

A BLACK HEART

by
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Manage-ment

FADE IN:

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

JAKE COLLIER (40) wades through throngs of people crowding a school gym filled with booths, clowns and fun games for kids.

Jake's dressed respectable but still carries himself like a guy who works in jeans and gets dirt under his nails.

He sidles up to an attractive WOMAN waiting by an airbag jungle gym filled with bouncing children, her back to him.

JAKE

Hello beautiful, are you available?
I'd kill for a date with you.

The woman, KARA (33) turns. Dark hair and eyes with a dash of the exotic. Holds up a hand, showing her wedding ring.

KARA

Sorry, already taken.

JAKE

Too bad. Your husband, a large man?

KARA

Unfortunately, no.

Jake winces because he is, of course, her husband.

JAKE

Ouch. Okay, I give. Can we go now?

KARA

The more tired he gets, the deeper he sleeps, which means more private time for us. Without interruption.

CONNOR (5) their son, bounces like mad inside the air gym.

JAKE

Good job, son, Keep going!

SCOTT WALTERS (50), a well-fed man without a shred of any obvious honest sweat on his person, approaches.

WALTERS

Jake! How's business these days?

JAKE

Scott. It's good, no complaints.

WALTERS

I'll bet. The recession must have been a real boon for you.

MARCUS LELAND same age and air of rich entitlement as Walters, chimes in on the conversation.

LELAND

Is it true, what Scott says, that no car is safe from you?

JAKE

Well Marcus, if it's paid for, it's safe from me. If it's not paid for-

WALTERS

You steal it back?

JAKE

It's not stealing because I return a product to its rightful owner.

LELAND

But you can "take" any car from anyone at any time? Anywhere?

JAKE

That is what I do.

The other two men look at each other, giggle. Kara doesn't like the direction this is going.

LELAND

Well? Show him, I dare you!

Walters holds up an iphone. A picture of a choice Porsche.

LELAND

His pride and joy. Half a million dollars of automobile. Stays in the garage, he rarely takes it out.

WALTERS

A gentleman's wager. Five hundred dollars you can't take my car.

LELAND

I'll double it. A thousand. I'd love to see you at work.

KARA

I'm sorry but no. Breaking and entering a private residence is against the law, even for repo men.

WALTERS

Oh, I won't press charges. If he can do it. I'll even go on record.

LELAND

It's all in fun. For the challenge.

JAKE

Can I see the picture again?

The men grin and clap. Walters hands Jake his iphone.

JAKE

I couldn't take your money for this. If you were to donate it, however, to the school-

KARA

Jake, please! I'm sorry but this is very inappropriate. No.

CONNOR

Mommy!

Connor appears and jumps into his mother's arms, laughing.

JAKE

When she's right, she's right. Gotta pass on this bet, sorry.

WALTERS

Just as well, I have the latest in home security. I see my wife waving for me. Good talking with you.

Jake hands the iphone back. The men bid good-bye, walk off.

JAKE

Should we go, honey?

CONNOR

Raffle, Daddy, raffle!

KARA

They announce the winners now.

JAKE

You two watch that and I'll go get
the truck, pick you up out front.

Jake ambles off, Kara eyeing him as he goes.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Kara leads Connor, holding a raffle prize, out into the brisk
October air. MRS. WALTERS (50) just as well-fed as her
husband Scott, waits with her rotund daughter out front.

MRS. WALTERS

Hi Kara, how's Connor's first year?

KARA

Going well, he likes this school.

MRS. WALTERS

He has your eyes, so cute. Can I
ask where are you from, originally?

KARA

Nebraska.

MRS. WALTERS

Oh. I'm sorry, I thought you had a
different cultural background ...

KARA

In a way, my mother was
Argentinian, my father American.

MRS. WALTERS

Really? Did you grow up there?

KARA

When I was very young. My father
was attached to the embassy there.
When he retired we moved to Omaha
and that's where I grew up.

MRS. WALTERS

They met at an embassy? Sounds so
lovely, like in a romance novel.

Leland and his FAMILY walk out of the school, along with
other people. Walters RUNS from the parking lot, frantic.

WALTERS

The Goddamn Caddy is gone, gone!

MRS. WALTERS
Scott, language please!

WALTERS
Don't start, Linda Sue, someone
stole my fucking Cadillac!

CONNOR
Daddy!

A HONK ... Jake drives up in the PORSCHE. He hops out.

JAKE
Caddy's in your garage. I trust you
gentleman will honor your
commitment to the school fund?

Eyes cold, Kara picks up Connor, storms off. Clearly pissed.

LELAND
Of course. Absolutely.

WALTERS
How did you get past my alarm, how
did you even know where I live? How-

INT. JAKE'S TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Jake drives the hilly streets of San Francisco. Connor in the middle, zonked out asleep, head on Jake's shoulder. Kara stares out her window, steam nearly coming out her ears.

JAKE
By the way ... I love you.
(beat)
You even want to know how I did it?

KARA
You backtracked his cell number to
find out where he lived, broke into
his Cadillac and used his automatic
garage door opener to get inside.

JAKE
Yeah. Don't you think it was kinda,
you know ... cool?

KARA
"Cool"? Jake, that's childish.

JAKE

He was dangling it out there like a big shot Daddy Warbucks, I hate that shit-

KARA

Grow up. You're a parent now.

JAKE

I know I'm a parent, but I'm also still me, the guy you met and fell in love with, and-

KARA

That guy, the guy who used to steal things and get into trouble? He's not who you are anymore. You have a family now. Be responsible. What if he changed his mind and decided to press charges? What then? What if something went wrong? What would Connor and I do if something happened to you while you're doing something stupid and against the law like you just did?

JAKE

Nothing's going to happen to me.

KARA

Everyone thinks that until it happens. Life can change in a second. And you want your defining moment to be about proving a point to some rich asshole? Grow up!

Nothing said for awhile after that.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kara tucks Connor into bed. The kid is totally knocked out exhausted and sleeps with a smile on his face.

Jake tiptoes in quietly next to Kara. Watch their son sleep. After a moment, Kara TAKES Jake's hand in hers.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jake at the sink, brushing his teeth. Kara enters, KISSES his shoulder. Jake rinses, spits. Smiles at her.

KARA

What?

JAKE

I love a lot of things about you,
but the thing I love most? You
don't hold a grudge. You get mad
and once it's out, it's gone.

KARA

What's the point? Once it's over?

JAKE

I was born holding a grudge.

KARA

Yes, I've noticed that about you.

JAKE

I don't know how you do it.

KARA

The Buddhist monks, the ones in
Tibet? They spend months working on
these murals made of colored
pebbles of sand on the floor. They
take all that time to create
something of breathtaking beauty
and once they finish a mural, you
know what they do?

JAKE

What?

KARA

Take a deep breath and blow it all
away. Then they start again.

JAKE

(after a moment)
That's fucked up.

KARA

My husband, the philosopher.

Kara kisses him. He kisses her back. Moves on to her neck.

KARA

You're not completely forgiven as
of yet. There must be punishment.

JAKE

Of course, punishment. Yes.

Kara grabs an eyebrow pencil. Writes on his chest.

KARA
 You're not allowed to wash this off
 until I say so.

The note on his chest reads: **"ASNO TERCO"**.

JAKE
 Wait, what does it mean?

KARA
 I'll never tell.

Kara crinkles her nose, backs away into the bedroom, teasing. Jake chases her and she shrieks and runs, giggling. He tackles her on the bed and intimate marital exercises follow.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jake stumbles in, takes a seat. Connor grins over cereal.

CONNOR
 Daddy!

JAKE
 What up, little man?

KARA
 Proper English, please.

Kara pours him coffee. Connor points at the words on Jake's chest, poking out of his bathrobe.

CONNOR
 "A"! "S"! "N"!

Kara grabs the bathrobe and covers it up for Jake.

CONNOR
 What's that mean, Daddy?

JAKE
 Punishment, son, pure and simple.

CONNOR
 Were you bad?

JAKE
 Once upon a time. Not anymore.

Kara pulls a tray of muffins from the oven. Jake reaches for one. She slaps his hand away.

KARA
Those are for the fund-raiser.

JAKE
What fund-raiser?

KARA
For Connor's soccer team, today at eleven, we're volunteering at the baked goods booth.

JAKE
What? When did we agree to-

The doorbell buzzes.

KARA
There's Amy. I told you, remember?

JAKE
Oh man, but I have to-

KARA
Jake, it's for Connor. Get ready.
We have to leave in a few minutes.

Jake rubs his head, groans. AMY (15), the sitter, bounces in.

CONNOR
Amy! Amy's here!

AMY
Connor's here too! Hey Mrs.
Collier, Mr. Collier.

KARA
His lunch is in the refrigerator,
help yourself to anything you like.
We should be back by four at the
latest. Connor, come with Mommy,
let's brush your teeth while Daddy
rushes to get ready to go.

She takes Connor by the hand, they go. Amy looks at Jake.

AMY
You forgot again, didn't you?

JAKE
I only just got up and already it's
a bad day.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jake carries a basket of baked goods out to his truck, loads it. Connor watches with Amy from the steps. Kara kneels before him, gives a tight hug and kisses him on each cheek.

Jake climbs into the truck. Starts it. Waits. Kara keeps kissing Connor. Jake leans out his open window. Waiting.

Kara whispers into Connor's ear. He giggles. She gives him one last kiss and a hug. Waves to him as she gets in. Jake puts the truck into reverse and pulls out.

JAKE

We'll be back in a couple-three hours, do you have to go through that whole long ritual every time?

KARA

Of course. He's my son.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake's blackberry buzzes again as they climb out of the truck. He checks it and curses.

KARA

What's wrong?

JAKE

Luiz is getting some threatening calls at the office.

KARA

You committed to this Saturday-

JAKE

I know, I know. Where are we at?

KARA

North end. I told Lila I'd pick up paper cups first.

JAKE

I'll do the pro shop while you do that, they've got the new leathers.

KARA

We're already late-

JAKE

Just swing by when you're done,
I'll be good. I don't want anymore
graffiti stenciled on my chest.

INT. MALL - DAY

In the pro bike shop. Jake checks out the racing gear. His blackberry buzzes again. Jake reads the latest text, shakes his head. He steps out of the pro shop.

Crowds of Saturday shoppers push by him as he taps into his blackberry. He looks up, sees Kara walking toward him, smiling. He glances down, presses send on his phone.

Looks back up. Kara has stopped. Not facing him. Not moving. Just standing in the mall. Jake saunters over.

JAKE

Hey pretty lady, want a boyfriend?

Kara turns, not smiling.

JAKE

What's wrong?

KARA

Nothing. Listen, I think I've been
... too pushy. You don't need to be
at this thing. I know you hate it.
Why don't you go? I can handle it.

JAKE

Serious? You're letting me off on a
Saturday afternoon, all by myself?

KARA

Lila will give me a ride home. Go.
Can you be home in time for
Connor's dinner, if this runs late?

JAKE

You bet. You're the greatest.

Jake leans to kiss her. Kara steps away. Sets her bags down.

KARA

Not in public, please, you how I
... Do you have a pen?

Jake pulls out a pen, hands it to her. She takes his hand.

KARA

You can wash off your chest now.

She writes on his hand.

KARA

This keep as long as you want.

Hands the pen back. Looks at him a moment, smiles tight.

JAKE

I'll do that. You okay? You're acting, I dunno ... out there.

KARA

I'm okay. Read the note.

Kara picks up her bags. Walks away. Jake watches her go. Glances at his hand, on which is written: "**I LOVE YOU**".

INT. JAKE'S OFFICE WAREHOUSE - DAY

Jake walks through a cluttered warehouse filled with cars, boats, and bikes into the front office where LUIZ (33), short, dark and quiet, looks up from a desk.

LUIZ

Eight calls, last two hours.

JAKE

No idea who it might be?

LUIZ

They don't say. Only that we took something of theirs.

JAKE

What else?

LUIZ

(after a moment)
They call me a taco.

