENING

Leti slows down in the Mustang along a desolate country road.  
Car stops. She puts on gloves, gets out with a flashlight,  
and opens trunk. She struggles to lift the body out of the  
trunk and into the gully.

EXT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. NEXT MORNING

Scantily clad Pearl, carrying an overnight bag, saunters to  
her VW. The VW leaves the street.

EXT. LOS ANGELES GAS STATION

Pearl tanks up. Mr. Tatoo - all ink - in a beat-up Ford F150  
pulls behind her, nearly kissing her bumper. He jumps out.

MR. TATOO

Hey Princess, move up a few feet.

PEARL

Why?

MR. TATOO

'Cause I'm in a truck.

PEARL

Take the other pump.

MR. TATOO

I need some shade.

PEARL

Almost done.

MR. TATOO

Then let me buy you dinner.

Pearl smiles half-diplomatically. The trucker senses she's  
not low hanging fruit. He crowds her.

PEARL

Back off, Prince Charming. My  
Dad's a cop on speed dial.

The trucker, having a very stupid day, touches Pearl's hair.  
Instantly, Pearl elbow punches him for a knockout.



Mr. Tatoo staggers back into the gas pump and drops to his ass. Pearl grabs a courtesy squiggie windshield wiper and puts it in Mr. Tatoo's lap. She "accessorizes him" with an empty coffee cup and throws in a few coins.

PEARL

Maybe you'll get lucky. Or maybe not.

She gets back into her VW and drives off.

INT. LA JOLLA HOUSE.

Leti makes pancakes in an open skillet. She's wearing a simple but beautiful summer dress with her best ear rings and pearl necklace. She sings the Beatles' "Blackbird" tune. The pancakes flip onto a plate, pours herself coffee, and then checks on Ralph's Mom who still is motionless on the couch. Leti throws a cheap blanket over Ralph's Mom.

LETI

It was just Amblin, you old battle axe. How long are you going to sleep?

Leti eats in the breakfast alcove. She reads the morning paper. The phone rings and the machine responds.

PHONE ANSWERING MACHINE

No one's here, leave a message for Ralph or me.

MESSAGE

Ralph, it's Carl. I got a job for you next week so call me today.

Leti looks at a large Los Angeles area map and finds the Van Nuys address for Sears. She circles the location and takes a few pills with her coffee.

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY.

Pearl's VW is speeding down the freeway in the commuter lane. She randomly crosses the double yellow line to return to the common lanes.

EXT. SAN DIEGO FREEWAY.

Leti drives the Mustang with the top down on route to Los Angeles.

EXT. VAN NUYS SEARS AUTO REPAIR. THREE HOURS LATER

Mustang parks just outside the open Sears garage.

EXT. LA JOLLA HOUSE. LATE AFTERNOON

Pearl, sits in her VW, uncomfortable leaving the car. She puts on the radio and stares at her Mustang across the street. She looks into the rearview mirror and fixes her lipstick. She spies Leti approaching and drops her lipstick.

LETI

How long you sitting out here?

PEARL

I don't know.

LETI

I got the Mustang washed and detailed for you. The trunk is spotless. Full tank of gas.

PEARL

Thanks.

LETI

My bag is packed and in the car. Do you need the powder room?

PEARL

No.

Pearl, removes her overnight bag, locks the VW and crosses the street to the Mustang.

LETI

Key's in the ignition. I brought a box of Sees candy.

They both get in and Pearl adjusts the seat and mirror. On the radio is "Silly Love Song" by Paul McCartney's Wings. As the car - top down - drives off, an establishing shot of La Jolla shores and the scenic mountain road leading to the freeway.

PEARL

I hate this song.

LETI

I lost my virginity to this song.

PEARL

You got to be kidding.

INT. LA JOLLA HOUSE.

Ralph's Mom stirs from the couch and she appears confused and unstable on her feet. There's a note on the coffee table for her. "Back in a few days. I bought a carton of Marlboros for you." She notices the debris in the fish tank.

INT. MUSTANG.

LETI

So Barry Bonds hit his 73rd homer.  
Breaks Maguire's record, who  
smashed Maris' record, who trashed  
Babe Ruth's record. The ball's  
worth a million bucks.

PEARL

Easily.

LETI

This Russian guy Alex Popov catches  
the ball but the crowd rushes him.  
So this Japanese guy grabs it.  
They fight. They go to court.

PEARL

Judge Judy?

LETI

Real court. Judge rules joint  
custody over a fucking baseball.

Leti lights a marijuana joint to share with Pearl.

LETI

Medicinal. I'm a registered user  
because of my migraines and  
insomnia. So you think an American  
would get possession of this  
historic baseball. Then we learn  
Bonds, Maguire and even Sammy Sosa  
were mainlining steroids. When  
baseball loses it's integrity, so  
goes the country.

PEARL

Could we put the top up?

LETI

Sure.

Leti gets on the freeway shoulder and hoists the canvas overhead.

LETI

(sings)

*Pony car, pony car  
Won't you be my pony car?  
Don't say no  
Here we go  
Ride across the plane  
Carry me, marry me  
Come away with me!  
Giddy up, giddy up!  
Come away with me.*

PEARL

Are you eating all the candies?

LETI

(hands joint over)

I'm sharing.

PEARL

What did you do with the body?

LETI

Do you really want to know?

PEARL

Yeah.

LETI

I drove past Ramona and found a roadside ditch. I covered him. He's with the earthworms now.

PEARL

You're not rattled?

LETI

No. You're not smoking?

PEARL

I can't drive stoned.

LETI

I can. Look. Enjoy this now. We got to dump the grass before the border. Especially the roaches in the ash tray.

(Pearl takes a long toke)

You know, Mex-cops will fuck us just to find a dinky roach clip.

PEARL

I don't know what goes on below  
Tijuana.

LETI

It used to be easier, doll-face.

PEARL

That's what my mother used to call  
me.

(takes another long toke)

She would sew my name into all my  
labels so I'd never lose a blouse.

LETI

Do you like the Go Go's or the  
Bangles?

PEARL

Who?

LETI

Sugar is sugar. You like Avril  
Lavigne.

PEARL

You got to be kidding.

LETI

Weatherman said there's be a meteor  
shower tonight. Time to get car  
insurance for Mexico

EXT. SAN DIEGO FREEWAY.

The Mustang turns of freeway at San Ysidro, California. Along  
the local streets are signs for Instant Mexico Auto  
Insurance.

EXT. SAN YSIDRO INSURANCE STORE.

Leti and Pearl leave the car and enter the store.

INT. SAN YSIDRO INSURANCE STORE.

An overweight woman, snacking, is tending the counter.

OVERWEIGHT WOMAN

Yeah?

LETI

Insurance for our Mustang.

OVERWEIGHT WOMAN  
How many days?

LETI  
We'll take a week.

OVERWEIGHT WOMAN  
Okay.

PEARL  
Just one night.

LETI  
It's cheaper by the week and just  
in case you want to stay more than  
a night. You might actually like  
this place.

Paperwork on the counter. Leti produces her driver's  
license.

LETI  
You eat a lot of potato chips.

OVERWEIGHT WOMAN  
It's better than drinking  
Margaritas before 5.

LETI  
Maybe not.

EXT. SAN YSIDRO INSURANCE STORE.

Leti and Pearl exit store.

LETI  
She wasn't fat. It was her lousy  
choice of clothes. I saw Freddy  
earlier today.

PEARL  
What?

LETI  
At the Sears garage. I drove up  
earlier today. Look at the  
odometer. He won't stalk you  
anymore.

PEARL  
What did you say to him?

LETI

I just scared him. Had nothing to do with what I actually said. I give you my word. He'll never raise a finger to you again.

In an trash can outside the store, Leti throws away the rest of her marijuana.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER CROSSING.

The Mustang is in front of a long line approaching the entry booth and the women cross into Mexico without any hassle from the guards.

LETI (O.S.)

*Bienvenidos a Mexico!*

PEARL(O.S.)

That was quick.

LETI(O.S.)

I guarantee you that from this moment on, it's going to be a fucking blast. Now we just got to find the toll road to Rosarito.

EXT. TIJUANA STREETS. EVENING

Local music is heard as the Mustang weaves into different barrios of the city. Street life is vivacious and rowdy.

LETI (O.S.)

Need some diet pills?

PEARL (O.S.)

No, thanks.

LETI (O.S.)

How about a perm?

EXT. MEXICAN TOLL ROAD SOUTH.

The Mustang finds sign for toll road and steer into the clover leaf entrance. The evening lights are hypnotic.

INT. MUSTANG.

Pearl is drowsy in contrast to Leti's caffeine intensity.

PEARL

I'm exhausted.

LETI

You've been on the road a lot today.

PEARL

So have you.

LETI

Just rest your eyes. We're almost there.

PEARL

Did you slip me something?

LETI

What?

PEARL

Did you give me something?

LETI

Actually I did. A sedative. Not GHB. Very mellow.

PEARL

What?

LETI

I know you get yourself excited and now that we're south of the border I thought you would relax more than you're used to.

PEARL

I don't want this craziness, Leti.

LETI

I know. I'm so fond of you, Pearl. Trust me. I won't hurt you.

PEARL

I don't know.

LETI

Look, I did you a big favor today. I got dressed up and pretty. I also took care of Freddy for you.

PEARL

Freddy?



LETI

Look, most of my life I tried to figure out if I'm closer to Mother Teresa or axe wielding Lizzie Borden. Freddy's gone, Pearl. He's as good as dead. I took care of him.

Pearl passes out from the sedative.

LETI

Poor baby . . .

EXT. ROSARITO BEACH HOTEL. EVENING.

Leti drives into the parking lot of this gated "low rent" resort complex on the ocean. Pearl is asleep.

LETI

(to herself)

They've painted the old shack. I guess the rates have gone up.

She parks the Mustang like a teenage valet. She tries to wake Pearl but Pearl is on Cloud Nine.

LETI

Wake up, cowgirl!

Leti lets Pearl stay inside the car and walks into the hotel lounge.

INT. ROSARITO BEACH HOTEL.

Leti approaches the front desk. Some American tourists are finishing up their registration. Leti, impatient, lights a cigarette. She sees the American couple using coupons.

LETI

Oh for Christsake.

Her glance goes towards the sofa where another American is quietly negotiating with a well dressed, freelance prostitute.

LETI

This place has really hit the gutter.

She checks her cell phone. Then the hotel clerk leaves the American couple for some urgent matter. Leti takes all this in non-verbally.

PASSAGE OF TIME

The clerk has returned and concludes with the American couple. Leti approaches the front desk.

LETI

A balcony room facing the ocean.  
Maybe a few nights.

HOTEL CLERK

One or two beds?

LETI

One.

Pearl is walking up behind Leti, but Leti is unaware.

HOTEL CLERK

One bed.

PEARL

One bed?

LETI

Oh, Sleeping Beauty has awoken.

PEARL

Two beds.

LETI

You want an ocean view, otherwise  
why come to Rosarito?

A sustained quiet look is traded between the two women.

PEARL

Don't they have roll-away beds?

LETI

Of course they do.

(to the clerk)

Give us a cot or bed on wheels.

Okay?

The clerk signals to a bell cap to lead the women to their room. Pearl gives over her bag. Leti holds on to her bag. They go down a picturesque corridor and arrive at the elevators.

PEARL  
I'm starving.

LETI  
Let's see the room first.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR.

PEARL  
Do they have AC?

LETI  
Of course. You can tip the bell  
cap before he leaves.

The bell cap doesn't speak English. This is the slowest  
elevator in all of Mexico.

PEARL  
Are we moving at all?

LETI  
Old electrical wiring, that's the  
beauty of ancient world.

PEARL  
His cologne is suffocating me.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR UPSTAIRS.

Elevator opens. The bell cap leads the women to their room.  
A pair of wasted beach guys in long swim trunks and flippers  
walk past them. Mexican music is piped into the hall. He  
unlocks their dusty room. It's colorful but not horrible.

LETI  
I'll tip him. It's got a balcony.

PEARL  
No air conditioner?

LETI  
*No air frío?*

BELL CAP  
*No, lo siento.*

He goes to the sliding balcony doors and opens them.

BELL CAP  
*Esta bien?*

LETI

*Sí!*

She tips him and he leaves.

LETI

You hate it?

PEARL

There's a breeze.

LETI

It's a lovely breeze. And the roller bed is on its way. I promise you.

There's a knock on the door. Another hotel staffer enters with a white wine chilled in bucket of ice, two wine glasses and a bowl of fruit.

LETI

*Perfecto.*

She tips the staffer and he leaves. Leti opens the wine and pours while Pearl is on the balcony.

PEARL

So I'm still in shock.

LETI

About Mexico?

PEARL

About Freddy. You didn't get to him. It doesn't add up. You'll just screwing with my mind.

LETI

That's right.

PEARL

So stop screwing around, Leti.

LETI

Fair enough.

PEARL

I don't like those games.

LETI

Okay. Cheers.

She tries to clink glasses with Pearl. Pearl reluctantly plays along.

PEARL (O.S.)  
How did you know I like white wine?

LETI  
I asked Freddy.

PEARL  
What else did he say about me?

LETI  
That you like sex in the shower.

PEARL (O.S.)  
There's a wonderful meteor shower.

LETI  
Really?

Leti joins Pearl on the balcony. The ocean view is expansive and intoxicating. The night sky is alive with stars and moving lights.

PEARL  
I've seen meteorite showers before  
but . . .

LETI  
This one's spectacular. I'll order  
room service to bring up dinner.

PEARL  
I like your dress.

LETI  
It's a Calvin Klein knock-off. I  
bought it in the lobby boutique  
while you were in the car.

PEARL  
How long was I asleep?

LETI  
About an hour. There are three  
Consuelas working the hotel. Two  
in the gift shop and one running  
the beauty saloon. How's the wine?

PEARL  
Not bad.

Leti touches Pearl's hair softly.

LETI

Nice hair. No split ends. Sometime my hair's like the wrong end of a witch's broom.

PEARL

Did you ever hold a job?

LETI

(pouring another glass)

I was a dental assistant. "You don't have to floss all your teeth, darling, just the ones you wish to keep."

PEARL

When?

LETI

A year ago. And you?

They stand shoulder to shoulder but not quite touching.

PEARL

I worked nights in a law firm proofing documents from Texas. We still had Enron documents, can you believe it?

LETI

You sound so smart.

PEARL

Yeah. I read a lot. I like to text message.

LETI

Why did you take up with Freddy boy?

PEARL

When he was on good behavior it was magic.

LETI

Love is magic.

PEARL

I believe in magic, not love.

LETI  
So do I, Pearl.

Leti appears dizzy and reaches for the balcony rail.

PEARL  
Are you okay?

LETI  
My head's spinning.

PEARL  
The wine?

LETI  
I don't know.

PEARL  
Do you trust me, Leti?

LETI  
Did you slip something in my wine?

PEARL  
No.

LETI  
I don't believe you.

She drops the glass and reaches out to Pearl.

PEARL  
I got you. Let's sit down.

Pearl leads Leti to the bed.

PEARL  
Better?

LETI  
I got to lie down.

Leti reclines on bed.

PEARL  
What did you tell Ralph's mother  
before leaving?

LETI  
Said I wasn't coming back. I told  
her that some gang members were  
pissed at Ralph for something and  
he was in danger.

PEARL  
She believed you?

LETI  
Yeah.

PEARL  
You packed everything?

LETI  
Everything I could take in two  
arms.

Leti passes out. Pearl leaves the hotel room.

AN HOUR LATER

Pearl reenters the room and sees Leti stirring.

PEARL  
Are we a pair, Leti?

LETI  
A pair of what?

PEARL  
Do you think the cops will come?

LETI  
No.

Leti closes her eyes and Pearl takes a deep long look at her.

PEARL  
The sky's gone black. Not a meteor  
in sight. I feel so insignificant  
and small. Even homesick.

LETI  
Close your eyes, Pearl.

PEARL  
They are closed.

Leti, her eyes still closed, hums a lovely melody. She reaches for Pearl's hands and she doesn't recoil. Leti initiates a slow dance on the balcony and Pearl maintains a proper distance so they aren't cheek to cheek. A raven lands on the balcony, unbeknownst to the women.

LETI  
Your hands are so warm.



PEARL  
How did you meet Freddy?

LETI  
I called his shop a couple of  
times.

PEARL  
And?

She opens her eyes and sees Leti's eyes still shut.