JAKE

Shit. Sorry man. Not everybody in America are racist assholes.

LUIZ

Not everyone. Only half.

JAKE

Sad but true. Well, whoever it was--

The front door opens and five huge BIKERS walk in, belly up to the counter. Tatted, hairy and in full leathers. Mean.

JAKE

--I'm sure they'll show up.

BRODY (40), six foot four, long hair, like a tattooed god Thor in biker boots, steps forward.

BRODY

You took Spider's bike.

JAKE

Spider ... let me think. Harley Roadster, right? Here's the thing. Wasn't Spider's bike anymore. Bank called in a repo. Here's the paperwork. It's all legal.

Jake sets a paper on the counter. Brody glances at one of his buddies, who delicately picks up the paper, puts it in his mouth, chews and swallows.

JAKE

Luckily, that's your copy.

Jake leans against the counter and his right hand rests on a baseball bat, out of sight underneath.

BRODY

You took Spider's bike. We want it.

JAKE

It's not his anymore. And it's not here, we delivered it. That Spider?

Jake gestures to a little guy, SPIDER, hidden behind the bikers. Spider sports a couple black eyes. Brody nods. Spider swallows, about ready to shit a brick.

BRODY

Not here? That's a problem.

JAKE

Doesn't have to be. Way I see it, you don't really care about the bike too much, right? You have a bunch of bikes, one more or less won't make a difference.

BRODY

This one does.

JAKE

Not the bike. The saddlebags. Luiz?

The bikers stiffen. Brody's eyes glint. Luiz slips out.

JAKE

Who cares about a shitty bike? But the bags were full, and so I kept 'em for the rightful owner.

BRODY

How much do you want?

JAKE

For what? The bags? Nothin'. I had paper on the bike. Not the saddlebags or the contents thereof.

Spider breathes a sigh of relief.

BRODY

You didn't look?

JAKE

Not my business. Bank got its bike, that's all that matters.

BRODY

(after a moment)

Much obliged.

Luiz brings in motorcycle saddlebags. The bikers take them. Brody glances around the office, notes PICTURES on the wall of Jake in military fatigues in a desert.

BRODY

You served?

JAKE

First Gulf War, the good one.

BRODY

Reserve puke?

JAKE

No puke, Marines, infantry. Went in hot with the first wave.

BRODY

Hooyah. I was infantry, too. But it was a done dollar when I got there.

JAKE

Yeah, it was over quick. They knew what they were doing with that one.

Brody glances at the saddlebags.

BRODY

I owe you. My name's Brody, if you ever need a favor, send word.

With a nod, the bikers stroll out. Luiz breathes a big sigh of relief, makes the sign of the cross.

JAKE

C'mon, they were pussycats.

Luiz shakes his head, prays in Spanish.

JAKE

That reminds me, what's this mean?

Jake opens his shirt, shows the note. Luiz grins.

LUIZ

Means stop pissing off your wife.

JAKE

I already knew that.

I/E. SERIES OF SHOTS - TIME LAPSE

On Jake as he ...

- arrives home, pays Amy the sitter.
- feeds Connor dinner.
- on his cell phone.

JAKE

Hey, where are you? It's already six, I'm giving Connor his bath.

- watches Connor in the bathtub, one eye on his cell.
- on his cell phone again.

JAKE

Honey, what's going on? I'm getting worried. It's late and ... call me.

- reads Connor a story at bedtime.

CONNOR
Where's Mommy?

JAKE
Busy, champ, but I'll make sure she
gives you a kiss when she comes in.

- at the window, staring out at the night, on his phone.

JAKE
Lila? It's Jake, Kara's husband?
Uh, I'm ... Kara has said she was
getting a ride home from you after
the sale, and she's still not ...

Jake turns away from the window, shocked.

JAKE
She what? But ...

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sun rises up over the horizon. Police cars in the driveway.

Jake sits on the steps, hasn't slept and looks it. UNIFORMED
COPS stand around. DETECTIVE OLSON (33) steps out of a car.

OLSON
Mr. Collier? Detective Jared Olson.

Clean shaven, tie tight, everything about him taut and
methodical. Olson looks at the house, then at Jake.

JAKE
My kid's still asleep, don't want
to scare him with a shitload of
cops in the kitchen when he wakes.

OLSON
You told the first responders, but
run through it again for me.

JAKE
I left her at the mall at a quarter
to eleven. She was going to help
with a bake sale. Lila, a friend,
was going to give her a ride home.

OLSON
Where did you go after you left?

JAKE

To my office, on the other side of town, there until three. Came home. When she didn't come back, I called and called, got no answer on her cell, called Lila and she told me Kara never ... showed up.

OLSON

She work?

JAKE

Housewife. Volunteer stuff for Connor's school, that's it.

OLSON

I understand you're a repo, run your own shop. Must be booming in this economy. Ever piss anyone off?

JAKE

Nobody likes a repo, but we run a clean shop, our policy is no confrontation, someone pulls a gun, we call the cops.

OLSON

How long have you been married?

JAKE

Five, no ... six years.

OLSON

How did you two meet?

JAKE

She was a waitress at Hattie's. I used to go there for lunch every day. Finally got the courage to ask her out. Dated for a year before ... we got married.

OLSON

I know Hattie's. Just a sec.

An OFFICER waves to Olson. Olson joins him. Talk in whispers, Officer's eyes on Jake. Jake doesn't like that. The front door opens, Amy pokes her head out.

AMY

I think he's awake, I hear him singing. I'll make him cereal.

JAKE

Okay. Amy ... thanks.

She nods, goes inside. Olson pops back over.

OLSON

Who's that?

JAKE

Our sitter. Lives two doors down,
she came over to help.

Nothing said for a moment. Olson clears his throat.

JAKE

Shit. I know what you're gonna say.

OLSON

Quite a jacket on you. Thirteen
arrests, mostly grand theft auto,
one choice assault charge.

JAKE

Arrests, no convictions. All
dismissed. And that was years ago.

Olson stares for a moment. Jake sighs.

JAKE

When I got back from Iraq and
mustered out, I was ... at loose
ends, had trouble adjusting. Ran
with some bad boys, got into
trouble. But I straightened up.

OLSON

Okay. For the record, how's your
marriage? Just for the record.

JAKE

Our marriage is good.

OLSON

No fighting, or-

JAKE

No more than anyone else.

OLSON

Your wife unhappy about anything?

JAKE

No. Why?

OLSON

Usually when a spouse disappears it's by choice. Just need to make sure that's not the case here.

JAKE

Our marriage is fine. We have a son, a great boy, just turned five. Even if she got so fed up with me she wanted to go, she'd never leave him. Something happened to her.

OLSON

(after a moment)

Stores open soon, we'll canvas the mall and surrounding area, also see what the city cameras tell us. Here's my card, you think of anything, call. I'll be in touch.

INT. JAKE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jake paces. Through his kitchen window he watches Amy play with Connor in his backyard. Jake grabs his truck keys.

INT. JAKE'S TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Jake drives city streets. Searching. Cell rings. He answers.

LUIZ (O.S.)

Boss, cops are here, they say-

JAKE

I know. Tell them whatever they want to know. Anything. Got me?

LUIZ (O.S.)

Kara, she's missing?

JAKE

Just cooperate with the cops, Luiz.

INT. MALL - DAY

Jake prowls around the mall. Stops at the racing pro shop, where he was before. Gazes around. Closes his eyes, thinks hard ... remembers ...

KARA

the day before ... walking toward him, smiling. Jake glances down at his blackberry ... looks back up ... Kara's turned away ... her hands moving ... like she's pulling something-

WALTERS (O.S.)
Jake? Jake Collier?

Jake OPENS HIS EYES ... and Kara is gone. He turns.

Walters with his family. He nods to his wife, who discreetly maneuvers her kids away. Walters approaches, hand out.

WALTERS
We heard the news and I'm sorry.
The police spoke to us this
morning. If there's anything I-

JAKE
Appreciate that. Not to be rude-

WALTERS
I've been married three times and I
know how it can get. Especially
when kids are involved. Here-

Walters reaches into his pocket, takes out a card. With a pen, he writes on the back of the card.

WALTERS
I've worked with this fellow a few
times, he's very reliable. In my
business, that counts.

Walters hands Jake the card.

WALTERS
In these situations there's only so
much the police can do. Dave's the
best skip-tracer in the business.

JAKE
Skip-tracer? She didn't leave me.

WALTERS
Well, you know ... She did seem-

JAKE
Seem what?

WALTERS
A tad worked up.

JAKE
Get the fuck away from me. Now.

Walters nods. Turns and walks away. Jake glares after him. His cell rings, ID reads RESTRICTED.

JAKE

Kara?

OLSON (O.S.)

Detective Olson. You're not home.

JAKE

I couldn't just sit there. Did you
... have you found Kara?

OLSON (O.S.)

Found some information. You have my
card, you know where my office is?

JAKE

Yes. What did you find out-

OLSON (O.S.)

Not over the phone. My office, as
soon as you can get there.

Olson hangs up. Jake looks at the CARD from Walters in his
hand. Tucks it into his shirt pocket.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Olson ushers Jake into an office. Jake takes a seat.

OLSON

That's Trask, he's our techie.

TRASK (45) a round bald man at a desk, nods, a bank of
screens before him. He very carefully avoids looking at Jake.

OLSON

You didn't tell me you had a fight
with your wife the night before.

JAKE

It was nothing. She got irritated
by something I did, and expressed
it, then it was over. She's got a
temper, but it's-

OLSON

What did you do that irritated her?

JAKE

You know already. You talked to
them, right? So why ask?

OLSON

She lose her temper a lot, mood swings, that kinda thing?

JAKE

No more than anyone else. Are you going to tell me what you found?

OLSON

You should brace yourself, because-

JAKE

Just tell me!

Olson nods to Trask. On a large screen, the Golden Gate Bridge. A WOMAN walks along the pathway to the bridge ...

OLSON

That's your wife, right?

She moves her hair out of her eyes. It's KARA. Jake nods. Olson pulls out a plastic bag. In it, a wallet and cellphone.

OLSON

We found this in a trash can, couple blocks away from the mall. ID, cash, credit cards still inside. My experience, when someone dumps their personal effects and walks out onto the Golden Gate Bridge, it's because they don't intend to return.

JAKE

No. No-

OLSON

I'm sorry, Jake, but she wasn't abducted or attacked. She walked out onto the bridge on her own power, and didn't walk back off.

JAKE

Is there footage of her jumping?

OLSON

The cameras can't cover every-

JAKE

You don't because she didn't. She wouldn't. She loved me, our son-

OLSON

People leave loved ones behind all the time. I'm sorry. We have boats sweeping the coast, but often the bodies get caught in the current-

JAKE

She wasn't suicidal! She was fine, she was happy, she-

OLSON

What about the nine-one-one calls?

JAKE

(after a moment)

That was a long time ago. Her hormones were out of balance-

Olson nods to Trask. He hits a button.

KARA (O.S.)

Send help, he's trying to kill me, everyone's trying to kill me! Don't touch me! Leave me alone!

Jake closes his eyes at that.

OLSON

Nine calls in four months, each one sounding worse than before, that's a little more than hormonal less than a year into a marriage.

JAKE

The pregnancy wasn't planned, she originally didn't want to have children, she was afraid ... worried she wouldn't be a good mother, the usual. But in spite of our precautions, she got pregnant and it freaked her out. Her hormones went haywire. She couldn't sleep, and when she did, she'd have nightmares. Wake up, screaming. Freak when I'd touch her, call the police, everyone. We hadn't been married for very long and there was a lot of anxiety about it, and parenthood and ... everything.

Olson gestures with his head. Trask leaves the room.

OLSON

I believe you. The investigating officers then believed you. Which is why we're pretty certain that we know what happened to your wife.

JAKE

She's Catholic, it's a sin, she-

OLSON

Catholics sin all the time, I know, I was an altar boy.

JAKE

She was happy. We were happy.