LETI  
I mentioned your name. Told him  
something urgent was going on. He  
met me at the IHOP in Van Nuys.

PEARL  
He showed up?

LETI  
I had Belgian waffles. He looked  
stupid and boyish.

PEARL  
Did he fidget with his motorcycle  
ring?

LETI  
Yeah.

PEARL  
Was he flirting?

Leti opens her eyes to meet Pearl's.

LETI  
He stopped flirting when I told him  
I couldn't stand the touch of a  
man.

PEARL  
You let him kiss you?

LETI  
Yes. On the neck. Not on the  
lips.

PEARL  
What did he say about me?

LETI  
That you boss him around too much.

PEARL  
You spiked his drink.

LETI  
Four pills in his coffee mug.

PEARL  
You really did it, didn't you?

LETI  
He's gone. The sin's on my head  
alone.

Pearl breaks away and shudders. She sees the raven.

PEARL  
I'm very cold.

LETI  
Take my shawl.

She drapes the shawl around Pearl. The raven flies off. The phone rings several times.

PEARL  
Are you going to get that?

Leti crosses to get the hotel phone.

LETI  
*Hola?*

PEARL  
Who is it?

LETI  
I can't understand you? *No  
comprendo todo, verdad. El doctor?*  
(to Pearl)  
Did you call for a doctor?  
(back to phone)  
You got the wrong room. *El numero  
incorrecto, estúpido!*  
(hangs up)

PEARL  
Do you understand Spanish?

LETI  
No. Think we need to get a couple  
of margaritas downstairs. I don't  
like this wine.

(MORE)

LETI (cont'd)  
 There's a lounge show with dinner,  
 Pearl. That'll take your mind  
 away. Let's go.

PEARL  
 I'm not going to sleep with you  
 tonight.

LETI  
 What?

PEARL  
 The desk clerk gave me a dirty  
 look.

LETI  
 I'll sleep on the goddamn couch. I  
 have no expectations. And you're  
 full of mixed messages. I don't  
 sleep with women. I don't seduce  
 chicks.

Leti closes and locks the balcony doors. She takes a tight  
 jacket out of her bag and puts it on.

PEARL  
 I drank too much.

LETI  
 So?

PEARL  
 What about the cash you left in the  
 car?

LETI  
 It's yours to spend or to keep.

Leti goes to the front door and opens it.

PEARL  
 Why do people whisper?

LETI  
*Ya basta.*

Leti leaves the room.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT.

Leti and Pearl are escorted to a table by the ocean front  
 windows. There are many patrons around them.

LETI  
Is this table okay?

Pearl smiles oddly. They sit. Leti lights a cigarette.

PEARL  
Are you people staring at us?

LETI  
No. Well, maybe they are at you.

PEARL  
How did you get the \$70,000?

LETI  
I had \$100,000 a month ago and I lost track of the days. I owed Ralph's mother some money. I don't handle money very well, Pearl. Look at me, please.

Pearl returns eye contact.

LETI  
I got to go to the powder room.  
I'll be back.

Leti exits nonchalantly. Pearl surveys the large restaurant. A mariachi trio is roving.

TEN MINUTES  
LATER

Leti returns. Her hair is combed differently.

PEARL  
While you were in the rest room, a man came over to our table.

LETI  
What did he want?

PEARL  
He asked about my necklace. He said he noticed us at check-in. He liked our car.

LETI  
Which guy?

PEARL

A fat guy.

LETI

What did you say to him?

PEARL

I said I like pearls.

LETI

Did you order?

PEARL

Lobster.

LETI

For both of us?

She lights another cigarette.

PEARL

Don't smoke anymore.

LETI

Where is this guy, Pearl?

PEARL

Sitting at the opposite corner.  
Right by the piano. Wearing a  
large cowboy hat and white  
carnation. He told me he's a cop.

LETI

That's such bullshit.

PEARL

Why would he lie?

LETI

Cops don't wear cowboy hats.

PEARL

Chuck Norris does.

LETI

Come on.

PEARL

He showed me his badge.

LETI

They buy tin badges in the fucking  
barrios.

We see the alleged cop in the corner and he has a cowboy hat one size too big. He seems aware the women are eying him.

LETI

That jerk looks a like an avocado farmer from Guadalajara.

PEARL

He says his brother Luis is one of the hotel owners.

LETI

And I slept with Donald Trump before he got hair plugs.

Pearl shows Leti the card the stranger gave her.

PEARL

It says *policia secreto*. He said that means he's a detective.

LETI

And he tells young girls lots of *secretos*.

PEARL

He's coming over.

LETI

Sweet.

The stranger is very short and slow but he does make it across the room to their table. He smiles without working most of those big muscles.

STRANGER

*Buenos noches.*

LETI

Same to you.

STRANGER

I'm married 19 years and my wife has leukemia. She has an odor. I love her like a sister. God knows I'm good to her. We had a telethon for her last month and raised ten thousand dollars.

LETI

*Que lástima!*

STRANGER

Can I sit down? *Por favor?*

LETI

No. *Puedo ayudarle?*

He sits and smiles a little more broadly. Two smiles for each gal. He drinks Leti's glass of water.

STRANGER

I shouldn't talk about my wife to you when it makes me look *loco*. I like your car. I see you when you came. I noticed the license plates. Very sexy. I own a '68 pony. I love all ponies. A lot of cars come from L.A. and go to TJ chop shops. You know that's true. I swear to you that if a Mustang has a Saint Christopher on the dash, no carjacking and no chop shop. And that is true too. I want to buy you drinks.

LETI

*No gracias.*

STRANGER

I'm a detective. You cannot say no. Here's my card.

He gives Leti an official card.

STRANGER

And here's my badge.

He flashes his badge.

LETI

*No me gusta Santo Christopher.*

STRANGER

I told your friend that I watch *Sex and the City* and she looks like Sarah Jessica Parker. But prettier.

LETI

Half the women on this planet are prettier than that twit.

STRANGER

Are you afraid of *policia*?

Leti signals for the waiter to come over. The waiter is shying away from their table.

LETI

Mexican cops are worse than Mexican *banditos*.

STRANGER

My brother asks me to check people out. I'm not supposed to do this for one hotel. So I told him I would only check out the pretty women. I found some things in your pony car.

LETI

Like what, Pedro?

STRANGER

My name is not Pedro.

Leti looks at the official card he gave her.

LETI

Like what, Fernando?

STRANGER

Marijuana. And marijuana seeds.

LETI

No, you idiot. I have a parakeet and she has to eat.

STRANGER

Show me a photo of this parakeet.

LETI

*Vaya, tu pinga!*

He laughs and sees the lipstick on his water glass. With a napkin he removes the lipstick and then he shows Leti the color on his napkin.

STRANGER

Please stop speaking Spanish. Your Spanish is awful.

LETI

So is your English, Señor Jerko.

STRANGER

You can feel a cop, or you can cop a feel. What do you like?



Mariachi music gets louder and the musical trio serenades their table.

LETI  
For the love of Christ! Go ahead  
and dance with him.

PEARL  
What?

LETI  
Make him happy.

The stranger smiles and takes Pearl by the hand. She rises and they go onto the parquet dance area. While they are dance, a waiter brings another round of drinks including a draft beer for the stranger. Leti drops pills into his beer.

PEARL  
My feet hurt.

STRANGER  
So do mine.

PEARL  
Can we sit down?

STRANGER  
No. This is the first night  
without my wife in 19 years.

PEARL  
Where is she?

STRANGER  
That's a very funny question. What  
is your name again?

PEARL  
Pearl.

TEN MINUTES  
LATER

Leti is eating lobster. The stranger and Pearl walk to the table.

STRANGER  
Now I want to dance with you.

LETI  
A hundred dollars a dance.

STRANGER

I will pay.

LETI

That's a joke.

(he laughs)

I think it's time you go.

STRANGER

I'll go in five minutes. We'll still having fun.

He sits down, his hand on the draft beer.

LETI

I worry about your wife.

STRANGER

Thank you.

He drinks his beer.

LETI

And I think you care about your children.

STRANGER

We have four boys.

LETI

That's beautiful.

STRANGER

I found money in your car.

LETI

Did you take our money?

STRANGER

Of course not. \$20,000.

LETI

So what the hell do you want?

STRANGER

I worry about your safety. This is very true. You don't believe.

LETI

I don't believe you.

STRANGER

Well, with the marijuana and the money, I believe you are in trouble. And I believe you need to come to headquarters with me. I can help you. You come and then I return you to the hotel.

LETI

We need to go to our room first to get some things. I'm on a daily prescription. It's medical.

STRANGER

I'll come with you.

LETI

If you must.

Pearl and Leti exchanges glances. Nothing feels comfortable. He finishes his beer. Pearl hasn't touched her plate. Leti has one more bit of lobster before pushing her plate away.

PEARL

I haven't eaten.

LETI

*Vamonos?*

The stranger takes Pearl by the arm. The waiter acknowledges the stranger. Leti shows the room key number to the waiter. The Mariachi band proceeds to another table. Leti lights a cigarette and throws down some tip money.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR DOWNSTAIRS.

Pearl is still locked arm in arm with the stranger as they walk behind Leti. They pass other hotel guests. The stranger's cell phone rings. He answers.

STRANGER

Sí?

LETI

(whispers to Pearl)  
He's leaving us soon.

STRANGER

*No puedo ahora.*

He's done with his call and returns his attention on Pearl and Leti. They approach the elevator. Leti reaches for his jacket lapels seductively.

LETI

Well, you are a lucky bastard  
coming up to our room.

She kisses his ear and pulls the hat cockeyed. He doesn't seem to mind being played with this way.

LETI

You like that?

He doesn't smile with his mouth but his eyes are alive. The elevator opens. The women and the stranger go in. The doors shut. Leti looks at her watch. Becoming groggy, the stranger leans against the elevator door. Again, Leti goes in to kiss him on the neck. He drops to the floor.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR UPSTAIRS.

Elevator doors open. Leti laughs. Pearl exits first.

PEARL

Is he okay?

LETI

He just needs to sleep it off.  
Hold the door.

Pearl holds elevator door while Leti frisks the stranger. She finds \$20,000 cash and a gun, pocketing them. The women find their room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM.

PEARL

So what happens when he comes to?

LETI

He won't tonight. I guessed his weight.

PEARL

Maybe we should leave?

LETI

Quit worrying. It's late and we both need some rest.

PEARL

I don't want to be hauled to a Mexican jail, Leti.

LETI

Not going to happen.

They make themselves comfortable, kicking off shoes and lounging along the arm chair and bed.

LETI

I'll tell you something about your Freddy. When we met at IHOP, he came prepared.

INT. IHOP. DAY (FLASHBACK)

We see everything that Leti narrates:

LETI (V.O.)

He was sitting in the booth early. I recognized him by his Sears uniform. He already ordered pancakes. I came in and sat down without saying a word. I showed him two pictures of you on my cell phone. He didn't understand what was really happening under the table. I knew he was out of control and I suggested the Super 8 Motel down the street. He didn't know if this was a practical joke set up by you. It was close to his birthday - or so he said. I picked up the check.

EXT. VAN NUYS BLVD.

LETI (V.O.)

He followed me in his truck to the motel. So I let the shadow angel of death take over, Pearl. It was like a half dream. I didn't know Freddy. He didn't know me. But he was willing to have a little party during his working day. He even took a shower before we unmade the bed. And I asked him to shampoo which he did. I told him that we needed to have a conversation before anything physical really happened. He said he was lousy making conversation. So I said, that's okay. I can do all the talking. And I waited for the drug to kick in. I talked about my brief pregnancy and how I lost a child in miscarriage. He thought it was a bummer and maybe not the best thing to discuss.

(MORE)

LETI (V.O.) (cont'd)

And I asked him how he felt about you, Pearl. He came out of the shower with a towel around his waist. He decided I was a friend of yours so he made a pretty speech about you. And he made this speech while caressing me. While undressing me. He said you would marry him and you would be all his forever. But not now because he's still frisky like a young colt. And I asked him what he really wanted out of life, Pearl. And that kind of shut him down. He looked puzzled. You know that look on him? So I went on a bit more about my miscarriage and how I was stuck in car on the freeway. How sick I got and I thought some good Samaritan would stop to help me. And he started to slur his words and he fell along the bed. His towel dropped from his waist. He asked me what the fuck was really going on. And I said that when I was a kid my dad told me about the shadow angel of death. The opposite of the tooth fairy. I pulled his legs onto the bed and threw over a blanket. Freddy's very hairy. The angel of death or the shadow angel - whatever - goes to you because we have appointments to keep. And it doesn't matter what your age is or what you've done or what you're about to do - the shadow angel comes to make a point. And then be gone. Best not to fear the shadow. Death isn't punishment. You know that. Freddy knew that. I know that. Death is the sex God knows best. Freddy boy, I said softly, you will climax and the mystery will be yours to keep.

In the silence of this flashback, we see Leti lighting a cigarette and remaining in her Super 8 Motel chair. She holds a steady gaze on Freddy's motionless body. She gets to her feet and looks out the motel window. She opens the night table and pulls out the Gideon bible. Ashes from her cigarette fall over the bible. She wipes the book clean.

LETI (V.O.)

And in the dusty light inside,  
squinting my eyes slightly, I could  
swear I was seeing the astral  
outline of the shadow angel enter  
the fucking room. And I imagined  
the shadow angel taking Freddy's  
hand for the ride of his life.  
Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

INT. HOTEL ROOM BALCONY.

Pearl is on the balcony hearing the final narration of Leti.

PEARL

There's a search light on the  
ocean. Like a magician's wand  
sweeping the ocean.

Leti goes out to join her.

LETI

It's the Mexican Coast Guard  
looking for the little mermaid.

PEARL

On prom night, my date and I danced  
until dawn. It was a hotel as  
trashy as this one. And there was  
this Swedish girl new to the school  
who talked to the boys in perfect  
English. It was like she was doing  
every guy but my guy. My guy had  
braces on his teeth - you know -  
the real heavy metal braces. And  
on prom night Berta or Brigit or  
whatever she called herself. She  
had a date but left her date and  
badgered us. So it was a fight on  
prom night and I had to walk home  
at 5am in heels.

Pearl laughs to herself and pulls her hair tightly behind the  
hairline.

PEARL

It taught me a great lesson and I  
don't know why I have to go back to  
that night. Maybe there'll be more  
shooting stars? I forgot to make a  
wish. I don't understand the  
appeal of Ellen DeGeneres.

LETI

Her Dad lives in La Jolla. I know him. He goes to same mechanic that I use.

PEARL

What gives with her new recording company? Gangsta Rap for white gals? And if Ellen's the girl next door, I'm fucking Snow White. And it's totally LOL that old whacked relationship with Ann Heche.

LETI

Whatever happened to Ann Heche?

PEARL

Whatever happened to Annie Lennox?

LETI

Did she goe to the same loony farm with Margot Kidder?

PEARL

Lennox?

LETI

Heche.

PEARL

Heche claimed that she was abducted by aliens.

LETI

That's right. Yeah. She thought her name was Celestria and she was the daughter of God. She offered everyone in the world a chance to fly back with her to heaven. She didn't call me, that bitch.

Leti counts out the cash on the bed that she lifted from the stranger.

PEARL

What if she were right?

There's a knock on the door. Leti throws a towel over the money on the bed. Pearl goes to the door.

PEARL

Who is it?



BELL CAP (O.S.)  
*La cama extra.* You want the extra  
 bed.

PEARL  
 Leti?

LETI  
 Look through the peep hole.  
 (Pearl does)  
 Okay?

PEARL  
 It's a guy with a roller bed.

LETI  
 Let him in.

Pearl opens door and the bell cap rolls in the fold up bed.  
 He sets it up in the corner of the room, space shrinking  
 rapidly now. Leti gives him a few bucks.

LETI  
*Gracias.*

BELL CAP  
*De nada.*

He exits.

PEARL  
 That scared the hell out of me.

LETI  
 What are you going to do with this  
 money?

PEARL  
 You're saying it's mine?  
 (Leti nods sweetly)  
 I . . . I don't know.

LETI  
 We can split the money. All tolled  
 it's nearly \$70,000. Pearl, you had  
 time to think about it.

PEARL  
 Maybe get a boob job.

LETI  
 You're too young for that sort of  
 crap.

Pearl picks up a complimentary newspaper left on the bureau.

PEARL  
You look very tired.

LETI  
I am.

PEARL  
I can't go to sleep. Maybe I'll  
take a stroll.