Olson presses a button. Playback from a security camera.

OLSON

At the mall, day of the disappearance. You know what I see?

Jake watches video of Kara and himself. Onscreen Jake checks his blackberry. Kara stops when she sees him. Turns. With her right hand, works on the finger of her left. Pulling.

OLSON

I don't see happy. I see tension. Anxiety. Stress. No affection.

Onscreen Jake looks up. Sees Kara. Walks toward her. Speaks and she turns. Glances over his shoulder.

OLSON

She's obviously troubled. You have a fight the night before, looks like you're arguing in this video, she won't even let you kiss her-

JAKE

She didn't believe in public displays of affection. And she wrote this on my hand.

Jake shows Olson the note on his hand.

OLSON

She write a note like that often?

JAKE

No, never anything like-

Jake stops, gets it. Looks down.

OLSON

I know this is hard, but you have to face facts. I've seen people walk that walk to the bridge before, I know what it means.

Olson hands a card to Jake.

OLSON

I'm sorry for your loss. You should go home, be there for your son. Here, numbers to call for support-

Jake jumps up and away from him.

JAKE

No. I don't believe it. She didn't ... she wouldn't ... no!

Jake turns and runs out.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jake pulls his truck into his driveway. Turns off the engine. Just sits there, head down. A door slams. Amy the sitter steps out of the house. Over to the truck window, leans in.

AMY

Taking his nap. Hear anything?

Her face, tight and scared, for the first time.

JAKE

No ... not yet. No. Do you need to go home now, or can you give me a couple more hours?

AMY

I can, sure. Mom said whatever you need, she'll help, too, send him over during the week, if you want.

JAKE

Thanks. I'll be back. For dinner, whatever you can find-

AMY

He's ... been asking about ... you know. They'll find her, won't they?

JAKE

Yeah. It's gonna be okay.

She nods. Walks back to the house. Jake backs the truck out of the drive. Pulls the CARD that Walters gave him out of his shirt pocket. Dials the number as he drives.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

MOWERS (58), a scruffy throwback in boots and a jean jacket, sits in a booth with Jake. Mowers takes notes.

MOWERS

Her maiden name was Estes?

JAKE

Yeah, still is, everyone called her Mrs. Collier but she never officially changed it.

MOWERS

Any particular reason?

JAKE

No, just didn't get around to it.

MOWERS

She speaks Spanish. Do you?

JAKE

No. Again, never got around to it.

MOWERS

They get you a copy of the police report yet?

JAKE

(shakes his head)
You need me to get it?

MOWERS

I'll do it, got some contacts at the station, it'll be faster that way. You know my rates?

JAKE

No. And I don't care what they are.

Jake takes out a checkbook, writes a check. Hands it to him.

JAKE

Retainer. Big enough?

MOWERS

It'll do.

JAKE
Can you find her?

MOWERS
If she's alive, I'll find her
eventually. It's what I do.

Jake stands to go. Stops.

JAKE
Can you get something else from the
cops, besides the police report?

MOWERS
Depends on what it is.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake, in the doorway, watches Connor enjoy an untroubled and restful sleep. He tiptoes in, kisses his son.

Sits down in a chair next to Connor's bed. Closes his eyes.
In his mind he sees

KARA ... at the mall. Smiling as she strolls. Jake blinks ...

Kara's back is to him, stiff and tight. Pulling at something.
Jake blinks ...

She has his hand in hers, writing on it ... Jake stares at
her hands, feeling something odd about them ...

CONNOR (O.S.)
Daddy?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Jake wakes, blinking in the morning sun. Connor nearby in his pajamas, rubbing his eyes.

CONNOR
Daddy? Where's Mommy?

JAKE
Hey buddy, you're awake.

Jake picks Connor up, pulls him on his lap. Connor leans his head against Jake's shoulder and yawns.

JAKE
Mommy had to ... go do something.

CONNOR
To do what?

JAKE
A Mommy-thing.

CONNOR
What's a Mommy-thing?

JAKE
I'm not a Mommy, so I can't say.
But she'll tell you herself when
she gets back.

CONNOR
When?

JAKE
Soon, little man, soon. She left
you a note, though.

Jake holds up his hand, the one with the writing on it.
Connor points at the letters, announcing them.

CONNOR
"I". "L". "O". "V". "E". "Y". "O".
"U". I love you.

JAKE
She does. I love you, too.

INT. MOWERS' OFFICE - DAY

Cramped and sloppy office, files everywhere. Mowers directs
Jake to a chair by his desk. Slides a folder over.

MOWERS
Copy of the police report. And the
footage you asked for.

He presses a button on a laptop. Jake watches a playback from
a security camera of his last conversation with his wife.

MOWERS
Some of this is from the cops, some
from the mall, they didn't hand
over everything. Got a guy I work
with, real good at this stuff, he
dug it up and culled together
different angles from the cameras.

Screen breaks into different angles. Jake watches it again.

JAKE

Right there, can you ... stop it,
or something? What's she doing?

MOWERS

Wondered about that myself. Watched
it a bunch of times. She's taking
her wedding ring off.

JAKE

Why?

MOWERS

You tell me.

JAKE

I don't know. We were fine.

MOWERS

(after a moment)
Okay.

JAKE

I'm telling you the truth.

MOWERS

Okay. So she leaves you here. We
got film of her going into the
ladies. She's there for an hour.

Mowers fiddles with the footage. New stuff comes up.

MOWERS

We got her coming out again.
Exiting the mall here.

JAKE

Can I get a copy of this?

MOWERS

I'll email you everything. And I
gotta ask. The other footage? Her
walking to the bridge?

JAKE

What about it?

MOWERS

I ain't no cop, but I been doing
this a long time. Report's pretty
clear. There's a reason cameras are
on that path.

(MORE)

MOWERS (CONT'D)

They also have 'em at the favored spots on the bridge, but they don't catch everyone who-

JAKE

She didn't jump.

MOWERS

(after a moment)

Well, she walked onto the bridge and didn't walk off. So if she didn't jump off it-

JAKE

Someone picked her up.

MOWERS

I can get my guy to check cameras on both ends, if she's in a car and visible, we'll find her.

JAKE

Do it. Whatever it takes. Wait ... look. Back this one up, this angle here. That one.

Onscreen ... a high angle shot of Kara walking toward Jake ... she halts, frozen in her tracks. Turns away from him ...

JAKE

See, it looks like she's looking at me, but really it's over to the side ... at that guy there.

Onscreen ... just on the edge of the camera ... a MAN in a black duster and a dark cowboy hat ... behind Jake, just entering the mall. He also stops.

JAKE

See? She knew him. That's why she got freaked. You see it?

The Man stops when Jake approaches Kara. Watches them.

MOWERS

Okay.

Mowers clearly believes Jake's grasping at straws.

JAKE

Is there a better shot of this guy?

MOWERS

Not in this stuff. Weekend at the mall, it was packed.

JAKE

Go to your guy, I want a picture of his face. And see if there's any footage of him anywhere else, traffic cameras, can he do that?

MOWERS

He can do that, but it's gonna cost-

JAKE

You want another check?

MOWERS

Just so we're clear. You think your wife saw a guy she knew, an ex-boyfriend maybe. She took her wedding ring off, left you, dumped her ID, walked miles out onto the bridge on foot, alone. Disappeared.

JAKE

She didn't jump.

MOWERS

Say she didn't, maybe she met with this guy, her ex. Right? Once you find her, what are you gonna do, drag her back?

JAKE

I just want to find her. I'll figure out the rest after that.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jake pulls into his driveway, fast. Hops out of his truck.

CONNOR

Daddy!

In the front yard, Connor plays catch with Detective Olson with a big plastic ball. Amy, face tense, on the step.

JAKE

Hey buddy. Playin' ball, are ya?

CONNOR

Yes! With ... with ...

OLSON
Daddy's friend Uncle Jared.

CONNOR
Amy said it was okay because he's a policeman. He showed me his badge.

JAKE
Good. Glad you checked.

CONNOR
Mommy comin' home soon?

JAKE
Soon, bud, soon. Thirsty? You want some apple juice?

CONNOR
Yes! You coming, too?

JAKE
In a second. You go ahead.

Jake nods to Amy, who ushers Connor inside.

OLSON
Great kid. Smart as a whip.

JAKE
What is it? Find something?

OLSON
Not yet. Heard a PI by the name of Mowers was sniffing around.

JAKE
So? What about it? If your wife disappeared, you'd just let her go, not look for her?

OLSON
If it were me, I'd do everything in my power, sure. That includes facing some ugly realities about the what, where and why of it. Because I have a son who's gonna have an even harder time dealing, and he's gonna need me to help him.

Olson fishes his keys out of his pocket. Opens his car door.

OLSON

You do what you got to do, I don't begrudge you that. But if you don't tell him, sooner or later he'll figure it out on his own. You don't want that, you know?

Olson climbs into the car.

OLSON

Eventually we all have to face hard truths in life, Jake.

INT. JAKE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jake walks in, rubbing his head. Amy at the counter, putting together a snack for Connor.

JAKE

Where is he, in his playroom?

She nods, face pale. Jake takes some bills out of his wallet. Amy shakes her head, refusing it.

AMY

I don't want your money. Even Mom and Dad said I shouldn't-

JAKE

I can't take advantage of you like-

AMY

I want to help, I love Connor, he's my favorite. And you and Mrs. Collier have always been so nice to me. Mom said however we can help, we will. I can bring Connor over there for dinner, spend the night, anything. We're neighbors.

JAKE

Okay. Thanks.

AMY

They ... think they know what happened, right?

JAKE

Yeah.

AMY

And that ... she might not be coming back? Because she ...

Amy swallows, barely keeping it all in.

JAKE

Listen, she didn't do what they say. She's coming back. Okay?

Amy nods, wipes her eyes. Jake's blackberry buzzes.

JAKE

I need to go to my office, you still good for awhile?

AMY

Yes, Mom said to bring him over for pizza, if that's cool-

JAKE

Yes. Thank your parents for me.

Text message on his phone reads: "MAY HAVE SOMETHING".

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Jake shuts the door, sits down at his desk. Opens his laptop as he dials his cell. Jake clicks on the file. It opens.

MOWERS (O.S.)

Got the email?

JAKE

Opening right now. Pictures?

MOWERS (O.S.)

Yeah, my guy came through, he's a genius at this facial recog shit. From an ATM on Howard Avenue. Across the street, see? Going into-

PHOTOS show the MAN FROM THE MALL walking into a ...

JAKE

A barbershop?

MOWERS (O.S.)

Yep. Same guy. Hispanic, has a big tat on his right cheek.

JAKE

You gonna go down there?

MOWERS (O.S.)

It seems I must, if only to prove to you that he doesn't know your wife. I'm a few hours outside the city now, so it's gonna have to be tomorrow morning.

JAKE

Outside the city? Why?

MOWERS (O.S.)

I'm trying to find your wife, figure that's more important than a tattooed dude who may or may not know your Missus.

JAKE

But why would you-

MOWERS (O.S.)

It's how it's done, backtrack where they lived. Your wife, where did you say she was born and raised?

JAKE

Born, uh ... some army base, I don't know which one, her father was career military. She went to high school in Omaha. You telling me you're going to Nebraska, next?

MOWERS (O.S.)

Lord, I hope not. And you said her folks passed away?

JAKE

Her parents died in a car crash years ago, before we met. Are you ... Where the hell are you?

MOWERS (O.S.)

Give you the blow-by-blow when I get back. My guy is still working the bridge cameras, should hear from him tonight. I'll drop by that barbershop in the morning and see what I can find out about our buddy with the tribal tat. Sit tight.

Mowers hangs up. Jake listens to his dead phone for a second. Puts it down. Thinks. Runs through the pictures on his laptop again. Leans back. Foot tapping, impatient. Hits print.

INT. JAKE'S TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Dusk hits as Jake zips through the streets. Pictures of the Tattooed Man strewn everywhere on his seat.