LETI  
Stay in the room, even if you can't  
sleep. We're going to check out in  
the morning. It's getting a little  
crazy in Rosarito.

PEARL  
(reading from newspaper)  
"Death by Wired Bras" . . . get  
this . . . London. The death of  
two women by a bolt of lighting in  
Hyde Park was due to their under-  
wire bras serving as conductors, a  
coroner said today. "A tragic  
case, a pure act of Heaven," the  
coroner said. The women, Anuban  
Bell, 24, and Sunne Whitworth, 39,  
had found shelter under a tree  
during a severe thunderstorm.

(pause)  
Why would smart girls wear metal  
around their tits?

LETI  
Britain is a funny country.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR DOWNSTAIRS.

Staff try to revive the stranger who is unconscious in the  
elevator. Medics and a gurney arrive.

MEDIC  
*Con cuidado.*

BELL CAP  
*Asistencias profesionales al  
paciente . . .*

MEDIC  
*Despacio . . . mira . . .*

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT.

Ambulance and a police car are outside. Some officials are talking to another. The gurney comes out of hotel and the medics bring the stranger into the ambulance.

INT. HOTEL ROOM.

Leti, in bed, appears asleep. Pearl isn't in the room. The balcony door is partly open. The wind is mild. We see the view from the balcony and a half moon peeking behind low clouds. The raven returns to the balcony ledge.

LETI'S DREAM

Leti is in bed with Ralph in Ralph's bedroom. Both are half clothed. She's smoking. He takes the cigarette out of her hand. She looks annoyed. He wants sex.

RALPH

I asked you not to smoke.

LETI

The window's open.

RALPH

Your mouth tastes like a damn ashtray.

LETI

Want me to tell you what your mouth tastes like?

He kisses her. He pulls her hair back. He is forcing another kiss. She goes to light another cigarette.

RALPH

Stop fucking with me.

LETI

You're getting fat, Ralph.

RALPH

I'm not fat.

He puts his weight on her. She reaches for the phone.

RALPH

Put the phone down.

LETI

You're hurting me.

RALPH  
Put the phone down.

She puts the phone down. He begins to have sex with her.

END OF DREAM

INT HOTEL ROOM. MORNING

Pearl, in the large bed, wakes up. She looks around, not seeing Leti. She gets up and sees the roller bed left untouched. She goes out to the balcony and comes back inside.

PEARL  
Leti?

LETI (O.S.)  
I'm in the bathroom.

PEARL  
Oh.

LETI (O.S.)  
I just got up.

PEARL  
What time is it?

LETI (O.S.)  
Just after nine.

PEARL  
I'm flat out dead.

Leti leaves bathroom with towels around her body and around her head.

LETI  
I can tell you didn't sleep well.

PEARL  
What happened last night?

LETI  
I think you walked in your sleep.

PEARL  
I did?

LETI  
You left the room.

PEARL  
In my nightgown?

LETI  
No, you got dressed.

PEARL  
Where did I go?

LETI  
You don't remember a thing?

PEARL  
No. How did I get back into the room?

LETI  
You have a room key.

PEARL  
I always lose room keys. Why didn't you stop me?

LETI  
That old saying - don't ever wake up the sleepwalker - or else something bad will happen. Did you dream of Freddy?

PEARL  
I did.

LETI  
He came to.

PEARL  
I guess.

LETI  
I dreamt of Ralph. Not a nice dream.

PEARL  
Do we need to check out right away?

LETI  
I think so.

Leti approaches Pearl and kisses her neck.

PEARL  
I'm starving.

LETI

You didn't eat much last night.  
Did you phone him?

PEARL

Did I?

LETI

Yes or no. Freddy.

PEARL

I did.

LETI

I thought so.

PEARL

In my dream.

LETI

No, you called him from the hotel  
lobby.

PEARL

How do you know?

LETI

Cell reception is lousy here.

Casually, Leti gets dressed.

PEARL

I spoke to his brother. His  
brother's dumber than a rock.

LETI

What did his brother say?

PEARL

Nothing special. I told him where  
we are.

LETI

Why?

PEARL

At first he thought Freddy was with  
me. And Freddy told him about you.  
You doped Freddy, but the dose  
wasn't enough. Freddy's not  
answering his cell phone.

LETI

I got his cell phone. He probably has a great cardiovascular system. So the asshole played dead for an hour.

PEARL

Are you a vampire?

LETI

I am, but I don't suck blood.

PEARL

I do.

LETI

That's the least of my worries, pumpkin. If you've phoned Freddy and his brother, then I know where we're going.

PEARL

Did you think we were going on a long vacation?

LETI

Yes.

PEARL

That's why you gave me the cash?

LETI

It's only money. I don't need money. Money's easy to get.

Leti is finished dressing and she goes into bathroom to apply some eye makeup.

PEARL

I didn't care for your garish baby-doll nightgown.

LETI

Then why did you sleep with me?

PEARL

I didn't sleep with you.

LETI

Look, Pearl. We can just go our separate ways today. Is that what you want?

PEARL (O.S.)  
Yeah.

LETI  
So you'll take Freddy back?

PEARL  
Not saying that. (O.S.)

LETI  
Think I'm too old?

PEARL (O.S.)  
No.

Pearl enters the bathroom and they share eye contact in the mirror. Pearl has no clothes on.

PEARL  
I see people falling into two categories, Leti. Cats and dogs. Dogs come when you call.

LETI  
Do you want me to see you again?

PEARL  
No.

LETI  
Alright.

PEARL  
I mean it.

LETI  
Let's have breakfast and we'll call it over.

PEARL  
What about the cops?

LETI  
If we were in urgent trouble, the cops would've crashed through the door at dawn. We have a few hours. Why don't you throw on some clothes, princess?

Leti squeezes past Pearl and leaves the bathroom. Pearl's clothes are in the bathroom and she gets dressed.



PEARL

I don't intend to run. I didn't drug anyone. I didn't steal a thing. Last night, the cop just wanted to get laid.

LETI

Let's have breakfast.

Leti goes out to balcony and lights a cigarette. She sees a surfer riding a wonderful wave. Seagulls fly telling Leti the perfect note on freedom.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR UPSTAIRS.

Leti and Pearl walk down the corridor with their overnight bags. Pearl reaches out and takes Leti's hand.

INT. ELEVATOR.

Leti and Pearl, sharing space with another couple, are silent inside the elevator

INT. HOTEL LOBBY.

The elevator doors open. Leti and Pearl exit elevator. They proceed to the restaurant. They pass a large Japanese tour group leaving the restaurant.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT.

Leti and Pearl are seated by hotel management at the same table they had last night. Festive guitar music is piped in overhead. The women are silent with each other. A hotel manager with lapel name tag comes over to their table.

MANAGER

Good morning, ladies. Are you enjoying your stay?

Leti and Pearl say nothing but smile.

MANAGER

That's so nice. And you are very lovely. Very lovely yes. My brother met you last night. Yes?

LETI

I don't think so.

MANAGER

His name is Fernando Alvarez. A detective with *la policia*.

LETI

Is he short with a moustache?

MANAGER

Everyone at this hotel is short with a moustache.

(Leti laughs)

Yes. Very handsome *hombre* with a million dollar smile.

LETI

Oh, yeah. We met him.

MANAGER

He had a stroke.

LETI

My God, oh no . . .

MANAGER

Yes. We worry but the doctor said it will take some days and Fernando will be okay. My brother cannot speak well now.

LETI

Was he working?

MANAGER

No. He just likes coming to the hotel during his free time. Like you. He likes to meet young women. Maybe he's not wonderful with his wife but Fernando is a noble police officer. He wrote a note to me about you. He described you. It's a very long note. You had drinks at this table together. He was seen leaving with you . . . maybe going to your room? Consuela told me Fernando was with you down the corridor.

(silence)

My staff found him on the elevator floor.

LETI

Oh?

MANAGER

How long are you staying?

LETI

Until Christmas.

(Manager smiles)

We don't know.

MANAGER

I see.

Manager turns his attention to Pearl.

MANAGER

He had money on him. The money's gone. Maybe as much as \$20,000. My brother thought you know something about this.

PEARL

No.

MANAGER

Are you two sisters?

PEARL

No.

MANAGER

Are you prostitutes?

LETI

No.

MANAGER

Are you selling drugs?