Jake parks at a meter on Howard Avenue. Down the sidewalk, the barbershop from the photos. Jake compares it to the pictures. Jake looks at his bat on the seat next to him.

Leaves the bat and jumps out.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Rough neighborhood, from the apartment buildings to the cars parked along the street to the garbage on the sidewalk.

In front of the shop, Jake takes note of a cherry CHEVY LOW-RIDER, shiny black with detailed flames.

Nice car. Out in the open, owner obviously not concerned about anyone fucking with it, even in this neighborhood.

A SKINNY OLD LADY carefully pushes a cart full of cans and bottles by Jake. The cart is packed tight and hard to move.

A wheel hits a crack, TIPS. The whole thing topples down with a crash. Kids down the street cheer.

The Skinny Old Lady crosses herself, taking a moment of prayer. Jake picks up her cart. Helps her set it upright. She chatters at him in Spanish, thanking him profusely.

JAKE

It's okay, no problem.

Jake peers through the store window, inside the barbershop. Eight barber chairs lined up, full with CUSTOMERS.

More men sit in chairs to the side, either there for a haircut or for the conversation.

Jake steps toward the front door. A hand pulls his sleeve ...

THE SKINNY OLD LADY pulls at him, chattering. Obviously doesn't want him to go into there.

JAKE

I don't speak Spanish. I'm sorry.

OLD LADY

No go there. No. Not for you.

Jake looks at her a second, then opens the front door.

INT. BARBERSHOP - NIGHT

Jake steps inside. Barbers work on their subjects. Spectators smirk at the white boy who must be lost. A chair empties. The BARBER dusts it off, looks at Jake expectantly.

JAKE

I don't need a haircut, I need help. I'm looking for this man.

Jake holds up the picture of the Tattooed Man. Conversation in the shop dies in an instant. The Barber shakes his head.

JAKE

Look, I'll pay for a haircut, just tell me where I can find him.

The Barber backs away, shaking his head. Jake shows the picture to others in the shop, who all avoid looking at him.

JAKE

Anyone ... do you know this man? I'll pay for the information.

CHUCHO (30) a smiling Mexican in slacks and a button shirt, obviously the manager, steps out of the back.

CHUCHO

Can I help you sir?

JAKE

I'm looking for this man.

Jake holds up the photo. Chucho doesn't even look at it.

CHUCHO

I'm sorry, sir, I don't know him.

JAKE

He came in here, two days ago.

CHUCHO

You're mistaken, sir. This is my shop, I'm here all day and night and I've never seen him.

JAKE

Maybe one of your workers or customers knows or saw him?

CHUCHO

No, I would know. They don't know him. He's never been in here.

JAKE

I have a picture of him walking in here, time-stamped and dated.

CHUCHO

You're mistaken. That man never came into this shop.

JAKE

(after a moment)

You're lying.

CHUCHO

I'm sorry you feel that way, sir. Now I'm running a business here and it's probably best if you go-

JAKE

No. I'm not going anywhere. You're going to tell me what I want to know or I'm gonna call the police.

CHUCHO

In this neighborhood, it takes time for them to get here. If I were you, I'd be on my way before I got into trouble. Or I could have my friend here escort you out.

RAOUL, a large fat man sitting in a chair, slowly stands. Raoul puts his hand on Jake's shoulder. Jake knocks it off.

JAKE

Don't make a bad mistake.

A barber throws a SMOCK over Jake's head, pulling it down tight, pinning his arms, trapping him.

Raoul HITS Jake in the head and gut, again and again. Jake goes down to his knees. Blood stains the smock.

Raoul reaches down, frees Jake's head. Picks him up, holds him tight from behind. Jake's face is a red bloody mess.

Chucho steps close, eyeballing Jake. Reaches into his pocket. Pulls out a STRAIGHT RAZOR. Holds it to Jake's cheek.

CHUCHO

You should know that where I come from it's a terrible insult to call another man a liar. It's not something one should do casually. It can get a man's throat cut.

Chucho barks Spanish to one of men. The man pulls out a bottle of tequila, tosses it. Chucho catches it in one hand.

CHUCHO

But I will take pity, I can see you're mentally disturbed just like most white men I've known. Trying to decide which sports car to drive, which fancy college to send your kids to, counting your money and shit like that, it drives all you white people crazy.

He takes the cap of the tequila bottle off with his teeth. Puts the mouth of the bottle to Jake's lips. Raoul holds Jake's head so he can't move. Forces Jake to drink. He gags.

CHUCHO

And when you get crazy, you get paranoid ... start thinking the spic gardener is ruining your roses, the spic maid is stealing your jewelry ... the spic barber you do not know is lying to you. A disease all you white people have. I have sympathy for it, I do. But there are limits to my patience.

Chucho takes the bottle away from Jake's mouth. Pours more of it over Jake's head and shirt, until he stinks of it.

CHUCHO

So go ahead and call the police. And when they come to take "statements", every brown-skinned man in this place will tell them that this drunk white boy stumbled in looking for trouble, and we kindly escorted him out the door, because we don't want trouble here. And he left in good shape. And they will believe us. Understand?

Chucho hands the bottle to someone. Holds the razor back up.

CHUCHO

I won't cut you this time. But should you get more liquid courage, decide to return, I won't be so understanding. *Comprende'?*

Chucho waits a beat for an answer. None comes. He raises an eyebrow. Brings the razor close to Jake's eye.

Jake nods that he understands. Chucho smiles.

Chucho barks Spanish. One of the men holds up a cell phone, takes a picture of Jake's face.

CHUCHO

Now I have your picture. I will
remember who you are.

Chucho nods. Raoul manhandles Jake out the front door.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Raoul hauls Jake down a few doors from the barbershop. Dumps him hard on the sidewalk, right into some trash cans. Spits.

Reaches down, takes the smock off of him. Shakes it out. Walks away. The Old Lady shakes her head, leans down to Jake.

OLD LADY

I tole' you. Not for you.

Jake crawls out of the garbage. Stumbles to his truck.

INT. JAKE'S OFFICE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake at a bathroom sink off the main warehouse, washing his face. Looks up, checks it out in the mirror. Looks bad.

Fat bloody lip. A spectacularly black eye. A loose tooth.

Picks up his blackberry. Types: "AMY, CAN CONNOR SPEND THE NEXT COUPLE DAYS & NIGHTS WITH YOU AT YOUR PARENTS HOUSE?"

Hits send. Sets it back down. Jake lifts his shirt. More bruises. Touches them gingerly. Blackberry buzzes.

Message reads: "SURE! EVERYTHING OK?"

Jake types: "YES. THANKS. TELL CONNOR I HAVE TO WORK LATE THE NEXT COUPLE DAYS & THAT I LOVE HIM VERY MUCH."

He hits send. Hands shaking a bit, he sets the phone on the sink. Again checks the mess that is his face.

LUIZ

Boss? What happened?

Jake jumps. Sees who it is, calms down.

JAKE

What are you doing here?

LUIZ

I finally got the Mercedes ... what happened? You've been drinking?

JAKE

Not exactly.

LUIZ

Who did this to you?

JAKE

The cops think Kara's dead, think she committed suicide. The skip-tracer I hired thinks she's dead, hell, I bet even my sitter thinks she's dead. I'm banging around like a madman, getting my ass kicked, trying to find out what happened because I don't think she ... You're Catholic too, right?

LUIZ

Yes.

JAKE

You'd never take your own life.

LUIZ

No. It is a grievous sin, for Catholics, very bad. I could never do that, I couldn't.

JAKE

Do you think Kara would?

LUIZ

No, I don't. She was pious, more than me. She'd never do that.

Jake stands. Wipes his face.

JAKE

She wouldn't. And until I see proof that she did, real proof, I won't believe otherwise. Because she's my wife and I know her better than anyone else. She didn't jump. She walked onto that bridge and didn't walk off, so someone picked her up, somebody took her, and I won't stop until I find out who it was.

LUIZ
Is there anything-

JAKE
No, Luiz. It's okay. Go on home.

Luiz hesitates a moment. Finally leaves Jake there in the bathroom. Jake looks at his hands, bloody and shaking.

He can just make out the faded "I LOVE YOU" note.

INT. TATTOO SHOP - DAY

Early morning. Jake sits in a shop as a BIKER TATTOO ARTIST inks in the note Kara left on Jake's hand. Blood flows. His cell rings and he answers.

MOWERS (O.S.)
It's me. Got something. Just sent you an email with an address, can you get there as soon as possible?

JAKE
Hold on.

Jake clicks hold, checks his blackberry.

JAKE
That's an hour outside the city.

MOWERS (O.S.)
I know. When can you get here?

JAKE
What is it, what did you find?

MOWERS (O.S.)
Better you see for yourself, trust me. Get there as soon as you can, I'll be waiting.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake's truck pulls into a very small town. He parks in the lot of a convenience store. Mowers waits, leaning against his own car. Jake climbs out.

MOWERS
Welcome to Pella, California.
Population six hundred and ten. You look like ten miles of bad road.
What the hell happened?

Jake says nothing, just locks the truck.

MOWERS

You went to that shop, didn't ya?

JAKE

I didn't want to wait.

MOWERS

And what'd you find out?

JAKE

They said he never went in there.

MOWERS

Christ. Of course they'd say that, even if they had nothing to hide. It's fucking Oakland, man. They'd wouldn't piss on you even if you were on fire.

Jake simply looks at him. A moment. Mowers takes off down a sidewalk, on foot. Jake follows.

MOWERS

All right, c'mon.

JAKE

You gonna tell me what you found?

MOWERS

Did you get married in a church or go to the justice of the peace?

JAKE

Civil ceremony with the JP. We were gonna have one in a church, but-

MOWERS

Just never got around to it, right?

JAKE

Yeah, plus there was an issue about me not being Catholic. And-

MOWERS

She was pregnant at the time.

JAKE

Yeah.

MOWERS

Reason you got married.

JAKE

Not the only reason. What does this have to do with anything?

MOWERS

You have a buddy or two at the ceremony? Work friends, family?

JAKE

It was short notice. My brother lives in Iowa, he couldn't make it. I had a couple friends from work.

MOWERS

What about your wife, she have anyone there for her, throw her a bridal shower, shit like that?

JAKE

No. I told you, we did it fast-

MOWERS

So no one there for her?

JAKE

She hadn't been in the city long-

MOWERS

She's met your family since, right?

JAKE

Yes. But-

MOWERS

You met hers?

JAKE

I told you, her parents are dead-

MOWERS

No one else, close friends, anyone? Have you met anyone who's known her longer than you have?

JAKE

Goddamn it, what's this all about? Have you found my wife?

Mowers halts. Gives Jake a look of pity. Points with his chin. They stand at the entrance of a small city cemetery.

Mowers opens the gate, walks on in. Jake follows, legs stiff. Mowers stops by a grave. Points to the TOMBSTONE.

MOWERS

I found Kara Estes, yeah.

Tombstone reads: **"KARA ESTES - BORN AUGUST 8, 1975, DIED MARCH 3, 2004 - BELOVED DAUGHTER AND SISTER"**.

MOWERS

Kara Estes died two years before you met, breast cancer. Same birthday, same social security number. The woman you legally married, in name, was put in this grave seven years ago. Thing is, since I got no idea who it was you really married, I don't know how the hell to find her.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake leans against his truck. Staring straight ahead. Not moving. Barely breathing. Dumb-fucking-struck.

MOWERS

You gonna be all right, amigo?

JAKE

She took this woman's identity?

MOWERS

Yeah, pretty easy to do when someone passes away. No one's around to complain.

JAKE

It's crazy ... Why would she-

MOWERS

Lie to you? Leave you? Folks do that to each other all the time.

JAKE

We have a son ... she wouldn't-

MOWERS

I've seen men and women bug out on family more times than I can count. Knew a fella had three wives in three different states, had kids, the works, never told any of 'em he had couple spare sets. Then he got behind on bills and ran out on all of 'em. Your wife's probably done this before.