PEARL

No.

MANAGER

Well, maybe I should stop asking these awful questions. You are my guests, yes?

Leti looks beyond the restaurant window and spies the black raven.

MANAGER

My resort hotel is gated. We have a fence that goes from the parking lot right to the ocean. We have video cameras on the roof.

(MORE)

MANAGER (cont'd)  
 We avoid crime at Rosarito Beach,  
 you see, and crime goes to other  
 villages because we do what we do.  
 You'll see *la policia* walking  
 around and in the parking lot.  
 Please do not be frightened.

Manager signals to the waiter a coded gesture.

MANAGER  
 Breakfast is on me. I think my  
 brother was charmed by you . . .  
 married men can be weak. I know.  
 I too am a married man. Enjoy your  
 breakfast, ladies.

He leaves abruptly and the waiter is ready to take their  
 order.

LETI  
*Juevos y pan, con cafe.*  
 (gesture to scramble eggs)

PEARL  
 Cereal and cafe.

LETI  
*Y frutas tambien.*

Waiter nods and leaves.

PEARL  
 So what's up?

LETI  
 Nothing. We can check out. No  
 hassle with the law.

PEARL  
 You don't think it's a game?

LETI  
 No. We're in the clear. You can't  
 get busted for stealing your own  
 money. So is Freddy coming to  
 Rosarito?

PEARL  
 No. But he's coming to get the VW.

LETI  
 You going to tell him anything  
 more?

PEARL  
No.

LETI  
So we just drive back together?

PEARL  
Yeah.

LETI  
Do you hate me, Pearl?

Pearl smiles warmly and nods in a pleasant way.

PEARL  
And do you hate me, Leti?

Leti doesn't smile and nods.

PEARL  
I'm going to drive the Mustang  
back.

LETI  
Fine.

PEARL  
You swear there's no grass hidden  
in the car?

LETI  
I swear.

PEARL  
Okay.

THIRTY MINUTES  
LATER, EATING

LETI  
Done?

PEARL  
Yeah.

Leti drops some cash on the table and they leave the restaurant. At the door is the hotel manager.

MANAGER  
*Todo bien?*

LETI  
*Todo bien, gracias.*

He hands Leti a prescription canister. She looks at it and pockets the canister.

INT. HOTEL FRONT DESK.

Leti settles the invoice while Pearl sits on the lobby sofa. In a moment, they both exit the hotel. The manager is within sight from another part of the lobby.

EXT. ROSARITO BEACH HOTEL.

They walk to their car. There is a police car with its lights on a hundred yards away. Leti pops the trunk open and puts their two bags in. Pearl takes the car keys from her and they get into the Mustang.

LETI  
The cop is watching us.

PEARL  
I know.

Pearl adjusts the seat, the mirrors, even checks her lipstick. She tries to start the Mustang. It fails to turn over. Leti gets out and checks the fan belt.

LETI  
Try it again, Pearl.

Pearl starts the engine. No luck. Leti makes a few more adjustments with her bare hands.

LETI  
Again, Pearl!

Pearl starts the engine and it turns over. Leti gets back into the Mustang. The cop car crawls toward them.

LETI  
Let's go, babe.

Mustang rolls out of the parking lot.

PEARL  
We're low on gas.

LETI  
How bad?

PEARL  
Less than a quarter tank.

LETI  
Don't worry about it. We'll gas up  
over the border.

EXT. MEXICAN TOLL ROAD NORTH.

The Mustang approaches the entrance of the toll road. The cop car continues to follow them from a distance. Leti turns around to look.

LETI  
This is fun.

PEARL  
If he's going to stop us, why  
doesn't he?

LETI  
Just watch your speed and get us  
going.

The Mustang ramps onto the highway and the police car follows several car lengths behind them.

LETI  
You know, I'm craving a strong cup  
of coffee.

She lights a cigarette and rolls down her window. Leti flips on the radio and catches the last half of the Eagles' "Hotel California".

PEARL  
I think the cop car just turned  
off.

Leti turns to look.

LETI  
You right.

PEARL  
Do you want me to stop for coffee  
in ten minutes?

LETI  
No. Let's keep going.

Pearl's cell phone rings. She answers it. Leti turns down the radio.

PEARL  
 Hello? Dad?  
 (silence)  
 I can't. I'm sorry. Maybe in a  
 few days. Can't talk. I'm  
 driving.

She puts down her cell.

LETI  
 How's Dad?

Pearl is quiet.

LETI  
 He's really a cop?

Pearl turns up the radio.

LETI  
 Did you Dad ever meet Freddy?

PEARL  
 I'm pregnant, Leti.

LETI  
 What?

PEARL  
 Probably six weeks. I took the  
 home test twice.

LETI  
 What are you going to do?

PEARL  
 I don't know. And it's not  
 Freddy's.

EXT U.S./MEXICO BORDER CROSSING.

A long line of cars ahead of them. Some children, selling  
 flowers and oddities, knock on car windows. Some very  
 destitute elderly hawkers are even more aggressive.

LETI  
 What a wait!

PEARL  
 (hands money to child)  
 A flower. Thank you.



LETI

You might like maternity, Pearl.  
It's not for me, but you have  
something in your eyes.

TEN MINUTES  
LATER

Several car lengths behind the border check booth, Mexican police approach the Mustang from both driver's window and passenger's window. The police signal for Pearl to pull away from the lane and park at the checkpoint shoulder.

PEARL

Oh fuck.

LETI

Just keep your cool, Pearl. We're  
clean.

Pearl and Leti get out of the car. We see the following from a far distance and only hear the din of car horns, engines, and white noise. Pearl and Leti show driver licenses. The police search the Mustang and ask Pearl to open up the trunk.

POV/FANTASY

A close angle on Leti's face. Leti imagines the body of Ralph in the trunk and, in this brief fantasy, the police find the body wrapped in a blanket. Flashing cameras go off. Guns are now drawn on Leti and Pearl. The body stirs inside the blanket, perhaps a grasping hand comes out.

BACK TO

The police open the glove compartment. They find a toy gun and see immediately it is a toy. They question Pearl and Leti. Pearl opens the trunk which has their two travel bags. The cops search the bags. The cops pull Leti aside as it seems she will be detained.

COP

(to Pearl)

*Puedes salir sin su amiga!* Go!  
Your friend stays.

Pearl looks very startled. Leti gets what's going on.

PEARL

She didn't do anything. Damn it!

The cop opens the driver's side door and escorts Pearl. The other cop throws Pearl's overnight bag back into the trunk and shuts the trunk. Leti's bag is in custody.

COP

*Vaya!*

Leti is horrified. Pearl starts up the Mustang and throws a final look at Leti. Their eyes meet.

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY. LATER THAT DAY

Pearl is driving with the top down. Traffic moves. The Pretender's song, "I'll Stand By You." plays loud and hard.

EXT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. DAY

Pearl enters her apartment. Her phone rings.

PEARL

Hi . . . Daddy? I'm back.  
(after a silence)  
My friend's in trouble.

THAT NIGHT

Pearl, in nightgown, feeds her cat. She looks outside her window and sees her parked Mustang. Pearl gets ready for bed and eventually turns out the bedroom light.

SERIES OF SHOTS OVER SIX MONTHS

Pearl three months pregnant at doctor's office.

Pearl five months pregnant taking maternity yoga.

Pearl seven months pregnant buying baby seat at Baby's R Us.

Pearl eight months pregnant getting a doctor's sonogram.

Pearl nine months pregnant trying to get into her Mustang.

Pearl in labor at the hospital with her father.

EXT. LOS ANGELES PARK. DAY

Pearl, with a baby stroller, is at a park bench. It's a beautiful weather and Pearl has transformed into an attractive young mother. Another mother with stroller comes by and they share the bench.

MOTHER

How old?

PEARL  
Three months.

MOTHER  
Girl?

PEARL  
Ahuh.

MOTHER  
Getting any sleep?

PEARL  
No.

MOTHER  
Mine's colic. He's almost a year  
old.

PEARL  
(looking into stroller)  
Cute baby.

MOTHER  
Thanks.

PEARL  
It's like a club.

MOTHER  
You bet.

PEARL  
And all my life I hated clubs.

MOTHER  
Are you married?

PEARL  
No.

MOTHER  
I didn't see a ring.

PEARL  
My dad's a police detective. No  
guy was ever good enough to pass  
his tests. Worse than an nun on  
your heels.

MOTHER  
I married my high school  
sweetheart.

(MORE)

MOTHER (cont'd)  
 But he's really fat now. Really  
 hard to shop for him. I don't know  
 how that happens.

(awkward smile, Pearl  
 laughs)

At my church there's a nice "Mommy  
 and Me" program for single moms.

PEARL  
 No thanks.

MOTHER  
 It's not a Catholic church. Much  
 more fun than that.

PEARL  
 No thanks.

Pearl gets up and releases the stroller's brake.

MOTHER  
 Bye bye.

PEARL  
 Yeah, bye.

Pearl meanders through the park. She gets to the parking lot  
 where she finds her Mustang. She puts her baby in the car  
 seat and she folds down the stroller. She opens the car  
 trunk and stares for a long moment at the empty trunk.

MOTHER  
 I really like your car.

Pearl is taken back by the intrusion.

MOTHER  
 My name is Olivia.

PEARL  
 Pearl.

MOTHER  
 Hi Pearl. I'll probably see you  
 here again. It's a very safe park  
 for families.

A chill goes up Pearl's spine.

INT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. THE NEXT DAY

Pearl is feeding her baby. Her phone rings.

PEARL

Hello?

No one answers. She hangs up.

EXT. LOS ANGELES PARK.

Pearl, in sunglasses, wheels her stroller to another section of the neighborhood park. She finds an empty bench. Her baby cries and Pearl takes her baby into her arms.

PEARL

Shhh . . . .

Pearl sings a lullaby while rocking her.

PEARL

The itsy-bitsy spider  
climbed up the water spout  
Down came the rain  
And washed the spider out  
Out came the sun  
And dried up all the rain  
And the itsy-bitsy spider  
Climbed up the spout again.

The baby stops crying. A woman approaches Pearl and Pearl notices from the corner of her eye. It is Leti with very short hair.

LETI

Hi Pearl.

Pearl is speechless and holds her baby closer.

LETI

I followed you from your apartment.  
I guess you didn't notice. What a  
beautiful baby. You both have such  
an amazing glow.

(silence)

Do you know who the father is?

PEARL

Yes.

LETI

That's good. Good for you baby.  
What's her name?

PEARL

Angelina.

LETI  
Angelina.

PEARL  
Thank you.

LETI  
For what?

PEARL  
I don't know.

LETI  
Are you working?

PEARL  
Not right now. I'll start in a few months as a proofreader at the law firm.

LETI  
Where's Freddy?

PEARL  
He's gone.

LETI  
That's good. No more bruises on the face.

PEARL  
What happened to you?

LETI  
I had a run of bad luck, you know. Well, so did Lindsay Lohan. I'm not thinner, Pearl, just more angular.

PEARL  
You look fine . . .

LETI  
May I hold Angelina?

After an uncomfortable silence, Pearl gives her baby to Leti. Leti is beaming with quiet joy.

LETI  
She's pure sugar, Pearl. Looks just like you.

PEARL  
I don't think so.

The mother from the previous day strolls by and thinks twice before acknowledging Pearl. Pearl is unaware of her presence and she stays focused on Leti. The mother decides to wave at Pearl and continue strolling through the park.

PEARL  
Were you put in jail?

LETI  
Why do you want to know?

PEARL  
Just tell me.

LETI  
Yeah. For six months. You remember short Fernando the cop in plain clothes - left in the elevator?

PEARL  
I'm sorry.

LETI  
It could have been worse, honey.

PEARL  
Where are you living?

LETI  
La Jolla.

Leti returns baby to Pearl. There's some spittle on Leti's blouse and Leti notices it at the same time Pearl does. Leti smiles innocently.

PEARL  
I'm sorry, Leti.

Pearl finds a wet baby wipe and tries to clean the stain. Pearl returns her baby to the stroller.

LETI  
It's okay, Pearl.

Spontaneously, Pearl and Leti begin to walk with the stroller. They fall into a comfortable silence.

LETI  
Have you plans for dinner?

PEARL

No.

LETI

Am I imposing, Pearl?

PEARL

No.

LETI

I could simply disappear. It's been almost a year.

PEARL

I know. I'll cook some pasta.

LETI

I'll bring some wine.

INT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT. EVENING

Pearl has straightened up the apartment and the lights are soft. She checks the wall clock and takes off apron. Pearl's wearing a modest print dress. She checks her baby who is sleeping in the crib. She looks out the window. Leti is approaching from the street. Pearl opens the door in anticipation.

EXT. LOS ANGELES APARTMENT.

Leti, in a long black dress, has flowers in her hand. She hesitates a moment before climbing the stairs to Pearl's door. She gives Pearl a smile but they do not kiss.

LETI

Am I early?

PEARL

No. Perfect. Angelina just fell asleep.

LETI

Oh.

PEARL

Right about now is Mr. Sand Man.

Leti enters the apartment.

LETI

Nice place.



PEARL  
Had did you know my address?

LETI  
On your driver's license.

Pearl takes Leti's short jacket and hangs it in the closet.

LETI  
How are your neighbors?

PEARL  
Some are nice and some are  
specimens from the zoo.

LETI  
Thanks for letting me see you.

Leti goes to the sofa while Pearl tends to the kitchen.

LETI  
Are you dating?

Pearl doesn't answer, but she brings a glass of red wine to Leti.

PEARL  
Pinot noir?

LETI  
Thanks.

PEARL  
I'm not drinking. I'm still breast  
feeding.

LETI  
Fancy that.

Leti sees that Pearl has let her nails grow stylishly long and must have had a manicure recently. Pearl has set the table for two and is about to serve the pasta with salad.

PEARL  
I'm a lousy cook.

LETI  
Do you have a job?

PEARL  
Not now. Do you?

LETI

Yeah. I'm selling health club memberships. It's a shitty job but I had to do something. I can pay the rent. You see, Pearl, I came into money and I never liked money. If I were smart, I would have saved some cash. I guess I just couldn't care. Maybe I did right with you, because you're doing something good for yourself and for your kid.

PEARL

Do I owe?

LETI

No.

PEARL

It feels like a know you for a lifetime.

LETI

Me too, Pearl.

There is a knock at the door.

LETI

Are you expecting someone?

Pearl slowly goes to the door. She looks through the peephole. She opens the door.

PEARL

Dad . . .

Pearl's father is standing with groceries.

DAD

Bad time?

PEARL

I've company.

DAD

Sure. I'll go. You told me you needed some groceries.

He enters to deliver the groceries. He's keen to know who is visiting his daughter.

LETI

Hi.

DAD

Hello.

PEARL

That's Leti, Dad. She sold me the Mustang.

DAD

Oh.

PEARL

Did you have dinner?

DAD

Actually, no . . . but I don't mean to intrude.

LETI

I don't mind, Pearl.

DAD

Fine. Let me just wash up.

He goes to the bathroom.

LETI

He's kind of handsome, Pearl.

PEARL

Yeah, I guess he is.

LETI

Where's your mother?

PEARL

She's dead.

Pearl unpacks groceries and then sets the table for her father. Leti craves a cigarette and takes one out. She stops short of lighting it. Pearl puts on a mellow CD on the boom box. The next moment, Dad returns.

DAD

I went to a celebrity book signing today at Bookstar. I don't usually do that sort of thing. I even bought the book. It was Joseph Wambaugh's latest crime novel. Pearl knows I like Wambaugh. Isn't that so, honey?

PEARL

Yeah, Dad.

DAD

I even got a photo with him and me.  
He used to be a cop in L.A. but had  
the smarts to get out early. Now  
he just golfs.

PEARL

Dad, sit down.

He does. Leti is already at the table. The baby cries.

PEARL

I'll be right back. Dad, help  
yourself to some wine.

Pearl exits. Dad pours wine for himself and refills Leti's  
glass.

LETI

Thanks.

DAD

She's got a hard life. Raising the  
baby alone. My heart goes out to  
her.

LETI

Yeah, I feel the same way.

DAD

I know you were helpful to her.

LETI

How so?

DAD

Well, for one, you managed to scare  
away that fucking bastard Freddy.  
He made parasites look noble. I  
don't know what the hell you did to  
him, but he stopped calling and  
Pearl's much safer now.

LETI

Are you a cop?

DAD

A detective, yeah. Three decades.  
I should pension out.