(MORE)

MOWERS (CONT'D)

Set up a life, one day got sick of it and went somewhere else to start over, a new name and a new life. I've seen it.

JAKE

She's not like that. I know her.

MOWERS

Nobody knows anybody.

JAKE

What are you gonna do now?

MOWERS

Gonna do? You asked me to find Kara Estes, I found Kara Estes.

JAKE

I want you to find the woman I married, the mother of my son.

MOWERS

I got no name, no social security, I don't know her real birth date or place of birth, nothing. I have a picture that won't even be current because she'll change her look, cut her hair, first chance she gets. They do that.

JAKE

What about the guy with the tattoo?

MOWERS

Jake, he probably has nothing to do with this. She just left you. I read the police report. I know you two had troubles when you got married. She didn't want to get hitched, didn't want to have a kid, you fought and she called the cops-

JAKE

In the beginning, yeah, but-

MOWERS

I've seen people like this before, they shed identities like snakes shed a skin. They get into a life and when it gets to be too much to handle, they take off. She's gone, man. She got a bellyful and bolted.

JAKE

She's not fucking like that!

Jake grabs Mowers by the jacket. Pushes him against the car.

JAKE

You hear me? I hired you to find my wife and that's what I expect you to fucking do or else-

MOWERS

Easy man, take it easy!

Jake releases Mowers. A moment. Jake lets out a deep breath.

MOWERS

Okay, we'll play it out. I'll get on my video guy, see if he found anything, and swing by that barbershop. It's a waste of time but it's your money. We can go through some old missing persons reports, chances are she did this before. Okay? Can I go now?

Jake nods. Mowers gets in his car. Jake grim, watches him go.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake parks his truck in the lot. Climbs out. In his hand, a folder of security camera pictures. Jake heads for the mall.

INT. MALL - DAY

Jake finds the spot where he waited for Kara. Looks around. Stands where she stood. Turns around, faces where the Tattooed Man stood. Takes a photo out of the folder.

Kara, entering the women's restroom. Jake heads there.

OUTSIDE THE RESTROOMS

In the hallway to the toilets, Jake waits, looking at the door to the bathroom where his wife waited for an hour.

Jake glances around ... no one close by. Mall is pretty deserted this time of day, mostly seniors. He steps into the

WOMAN'S BATHROOM

Jake looks around. Standard toilet for females. Sink, mirrors. A dispenser for sanitary napkins. Three stalls.

Jake looks inside each stall, one by one. In the last one, some graffiti on the wall. Jake sits. A note, eye level.

It reads: "**HADO**"

He recognizes his wife's pen. Jake compares that note to the note on his hand. The handwriting is the same.

He pulls out his blackberry, gets on the internet. Finds a Spanish to English Translator. Enters the words into it.

Translation reads: "**FATE**".

Jake takes a picture of the note with his phone. Glances around. A glint catches his eye. Tucked up in the toilet paper dispenser ... A WEDDING RING.

His wife's wedding ring. He pulls it out of there.

Everything hits home, hard.

The bathroom door opens. Jake freezes. Footsteps. Someone enters the stall next to him. Relieves herself.

Jake inches out of the stall. Walks out of the bathroom into

THE HALLWAY

and freezes. Written on the hallway wall opposite the door, in dark masculine strokes, is a note in permanent marker.

It reads: "**OBLIGACION**".

It's obviously new and also obviously NOT his wife's handwriting. He compares it to his tattoo just to be sure.

Below that word is another note in Kara's handwriting.

It reads: "**F8**".

Jake takes a picture of the note with his phone. Thinks.

JAKE

Obligation.

AT THE EXIT DOORS

Jake takes a photo out of the folder, the one of Kara leaving the mall. Jake stands at the same exact spot of her exit.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake wanders around the empty lot. The parking spaces are marked with letters and numbers.

He finds the spot marked F8. No car parked there.

But there is a note, written in his wife's handwriting, on the cement in black marker.

The note reads: **"PUENTE EN SEIS"**.

Jake takes a picture of it with his phone. Enters the phrase into his blackberry browser.

JAKE
(reads)
Bridge at six.

He looks up. Sees the Golden Gate Bridge in the distance.

He starts walking.

EXT. BRIDGE PATH - DAY

Jake walks to a bench, one with a spectacular view of the bridge. Takes out a photo from the folder.

The camera picture of Kara, not far from this very bench. Looks around. Spots the city camera on a street lamp.

Jake sits. Thinks. Glances at the bench. Finds another note in his wife's handwriting.

The note reads: **"LA VIDA ES UN SUENO"**.

Jake enters the phrase into his blackberry browser.

The translation reads: **"LIFE IS BUT A DREAM"**.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DAY

Jake walks along the pedestrian pathway. Cars whiz by. He stops when he sees a note written on the side of the bridge.

It reads: **"AQUI"**.

His wife's handwriting again. Jake checks the translator on his PDA browser.

Translation reads: **"HERE"**.

Touches the written word ... in his mind, he sees

KARA ... standing in that same spot on the bridge. Waiting.

Jake ... blinks, fighting rising emotion. Turns to the water.

JAKE

Why did you lie to me? Why!

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake, sweating, returns to his truck. Tosses the file folder of photos inside. Climbs in. Before he can start the engine, his cell rings. ID reads: MOWERS.

JAKE

I got something, I went-

MOWERS (O.S.)

(wheezing)

Listen, we got problems, this has turned into a real shitstorm real fast, it ain't good.

JAKE

What do you mean?

MOWERS (O.S.)

I mean I don't know who your wife was, but she sure as hell was someone that somebody with juice wanted back real bad. Ah, Christ, no. Shit. They followed me. Fuck!

JAKE

Who followed you?

MOWERS (O.S.)

I sent ...

He coughs and the rest of the call goes fuzzy.

JAKE

Mowers, what do you mean? My wife, who was she? Who was she!

MOWERS (O.S.)

... He'll find you ... so-

Jake loses the call. Starts the truck and peels out.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sunset. Jake's truck screeches to a stop in front of Mowers's office. He jumps out, baseball bat in hand. A word spray-painted on the front window.

It reads: **"MUERTE"**.

The door to the PI's office hangs on one hinge, broken. Jake slowly pushes it open. Steps inside

MOWERS'S OFFICE

The place is trashed. Jake steps carefully, baseball bat held high. Around the desk, on the floor, lays ...

MOWERS

Dead. Beaten and cut in several places.

JAKE

Shit. Goddamn it. I'm sorry, man.

Jake sits down, heavy, on a chair. Reaches over, lifts up the receiver from the phone on the desk. Dials **"911"**.

Leaves the receiver up on the desk. Walks out.

INT. JAKE'S OFFICE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake enters this office, grim, bat in hand. Tosses the folder of photos on the counter. His phone rings. Jake ignores it.

BRODY

My man. You look like hammered shit left out to dry in a hot sun.

Jake jumps. Brody sits, relaxed, in one of the office chairs.

JAKE

What are you doing here?

BRODY

Your little taco-loving buddy dropped word at Spider's bar that you could use a hand. I owe you, so-

Luiz appears at the door to the warehouse.

LUIZ

Sorry boss, I thought it best.

BRODY

Judging from the dance somebody did
on your face, I'd say he's right.
Hear your wife done gone missing?

JAKE

I think somebody took her.

BRODY

I take it you want her back?

Jake just looks at him. Brody smiles, then starts chuckling.

JAKE

What's so fucking funny?

BRODY

You're gonna "repo" your wife. I
like that. Know who took her?

JAKE

The PI I hired may have found out
but somebody killed him before he
could tell me who it was.

BRODY

Ups the pucker factor, don't it?

JAKE

Still want to be involved?

BRODY

Something you should know about me.
I love me a good squabble.

A BANGING from the dark of the warehouse. Everyone tenses.

BRODY

Turn out that light. Nobody else
should be here, right?

Luiz shakes his head. Jake turns out the office light.

BRODY

Get out of the way, Pedro.

Brody pushes past Luiz, goes to the door to the warehouse.
Pulls out a knife. Disappears into the dark. Jake and Luiz
wait, holding their breath. Jake grips his bat.

BRODY

Turn the light back on.

Luiz flips the light on to reveal ...

TRASK, the camera tech from Olson's office in the doorway, not moving because Brody holds a knife against his throat.

JAKE

Wait, I know him. He's a cop.

BRODY

You say that like it's a good thing. I should cut him just on general principle alone.

TRASK

I'm not a cop. I work for them as a technical consultant.

JAKE

What are you doing here?

TRASK

Mowers. I know you know he's dead. You're the last number he called, after me. Probably you who dialed nine-one-one.

Brody takes the knife away. Trask goes to the desk, opens up his briefcase. Takes out a laptop. Jake's cell rings again.

JAKE

You're Mowers's camera guy?

TRASK

Keep that between us. And don't answer that call. That's Detective Olson, looking for you. We don't have much time. I have something of importance for you, but there's a small matter of compensation.

JAKE

How much?

TRASK

Five hundred.

BRODY

Fuck that, don't pay this dude.

Jake nods to Luiz, who opens a cashbox. Counts out bills, hands them over. Trask swings the laptop around.

JAKE

He did the work, he earned it.

TRASK

I don't know what Dave found or why
it got him killed, but he told me
to give you this.

Trask hits a button. Picture plays. A convenience store.

TRASK

Traffic cameras were no help, so I
hit all the gas stations and
convenience stores on the other
side of the bridge. Got this.

Waiting by the magazine stand inside, The Tattooed Man.
Reading a Hustler. The Clerk is careful not to notice him.

BRODY

That's your man? That's a gang tat
on his face, seen those in prison.

JAKE

Which gang?

BRODY

One of the spic gangs, fuck if I
know which one, it ain't local. At
least, better not be.

Through the glass doors of the store ...

KARA ... climbs out of a car out by the pumps, walks into the
store, eyes downcast, defeated slump to her shoulders.

Jake ... catches his breath. His wife. Alive.

TRASK

I have audio, too, but I don't
speak Spanish.

Jake looks to Luiz. Luiz leans in, listens. The car that
dropped her off drives away. The Tattooed Man puts the
magazine back. Approaches Kara. Glares.

Tattooed Man grabs a pack of smokes, pays for them. Rips
opens the pack with his teeth, speaks to Kara in Spanish.

She answers him, eyes down. They converse. He grabs her by
the arm and leads her out. They get into a truck. Drive off.

LUIZ

He say, she knew this day would come. She says yes. He tell her she was stupid to run, but smart to know she can't get away now. He ask her, who was the faggot she talked to at the mall? She say it was just another white boy asking for a date. He ask her what she write on his hand. She say, he insist on a phone number, so she gave him a phone number. The number to a mental hospital. He likes that.

JAKE

She lied about who I was. Wait, back up. Who dropped her off?

TRASK

I didn't get a picture of the driver, just part of the car, a-

Trask backs up the footage. A CHEVY LOW-RIDER. With flames.

JAKE

Motherfucker.

BRODY

Look familiar, do it?

Trask hands Jake a disc.

TRASK

Your copy. If you give it to the cops, you didn't get it from me.

JAKE

Thanks for this. Really.

Trask packs up his stuff, heads for the doorway.

TRASK

No need for thanks. It's a money thing for me, nothing more or less.

Jake digests that. Trask disappears out the back.

BRODY

Whatta want to do now, Chief?

JAKE

Code red.

Jake picks up his baseball bat. Heads for the front door.

BRODY
Semper-fucking-fi, love code reds.

EXT. JAKE'S OFFICE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Jake jumps into his truck. Luiz opens the passenger door.

JAKE
What are you doing?

LUIZ
I go.

BRODY
No hobbits allowed, Pedro.

LUIZ
I go, I help.

BRODY
It's a fucking gang, shorty. Think they'll give you a break 'cause you're the same color? They cut you just as easy as any white man.

LUIZ
(ignores Brody)
I go. She's my friend, you're my friend, I go, too. I want to help.

After a moment, Jake nods. The two men slide into the truck, Luiz in the middle.