LETI

I didn't think cool cops read  
Wambaugh.

DAD

Most cops read John Grisham. What, you think cops don't read shit?

LETI

(laughing)

Yeah.

DAD

You know, I was part of the team that cracked the O.J. case in 1994. glove. Remember's Johnny Cochran's little ditty, "if the glove don't fit, you must acquit." I was the asshole who found the

LETI

Very impressive.

DAD

You were in Mexico for a time.

LETI

That's right.

DAD

You were busted.

LETI

Yep.

DAD

And they let you out?

LETI

I believe in miracles. I got a miracle, Mr. Campbell.

DAD

You can call me Charlie.

LETI

And you only get one miracle in a lifetime.

DAD

Pearl told me a little bit and I said don't tell me any more. I don't like escapades over the border and she knows I forbid her to cross into TJ. I know about the money you gave her too.

LETI

Oh really.

DAD

And the truth is, I don't earn enough to help Pearl right now, unless she wants to move in with me. That was an option. Her mother didn't give Pearl enough support and I can't make up for the hole.

Pearl returns. She glances at Dad and Leti to discern what might have been discussed.

LETI

Angelina okay?

PEARL

Ahuh. She likes being rocked back to sleep.

LETI

Eventually, you'll need a mother's little helper.

PEARL

No nannies.

DAD

I could retire in three years, Pearl, and be your *au pair*.

He lifts his glass, taking a big swig.

PEARL

Cute.

DAD

I was telling your friend that she did a wonderful thing for you.

Pearl is unclear about the reference. She serves pasta onto her father's plate.

DAD

Maybe I could hear the whole story, Pearl, since I'm a curious old coot.

PEARL

No, Dad.

DAD

Hell, I couldn't scare the hell out of Freddy boy. How did she do it?

PEARL

She slept with him, Dad. Is that enough info?

DAD

Did you sleep with this rat?

LETI

No.

DAD

Okay. So the story's not quite straight.

(laughs)

So Pearly, why would you say that?

LETI

Your daughter's inventive.

DAD

I know that. I'm not stupid.

PEARL

Dad, I don't know what happened and it's history. So let it drop.

DAD

Well, I do know your friend was busted in Rosarito - either for grass or for screwing with a corrupt cop. But it's really hard to get a reduced sentence down there, unless you're with a major gang or you got big money. And I know Freddy tried to get to you that weekend a year ago. Oh hell, you both are sworn to secrecy. I faced off with Freddy before. Didn't accomplish doodly squat. I tried to harass him with car and license violations. He didn't even blink.

LETI

Young guys don't like me. That's the truth, Charlie.

(MORE)

LETI (cont'd)

They may find me attractive and they may ask me out for a date, but deep inside they know I'm only seconds away from stabbing them with a butcher's knife. And the thing is, they're right and I'm unburdened.

PEARL

Enough about Fred, okay? You're both pissing me off.

DAD

Where are you living, Leti?

LETI

San Diego.

DAD

Are you in a relationship?

LETI

Are you asking me out?

DAD

No, I'm not asking you out.

LETI

I don't date any more.

DAD

Good for you. I don't date any more either. We've something special in common.

Dad sees the displeasure on Pearl's face. He coughs into his hand and wipes himself with a napkin.

DAD

Wonderful dinner, darling. I love angel hair pasta.

THIRTY MINUTES  
LATER

Pearl clears the table and Leti helps pick up some plates. Pearl's baby is heard crying.

DAD

I'll make it an early evening.

PEARL

Thanks, Dad. Give me just a moment.



Pearl hurries to Angelina.

DAD  
Leti, you really do shock me.

LETI  
How?

DAD  
I didn't think you would call me  
Charlie.

LETI  
I didn't think I would either.

DAD  
I didn't think you'd ever visit  
Pearl.

LETI  
I was surprised too.

DAD  
And I didn't think you'd tell me so  
easily how fucking deviant you are.

LETI  
Well, you're a Los Angeles cop and  
some years ago I might have slept  
with Rodney King.

DAD  
Pearl told me you murdered your  
boyfriend.

LETI  
Did she?

DAD  
Yeah. She said there was no way  
she could go to the cops. Telling  
me doesn't count either. Do you  
know why?

LETI  
Why, Charlie?

DAD  
Because I figured out long ago the  
only way I could keep my ties to  
Pearl was to not wear a badge in  
the house.

(MORE)

DAD (cont'd)  
 Not in my house and not in her  
 house. It's that damn simple.

LETI  
 I like that.

DAD  
 If you're in love with Pearl as  
 much as I'm in love with her, well,  
 you have to make big  
 accommodations.

LETI  
 Thanks.

DAD  
 God doesn't exist. I figured that  
 out long ago.

Dad counts out about \$200 in twenties for Pearl and leaves on  
 the table. Pearl returns and doesn't see the cash. She hugs  
 her Dad.

PEARL  
 Drive safely, okay? You're over  
 the legal limit.

Dad kisses her.

DAD  
 'night, Pearl.

He turns to Leti. Leti is uncomfortable suddenly.

DAD  
 I'll walk you out, Leti.

LETI  
 I wasn't ready to go.

DAD  
 Oh, alright.  
 (Looks at Pearl)  
 Good night, Leti. Nice meeting  
 you.

LETI  
 Good night, Charlie.

He hesitates then kisses Leti's cheek. Dad exits.

PEARL  
 He's a piece of work.

LETI

Yeah.

PEARL

Did he grill you?

LETI

Yeah.

PEARL

What did you say?

LETI

I don't remember, Pearl.

Pearl pours herself more wine and drinks.

PEARL

He knows you killed your boyfriend. Maybe he thinks it was justifiable. He didn't do shit about it. And he thinks the San Diego cops just wrote it off as a low rent gangland hit.

LETI

Good to know.

PEARL

I'm exhausted, Leti.

LETI

I know. I see it on your face.  
(silence)  
I'm in love with you, Pearl. I want to see you again. I don't want to make a game of it. And I never want to go to jail again. You don't have to say anything now. I just want you to know that we both don't have to mess up our lives any longer.

PEARL

Okay.

LETI

Okay.

PEARL

You should drive home tonight.

LETI

Fine.

PEARL

Thanks for helping. Thanks for  
visiting. Thanks for . . .

LETI

Good night, Pearl.

Leti goes to the closet to collect her jacket. She walks to the front door. Pearl approaches. They look at each other. Pearl caresses Leti's face with an open hand. The eye contact is very intimate. Leti pulls away and opens the door.

PEARL

Don't drive back.

Pearl reaches for Leti's hand. Leti turns and Pearl initiates a passionate kiss. Pearl breaks from the kiss and is about to close the door. Pearl spies her father watching from the street. She closes the door. The two women kiss again.

Pearl lead Leti to the bedroom. They slowly disrobe and climb into bed. They are intoxicated by each other. The next moment, Angelina is heard crying from the crib next to the bed. Leti finds this amusing and Pearl less so. Pearl gets up and tends to her baby. We see Leti's face in close-up looking serene and grounded for the first time in her life.

EXT. LOS ANGELES PARK. DAY

Pearl and Leti are walking the stroller. They're both wearing hats and heels. Leti carries her pack of cigarettes and has an unlit cigarette out. Yet she is trying to curtail the habit. A group of preschoolers go by with a teacher. Pearl and Leti find a bench and sit. A balloon salesman passes and Leti buys a few balloons for the stroller. The mother, Olivia, who ran into Pearl before in the park is back on the scene. Olivia strolls by and acknowledges Pearl. Leti seems to intuit some park history and she decides to kiss Pearl in front of Olivia. Olivia pretends not to have seen the kiss and walks on. Pearl seems happy by the awkward moment. A raven appears and Pearl throws some snack food to the ground for the raven. Both women notice the bird.

EXT. PARKING LOT.

Pearl and Leti go to the Mustang in the park's car lot. Angelina gets secured in the baby seat bucket.

The stroller is folded for the trunk. Leti opens up the trunk. The car is packed and ready to go. Pearl's in the driver seat. Leti checks Angelina and smiles assuredly. Leti opens up the glove compartment and finds a Pretenders tape.

LETI  
You kept my Chrissy Hinds.

The Mustang takes off to the Pretenders' "Don't Get Me Wrong".

THE END

(MORE)

(cont'd)

(MORE)

(cont'd)