BRODY
That case, you ride bitch, Pedro.

LUIZ
Luiz.

BRODY
What?

LUIZ
My name is Luiz, you fucking asshole. Not Pedro, Luiz.

BRODY
Louise as in Thelma and ...?

Luiz swears under his breath. Jake hits the gas, peels out.

EXT. HOWARD AVENUE - NIGHT

Jake's truck squeals to a stop not far from the barbershop. Jake jumps out, bat in hand, Brody and Luiz close behind.

The Skinny Old Lady with her cart of cans recognizes Jake.

Jake finds the black Chevy low-rider, black with flames, parked right in front of the shop. Takes out his slim jim.

JAKE

Luiz, do you have ... that's it.

Jake points at the oil rag in Luiz's back pocket. Luiz hands it over. The Skinny Old Lady shouts Spanish at Jake.

JAKE

Don't worry, lady, I'm not goin' inside this time.

BRODY

We ain't?

Jake hands the bat to Brody and works the lock fast.

JAKE

No. They're comin' out.

INT. BARBERSHOP - NIGHT

Half the chairs are filled, barbers working on customers. Music blares. More men sit on the side and chat, drinking bottled beer from a straw in brown paper bags.

Chucho and Raoul eat takeout in the back. Just outside, a heavy wire metal trash can flies through the air and ...

CRASHES

... through the front window of the shop, sending shattered glass everywhere. Outside, a car horn blares.

Everyone jumps, shouting. Runs for the front.

EXT. HOWARD AVENUE - NIGHT

Chucho and Raoul, followed by five TOUGHS, spill out of the shop and onto the sidewalk, where they see ...

Jake ... standing tall, baseball bat in hand.

Brody by the driver's side of the car, leaning on the horn. Jake points at the Chevy low-rider.

JAKE

Whose fucking car is this?

Brody gets off the horn. Joins Jake on the sidewalk. Shop customers who want no trouble beat it the hell out of there. The Skinny Old Lady sits on a stoop to watch, rapt.

Chucho stares at the shattered shop window. Back to Jake.

CHUCHO

You crazy motherfucker!

JAKE

I said, whose fucking car is this?

Jake nods with his chin, and the men see ...

Luiz by the Chevy, a LIT cigarette lighter in hand.

The fuel cap is off and the FLAME is inches away from an oily rag stuffed in the hole leading to the GAS TANK.

JAKE

If I have to ask again, fancy car go boom. *Comprende?*

CHUCHO

You don't have any idea the shit you just walked into.

JAKE

Let's blow the car and find out.

Luiz inches the flame closer to the rag.

CHUCHO

You want fire, I'll show you fire.

Raoul reaches into his belt, pulls out a pistol.

In a snap, Brody is there, his hand on the fat man's wrist, holding it down. Raoul struggles to bring the gun up.

Brody grins, squeezes. The pistol FIRES into the sidewalk. People jump back. Raoul drops the pistol. Brody kicks it and the gun skitters off the sidewalk and under the Chevy.

With his other hand, Brody grabs Raoul's collar, lifts ...

TOSSES RAOUL

back through the broken window of the shop. Raoul lands hard into a barber chair. Brody turns back to Chucho.

BRODY

Man asked you a question.

CHUCHO

It's my car. So what?

JAKE

Where is she?

CHUCHO

Who?

Jake swings the bat. Shatters the passenger window of the Chevy. Chucho curses. Jake smashes the windshield.

JAKE

I'm gonna have a lot of fun with this Chevy until you tell me what I want to know.

CHUCHO

Bust it. Blow that shit up. Think I give a fuck? I'll get another car. It won't change the fact that you are a dead man. All of you. Dead.

Chucho glances at the five TOUGHS with him. Speaks Spanish. They appear to think about it.

LUIZ

He tell them he pay one thousand dollars, apiece, for each testicle they bring him from each of us.

BRODY

A bounty on our balls?

The Toughs look at each other, then all move at once.

Two Toughs JUMP Brody, swinging and kicking.

Brody ELBOWS one in the jaw. The other Tough punches Brody in the face. And again. Brody GRABS the last punch, head-butts the guy. They swarm him.

Two other Toughs rush at Jake. He swings the bat, putting one guy on his knees, kicking him in the chin when he's down.

Swings at the other Tough, who ducks under. Picks up a broken piece of pipe. Swings it. Jake blocks it with the bat.

The Tough swings again, coming close. Jake feints with the bat, brings it up high and down hard ...

Right on the Tough's FOOT. He hollers. Jake swings. Right to the skull. Tough guy goes down, tough no more.

The fifth Tough runs at Luiz, grabs him by the collar and forces him against the Chevy. Punches him in the head.

Luiz drops the lighter, covering up, taking the blows.

BRODY

appears, grabbing Tough Five. One hand on the collar, the other on his crotch, Brody picks the guy up off of Luiz.

THROWS HIM

... through the broken shop window and into Raoul, who'd just gotten his wits back and stood back up. Both men crash hard.

BRODY

You should say thank you, Louise.

The Skinny Old Lady on the stoop stands and applauds, really enjoying the show. Jake glances around, finding

CHUCHO

on his belly, reaching under the Chevy for the pistol. Just before his fingers touch it ...

Jake grabs his legs and YANKS him out from under the car. Chucho curses as Jake and Brody drag him to his feet.

BRODY

Only two G for our balls? You're gonna have to spend more than that.

Jake tosses the bat, pulls the picture out of his pocket.

JAKE

Where is she?

CHUCHO

What the fuck you talking about?

Jake shows the picture of the Tattooed Man and Kara.

JAKE

You picked up this woman on the bridge, gave her to this man, here.

Chucho glances at the picture. Chuckles.

JAKE

Tell me!

CHUCHO

Fuck you, white boy.

BRODY

I say we tie him to the bumper of your truck and drag him until he gets more friendly.

JAKE

Where is she?

CHUCHO

She gone.

JAKE

Gone? Gone where? Who is this man? Where can I find him?

CHUCHO

You don't find him, *puta*, he finds you, and when he does, you wish you hadn't been found.

Chucho looks over their shoulder. Brody and Jake turn, see

RAOUL

... stumble out of the shop with a sawed-off shotgun. Raoul points the weapon right at Brody, squeezes the trigger ...

LUIZ

steps in with the bat, swings. Hits the barrel, knocks it up.

Shotgun FIRES at the sky. Luiz swings again, connects to Raoul's head. Fat man goes down. Luiz looks at Brody.

LUIZ

Now you say thank you, redneck motherfucker.

BRODY

I'm startin' to like ya, Louise.

Chucho slips a straight RAZOR out of his pocket. Swipes at Jake. Jake dodges away, takes a cut on the arm.

Chucho stands ready, blade out. Brody takes a step. Jake shakes his head. Steps forward, facing off with him.

Luiz tosses him the bat. Jake catches it, rolling it in his hands. Chucho spouts out Spanish in a torrent.

LUIZ

He say he's with the Mano Negra de Muerte, the Black Hand of Death, and that all of us, our families and everyone we know are now dead, and soon we will know it.

Chucho rips open his shirt, revealing A LARGE TATTOO on his chest, same tat the Tattooed Man had on his face.

Chucho swipes at Jake. Jake dodges. Swings the bat. Chucho sidesteps and stabs.

Jake blocks it with the bat, swings. Chucho ducks under, swipes. Nicks Jake on the chest.

Jake traps Chucho's knife hand with the bat, TWISTS. Leverages Chucho into the broken car window.

Knees him in the ribs. With his free hand, Jake opens the Chevy door. Traps Chucho's razor hand in it and slams it.

Chucho screams in pain. Drops the razor. Jake slams the car door again, breaking Chucho's wrist. He howls.

Jake drags him back out on the sidewalk.

JAKE

Where is she!

CHUCHO

Go ahead, kill me. I say nothing. Whatever you do nothing compared to what he'll do.

JAKE

Who? What's his name?

The Skinny Old Lady shouts in Spanish. She's picked up Jake's dropped picture of his wife and the Tattooed Man. She points.

LUIZ

This lady say, if this woman with this man, then she knows where. Dedos took her back.

JAKE

Dedos?

LUIZ

It's his name, it means fingers.

Chucho shouts at the Skinny Old Lady. Jake kicks him to shut him up. The Skinny Old Lady chatters away.

LUIZ

She say she sit here all day while this scum talk their business, she hear everything. This woman belong to Mano Negra de Muerte. She ran away and Dedos found her, take her back. Mano Negra sell drugs to their own people. Old Lady say her daughter OD because of them.

Chucho growls more Spanish. The Skinny Old Lady spouts back, then spits on the sidewalk. They bicker in their language.

BRODY

Christ, it's like Telemundo in stereo cranked to eleven.

Brody picks Chucho up, tosses him into the side of the Chevy. He collapses on the sidewalk. Sirens wail.

LUIZ

He threaten her. She says she's not scared of Mano Negra anymore, she's old and dying anyway. She believes she died the day her daughter did.

BRODY

Police coming. We better full tilt boogie on outa here, brother.

Brody grabs the shotgun off of the sidewalk.

JAKE

Where? Where is this Dedos?

OLD LADY

Tijuana.

JAKE

Thank you. Let's go.

Chucho pulls himself up, back against the Chevy.

BRODY

You just gonna leave this guy here?

JAKE

I got what I need to know.

BRODY

You can't leave a banger alive.
He'll come back and kill you in
your own kitchen.

Brody hands Jake the shotgun. Jake takes it, aims at Chucho.

LUIZ

Jake, no. It's wrong. No.

CHUCHO

Do it, white boy. Do it.

A moment. Jake lowers it the shotgun.

JAKE

I can't just kill a man sitting
there helpless like that.

Chucho sneers, laughs.

CHUCHO

Maricone. I am already dead for
letting you disrespect one of the
Muerte like this. I'm dead. You
dead. We are all dead. Why wait?

Chucho reaches down with his good hand, picks up the lighter.
He flicks the FLAME to the rag stuffed in the gas tank.

The rag CATCHES FIRE. Jake, Brody and Luiz back away fast.

CHUCHO

Know who else dead? Five twelve
Hardin Road. Made the old *puta* tell
us who hire him. Before he die.

LUIZ

Oh shit.

BRODY

What? What's that mean?

JAKE

That's my home, where I live.

Jake runs for his truck, Brody and Luiz close behind. Chucho
just stays where he is, leaning against the Chevy.

Raoul comes to his senses. Chucho calls to him. Raoul crawls over, sits next to Chucho.

Both men wait by the car as the rag burns until ...

THE CHEVY BLOWS IN A HUGE BALL OF FIRE.

Jake and the guys pull away in his truck, fireball behind.

BRODY

Jesus Hamilton Christ, man, even by
my standards these are some crazy
motherfuckers.

The Skinny Old Lady watches the fire burn. Walks as close to it as the heat will allow and carefully spits into the fire.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jake skids to a stop in his drive. Written in spray paint on the front of his house ...

The word: **"MUERTE"**.

Jake jumps out, runs

INSIDE THE HOUSE

... The whole place is trashed and torn up.

INT. PETERSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Jake paces the front hall. Luiz sits, dazed, not far. Amy huddles with her parents, MR. & MRS. PETERSON (40s), in the living room. Obviously scared.

A quiet knock on the door. Brody, sitting by the front window, cocks the shotgun. Jake looks out, opens the door. Detective Olson enters. Glances around.

OLSON

Where's your boy?

JAKE

Sleeping upstairs.

OLSON

Pretty damn lucky your kid was at
the sitter's house with her folks
and not yours, wouldn't you say?

After a moment, Jake nods.

OLSON

Let me deal with these folks.

Olson joins the Petersons in the other room, shows his badge and talks fast and quiet. After a moment, the Petersons numbly go upstairs. Amy shoots worried glances at Jake. Olson returns. Gives Jake a measured look.

OLSON

I think they'd appreciate it if you were gone in the morning.

JAKE

We will be.

OLSON

You got a safe place you can go?

BRODY

Hells yes.

OLSON

I wasn't asking you, was I?

(beat)

I suppose I should skip the part where I rip you a new asshole for tearing the shit out of my town, and with a known felon, to boot.

JAKE

You got the pictures, video, everything I sent? You look at it?

OLSON

Yes. It should come as no surprise that you are wanted by authorities for questioning.

LUIZ

We will be arrested, put in jail?

OLSON

If we could prove definitively that you three put two men in the morgue and five in the hospital, destroyed their place of business and blew up a car as a coup de grace, then yes, I'd put you in jail immediately. Cops are good like that. But no one's talking, so right now you're only wanted for questioning.

BRODY

Hey, we didn't kill those two
dudes, they iced themselves.

OLSON

(to Brody)

I'm pretending I don't notice the
illegally modified firearm you're
holding because I'm generous like
that, but the more you talk, the
harder it is for me to be generous.

LUIZ

It's true, they take own life.

OLSON

(after a moment)

The two stiffs were members of a
gang called Mano Negra de Muerte,
and they put a red hot target on
your ass. Mexico-based, extremely
violent, traffic in drugs,
extortion, nearly every illegal
racket there is. Best guess, your
wife was attached to them in some
capacity, ran away, they found her
and she went back. Willingly.

JAKE

That's insane, why would she-

OLSON

She did it for you, for your son.
You saw the footage. She saw this
Dedos at the mall, first thing she
did was take off her wedding ring.
Pretended she didn't know you. She
was protecting you, that much is
clear from the conversation in the
video. According to a buddy of mine
in the gangs unit, Mano Negra is
brutal when it comes to their own
and what they perceive as
disloyalty. If they'd known she was
married, if they'd known she had a
son, they'd have killed all of you.

JAKE

That's why she never wanted to have
kids, why she was so upset when she
got pregnant ... why she ...

OLSON

She must have known this moment
might someday come.

JAKE

What can you do?

OLSON

I can arrange for protection for
you and your son, but-

JAKE

What about her?

OLSON

(after a moment)

Nothing I can do. Or Interpol. As
far as the law is concerned, she
left of her own free will.

JAKE

You know that's not true.

OLSON

I know it but I can't prove it. And
even if I could, she's technically
not a citizen, so-

JAKE

Fuck! We just leave her to be
killed or worse? What does Mano
Negra do to runaways?

OLSON

(after a moment)

You don't want to know.

Nothing said for a minute. Jake takes a deep breath.

JAKE

Okay. I appreciate your help.

OLSON

What are you going to do?

JAKE

Wait for my son to wake up. When he
does, I'm going to give him a hug
and tell him everything.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Sun rises through a shaded window. Connor, in bed, opens his eyes and yawns. Sees Jake in a chair nearby.

CONNOR

Daddy!

He slides out of bed, jumps into Jake's arms. Jake hugs him.

JAKE

Hey buddy. Sleep good?

CONNOR

What happened to your face?

JAKE

I fell down but I'm okay.

CONNOR

Is Mommy back?

JAKE

No. I need to talk to you about that. It's a big boy talk, though. Can you handle a big boy talk?

CONNOR

Is it bad?

JAKE

Big boy talks sometimes are. They can be scary. Can you try real hard to be brave for it?

After a moment, Connor nods, scared.

JAKE

Your mother ... she's not away doing a Mommy-thing, she ... someone ... took her away.

CONNOR

Someone took her away?

JAKE

Yes. I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, I ... I should have.

CONNOR

Who? Who took Mommy?

JAKE

A ... bad man.

CONNOR

Is she ... coming back?

Connor's eyes fill. Jake doesn't say anything, just looks at him. Connor leans against Jake's chest and tears flow.

CONNOR

Why? Why did he take her?

JAKE

It's hard to explain. There are bad people in the world, bad people who do bad things and sometimes you can't avoid them. This is one of those times.

CONNOR

The policeman? Can he catch the bad man and help Mommy?

JAKE

Not this time, no.

CONNOR

But ... but ... why?

JAKE

Sometimes they can't.

CONNOR

Can we help?

JAKE

Well, listen ... Connor, this is the hard part, okay?

Connor lifts his head up, looks at Jake.

JAKE

We have a choice now. You remember about choices, in school?

Connor nods.

JAKE

We have a choice. I could try to help her. But it's risky, you know what risky means, right?

CONNOR

Yes. Dangerous.

JAKE

Yes. If I go to try and help her, there's a chance I can bring her back but ... there's also a chance I won't be back, either. And you'd lose both of us. Understand?

Connor nods, tears falling fresh.

JAKE

But if I don't go try to help her ... she won't ever come back.

CONNOR

Never?

JAKE

I'm sorry.

Connor sobs harder.

JAKE

I know, I know. It's hard but it's the truth. And it gets harder. I don't want to leave you but I also want to go help her. If Mommy were here, I know that she'd tell me not to go, she'd want me to stay and protect you. We can't decide this without you. We're a family. We decide together. Understand?

Connor nods, wipes his nose on his sleeve.

JAKE

You want to think about it?

Connor shakes his head.

JAKE

What do you want me to do?

CONNOR

Go help Mommy. Bring her back.

EXT. PETERSON HOUSE - DAY

Early morning. Jake carries Connor out to his truck, Luiz in the driver's seat, Brody stands guard with the shotgun.

Amy, watching from the doorway with her parents, calls out.

AMY
Mr. Collier?

She runs to them, hugs both Jake and Connor.

AMY
Be careful.

Jake nods, loads his son into the truck.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Brody shows everyone around a big log house, complete with barn and horse stable.

BRODY
He'll be good here for a few days.
My Ma, she just loves kids. She's
got a passel of toys and games.

The three men watch as BRODY'S MOTHER (60) shows Connor a fresh litter of puppies on her vast porch. Connor holds a puppy to his cheek.

BRODY
And it's safer here than the
Pentagon. My word.

Bikers everywhere, armed to the teeth. Jake nods.

BRODY
My crew can protect your family in
Cali and we'll discourage Mano
Negra in our territory, hell, it's
something we should be doin'
anyway, but I can't help you
Mexico. Can't even show my face
there, I'm more wanted south of the
border than anywhere else.

JAKE
You've done enough already. If I'm
not back in ... if I don't make it
back, Luiz has the contact info for
my brother and his family-

LUIZ
I go with you.

JAKE

I can't let you do that. You've got your own wife and kids to think of.

LUIZ

I go with. I'm Mexican. You don't even speak Spanish.

JAKE

Luiz, I need someone I trust to make sure that my son is looked after if anything happens to me, and that's not something I could ask of just anyone or something I ask lightly. I want you to look after my son's future, if I can't do it. Please.

LUIZ

(after a moment)

It is my honor.

BRODY

When you leaving?

JAKE

Five minutes ago.

BRODY

You got a plan?

JAKE

An idea, yeah. I've got contacts in Tijuana from when I was dealing in hot cars, already made some calls. I'm flying down. Can you drive me to the airfield, Luiz?

Luiz nods. Looks to Brody, who holds out his hand.

BRODY

Luiz, gotta say, you may actually force me to re-evaluate my entrenched views of non-whites.

LUIZ

You still a big asshole.

BRODY

Well hell, we agree on one thing.

They shake hands. Brody laughs as Luiz goes to the truck.

BRODY

I'll keep an eye on Pedro and family, too. You got cash, pesos?

JAKE

I got some money.

Brody whistles. One of his men tosses a fat envelope to Jake. Jake opens it. A thick stack of hundreds.

JAKE

I can't take this.

BRODY

Sure ya can, I know you're good for it. You saved me a lot more dough than this with Spider. And no interest, no shit. Straight up, dollar to dollar loan. Use it, get some Mexican boom-boom. One thing. You ever kill anybody, Jake?

JAKE

In Iraq.

BRODY

How many?

JAKE

More than enough.

BRODY

So you were good at it, then.

JAKE

Yeah. Too good.

BRODY

Kinda liked it, maybe.

JAKE

(after a moment)

After the war, I was in a bad way. Got into some tussles, stole cars. I was good at it. After almost doing hard time, I walked away. Looked for real work, caught on as a repo. Guy that hired me, he told me that to succeed as a repo, you gotta have a black heart. At the time, I figured that'd suit me just fine. And it did.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

But all that changed when I met my wife, when my son was born. Not who I am now.

BRODY

That's who you gotta be, though. You know that, right? And this ain't gonna be like Kuwait, shooting someone hundreds of yards away. This is shit close up, you don't show mercy like you did at the barbershop. Can't be soft, gangs don't respect that, you go in hard and leave nothin' but blood on your way out, understand? Any other way you won't make it back and personally I'd hate to see that.

JAKE

Thanks Brody.

Jake holds out his hand. Brody pulls him in for a man-hug.

BRODY

Semper fi, motherfucker, semper fi.

Jake looks over to where Connor sits with a puppy.

He walks over to the

PORCH

Kneels down before his son.

JAKE

Hey bud.

CONNOR

Hey Daddy. Puppy.

JAKE

I see that. Does he have a name?

CONNOR

Not yet.

JAKE

You're going to be here for a couple days. Uncle Luiz will check on you and let you know what's going on. Okay?

Connor bites his lip.

CONNOR
Time to go?

JAKE
I'm afraid so, son.

Connor sets the puppy down carefully. Goes to Jake, gives him a tight hug. A long, tight hug. Then he kisses Jake on each cheek. Hugs again.

The same good-bye routine Kara did with Connor before.

Connor whispers Spanish into Jake's ear, just as his mother did with him, then kisses and hugs him tight one last time. Connor puts his hand on Jake's cheek.

CONNOR
I love you, Daddy. And Mommy, too.

JAKE
We both love you, more than anything in the whole wide world. No matter what.

CONNOR
Bring Mommy back.

Jake takes a pen out. Writes a note on Connor's hand.

The note reads: "**I LOVE YOU**".

Jake steps back, turns and heads for the truck. Climbs in. Luiz puts it into gear and they back out of the drive.

Connor stands on the porch and waves as they drive off. Jake waves back until they can't see each other anymore.

Jake looks back in the direction of his son for a long time.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

A twin engine plane waits on a dinky grass runway, propellers turning. Jake gets out of the truck with Luiz. A moment.

JAKE
Luiz, if I don't make it back, don't hide it from Connor. Let him know right up front.

LUIZ
I will take care of him, I promise.

They embrace. Luiz gets back into the truck. Jake heads for the puddle-jumper. Hears a HONK.

Olson leans against his sedan. Jake sighs. Walks over.

JAKE

You following me?

OLSON

Can't talk you out of this?

JAKE

How do they punish runaways?

OLSON

(after a moment)

It varies, but I'm told that the preferred method as of late is to pour gasoline over their heads and light them up.

JAKE

How can I look my son in the eye if I don't try to save his mother from that?

OLSON

I guess you can't. I know I couldn't. That's why I'm here. For you, from a buddy in Border Patrol.

Olson hands him a picture of Kara and the Tattooed Man, Dedos, in a truck.

OLSON

They crossed into Mexico last night, about four in the morning. Probably headed to Tijuana, where the gang owns some businesses. I reached out to a woman I once dated who works for the DEA now. According to her sources, some big shots in the gang are flying in from Cabo tonight for the All Saint's Day celebration, you familiar it?

JAKE

Yeah, their celebration of Halloween, but bigger. Parades, costumes, like Mardi Gras.

OLSON

Like that, only wilder. Lots of guns. I know you were a Marine, but are you sure you up for this?

JAKE

I will be.

Olson holds out his hand. They shake.

INT. AIRPLANE (FLYING) - DAY

Bouncing through sky, Jake watches Mexico get closer in the tiny window. Looks again at the tattoo on his hand.

EXT. MEXICAN AIRFIELD - DAY

Jake climbs out of the plane on a decayed dirt runway outside of Tijuana. ERNESTO (55), a jocular Mexican with a carefully maintained mustache, waves from a jeep. Jake joins him.

ERNESTO

Jacob, good to see you again, it's been a long, long time, has it not?

JAKE

Ten years. You get everything?

ERNESTO

I did, but we will talk of such things in private, yes?

He puts the jeep in gear and roars away.

INT. CRAPPY MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jake and Ernesto enter a cruddy motel room. JAVIER (36) dark and quiet in a black duster, nods to them.

ERNESTO

My nephew, Javier, I'm teaching him my trade, he has a good head for the business, I think.

Javier nods to Jake, shakes his hand. Ernesto speaks Spanish. Jake raises his eyebrow in question at it.

ERNESTO

Unbelievable. You still don't speak Spanish, after all this time?

JAKE

I plan on learning real soon.

ERNESTO

I tell Javier how we used to work together, that you were at one point the most dependable source of fine luxury automobiles from the States. We did much good business together, you and I.

JAKE

Yeah. Once upon a time.

ERNESTO

Then you left the life.

JAKE

I did. But I'm back now.

Ernesto nods. Javier hauls out a suitcase from under the bed. Opens it. Inside, pistols and ammunition and grenades.

Javier pulls out a couple of Berettas. Jake takes the pistols, inspects them, works the action. Nods. Takes out as many ammo clips as he can carry. Steps back.

JAKE

M16?

Ernesto sits on a chair close to the bed. Glances at Javier. Javier closes the suitcase, slides it back under the bed.

Hauls out a guitar case and opens it. Inside, an M16 automatic rifle and clips.

JAKE

A guitar case, seriously?

ERNESTO

The young men who are my customers often enjoy the reference, so who am I to judge? To be honest, it is the perfect size for carrying an automatic rifle, and few think twice when they see a man walk down the street with it on his back.

Jake checks the action on the M16.

ERNESTO

Archaic, that weapon. I could get you a Uzi, which is much smaller-

JAKE

I've never fired an Uzi, so no. I already know how to use this.

ERNESTO

These are for your own personal edification? Not for resale?

JAKE

How much?

A moment. Ernesto holds up seven fingers.

ERNESTO

That's a friend price.

Jake pulls out a wad of bills, counts it out. Hands it over. Jake jerks his chin at Javier's black duster.

JAKE

How much for the jacket?

ERNESTO

It's his favorite, so I don't think-

JAKE

Say when.

Jake peels off hundreds, one, two, three, four, five ... Javier takes the duster off, hands it over. Jake puts it on.

ERNESTO

Pistols, automatic weapon ... I only agreed because you have shown me favor in the past and, in your youth, demonstrated yourself to be a civilized person, no small accomplishment in the world in which we live in, but I must confess, Jacob, that I am consumed with curiosity.

Jake loads up the two pistols, sticks them in his belt.

JAKE

About what?

ERNESTO

Whom you're declaring war upon?

JAKE

Ernesto, you know I'm strictly non-confrontational.

ERNESTO

That was my recollection. It would be decidedly inconvenient for me if you were to make use of these tools within my area of influence.

Jake closes the guitar case, snaps it shut tight.

JAKE

One last thing, maybe you can help?

ERNESTO

Of course, you have only to ask.

Jake flashes the picture of Dedos the Tattooed Man.

JAKE

I'd like to find him.

Javier glances at Ernesto. Jake catches the look.

ERNESTO

He is not someone you want to find.

JAKE

I do.

ERNESTO

I cannot help you with this.

JAKE

I find that hard to believe. You know where everything and everyone in this town is.

ERNESTO

It is true that I am blessed with many friendships. But this? I cannot. I'm sorry.

A moment. Javier fidgets.

JAKE

Me, too.

Jake grabs the guitar case. Turns. Takes a few steps ...

Tosses the case to Javier, who catches it in surprise with both hands. Jake pulls out both Berettas, fast.

Points one at Ernesto, who is in the process of raising his own pistol. Ernesto freezes. Points the other at Javier, who also freezes, case in hand.

JAKE

Gonna shoot me in the back, take the money and the guns, Ernesto?

ERNESTO

Of course not, Jacob, you misunderstand me. I only-

JAKE

Drop the pistol. Now.

Ernesto drops the gun.

JAKE

This guy, Dedos is his name, right? Where can I find him? Tell me.

ERNESTO

Jacob, this isn't civilized.

JAKE

I left civilized life behind.

Jake takes a step, sticks the barrel of his pistol into Javier's mouth. Javier's eyes widen.

JAKE

Your nephew isn't going to have a good head for anything at all if you don't tell me what I want to know right now. Where is he?

ERNESTO

You slander our friendship.

JAKE

I'm going to splatter it, you and your nephew all over these walls in three seconds. Three. Two ...

Jake squeezes the trigger, nearly firing. Javier squeals.

ERNESTO

Wait! Dedos owns a club. He makes his rounds, when he is in town, the same time every afternoon.

INT. CRAPPY MOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Ernesto and Javier are handcuffed together to the shitty toilet pipes, towels stuffed into their mouths.

JAKE

I'm going to borrow your jeep.

Jake reaches into Ernesto's pocket, grabs the keys. Takes out Ernesto's wallet, flips it open, revealing

A MEXICAN POLICE BADGE

Flips the wallet shut, shoves it into his pocket.

JAKE

He's not where you said, I'll come back and kill you. He'll be there?

Ernesto nods, eyes hot with anger. Javier seethes.

JAKE

Don't go anywhere.

EXT. TIJUANA STREETS - DAY

Jake drives the jeep into the city proper. Crowded, filled with folks getting a head start on the night's festivities.

Checks his blackberry for GPS. No service here. Fucking AT&T.

Jake pulls over at a congested street, double-parks. Climbs out of the jeep, guitar case in hand.

A STORE OWNER (60) steps out of a shop and sputters at him, pointing at the jeep. Obviously doesn't want it parked there.

Jake ignores him and when he doesn't go away, flashes the Mexican police badge. That works and Store Owner shuts up.

Jake goes to a tourist stand, grabs a city map and pays for it. Walks back to the jeep, spreads the map out.

Finds the point where he is. Looks up the name of the club. Other side of town.

A TAP on his shoulder, along with a question in Spanish. Jake brushes the hand away, intent on the map.

Another tap, insistent. Jake looks up, holds up the badge. It's the Store Owner again. Asking him something in Spanish.

But it's not directed at Jake. Directed at someone standing just over Jake's shoulder.

Jake turns, badge in hand, and looks up into the eyes of

A MEXICAN COP

In uniform. A police car nearby. The Cop takes the badge from Jake, asks him a question.

The Cop, Jake's badge in hand, asks him another question. Harder this time.

A moment.

The Cop looks at the badge, then at Jake. Reaches fast for the gun on his belt.

Jake pushes the Cop away, out into the street and into traffic. The Cop dodges cars, nearly getting clipped.

Jake jumps into the jeep, starts it and backs away.

Zigzags in and out of traffic. Backwards.

The Cop jumps into his car, follows Jake down the street, shouting into his radio.

Jake hits an intersection, SPINS. Drives forward down the street, nearly getting sideswiped by another police car.

Both follow him now, and both are faster than the jeep.

They rocket down the city street, people dodging out of the way. Right before an intersection, Jake sees

A KID ON A BIKE

... right in his path, not enough time to get out of the way. The Kid screams and shuts his eyes.

Jake SLAMS on the brakes, cranks the wheel. Tires squeal.

The jeep slides sideways, tips up over onto its side and slides to a stop. It stays on its side.

Jake drops down from the driver's seat lightly on his feet. Grabs the guitar case and map.

Runs for it, like a madman, slinging the case over his back.

The Kid opens his eyes as police cars zip past either side of the upturned jeep, sirens wailing.

Jake dodges down a narrow alley.

A police car screeches to a stop at the entrance. COPS jump out and follow Jake on foot.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Jake ducks in and out of tight connected alleys, jumping over crates and junk left in dark places like these.

Cops hard on this tail, shouting.

Jake sees daylight at an open street ... only to have a police car cut him off. He ducks into another twisty alley.

More daylight ahead. Open road.

Jake pushes himself harder now, pumping his arms.

A GARBAGE TRUCK ...

blocks entrance of the alley.

A GARBAGE MAN

in overalls and gloves, hot and tired, jumps off the back, picks up a can. Dumps it into the back.

He wipes sweat off his forehead, jumps up on the back of the truck. Slaps the side to signal the driver to go ...

AND THE GARBAGE TRUCK lays rubber, tearing the hell out of there real fast. Really fast.

Cops pour out of the alley, shouting at the truck.

The Garbage Man hangs on tight, feet flying out in the air.

On the street behind him, he sees the GARBAGE TRUCK DRIVER lying on the sidewalk, rubbing his jaw.

In that briefest of instants while flailing around on the back, the Garbage Man wonders ...

Who the hell is now driving the Garbage Truck?

INT. GARBAGE TRUCK - DAY

Jake downshifts, putting the accelerator to the floor. The truck is really booking it down the street.

He lays on the HORN. People duck out of the way.

A police car zips up alongside, lights flashing. Bumps the front of the truck. Mistake.

Jake RAMS the police car off the road, into a store.

More lights in his rear view. Too much attention. Jake spins the wheel, turns off the narrow road into a wider throughway.

More room to move. Jake shifts gears ... goes FASTER. The truck hauls ass, zipping in and out of traffic.

Looks in the rear view. Police lights recede. Jake grins.

Looks ahead. Shit. Police cars ahead, blocking the road.

Five cars, parked at an angle with each other ... only a thin path between them ... not wide enough, not at all.

Jake thinks for a moment. Puts the pedal to the metal. Truck's now at full speed.

Right for the blockade. Cops point guns, waving him off.

At the last second ... with the nose of the truck at the blockade opening ... Jake DOWNSHIFTS to second.

Gears grind. Front wheels LOCK ... Back end slides, knocking a police car out of the way, opening the path.

GARBAGE MAN hangs on for dear life on the back.

Jake UPSHIFTS ... gears grab hold, straightens out of the slide and the Garbage Truck just ...

SHIMMIES right through the blockade ... cops watch, open mouthed, as the truck slides on past them.

JAKE ... grins, blows a big sigh of relief now that the police cars are far enough behind.

Looks ahead.

A BUNCH OF KIDS ... in the road at a school crossing. Nuns, waving stop signs, try to get them out of the way, frantic.

JAKE ... downshifts to first, yanks up the handbrake.

THE GARBAGE TRUCK SPINS in a three hundred and sixty degree circle ... ONCE ... TWICE ... A THIRD TIME, the Garbage Man flailing on the end, trash flying everywhere, NEARLY TIPPING until it ...

STOPS ... right side up.

The kids all cheer and applaud at the spectacle.

The Garbage Man pants, still hanging onto his rail on the back. Doesn't want to let go.

With his free hand, he crosses himself.

Police cars squeal to a stop. Cops jump out, swarm the truck. Jump up to the cab, weapons out and ready.

Cab's empty.

Jake's disappeared.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Jake skirts along an alley, guitar case on his back. Leans back against the wall when he sees a police car drive by.

Watches it go. Checks his map.

Steps out to the

STREET

Finds an old beat up VOLKSWAGON. Pulls out his slim jim, preparing to break in, until he notices ...

A NICE BMW, newer and sleeker. Jake sidles over, preparing to break into it, until he notices ...

A CHILD'S CAR SEAT in the back. That stops him.

He hears English being spoken around the corner.

TWO ASSHOLE AMERICAN FRAT BOYS climb out of a PIMPED OUT VAN, talking shit about hookers and booze, in that order.

They lock the van up tight. Pull out a wad of cash, give a couple bills to an OLD MAN sitting close by.

Miming with their hands, they signal to the Old Man to keep an eye on their van for them. Old Man takes the money.

With that the Frat Boys head up into the whorehouse. The Old Man stares at the dollar bills in his hand. Shakes his head.

Jake appears. Inspects the tricked out van.

JAKE

Nice van. How much?

The Old Man thinks. Holds up four fingers. Jake counts out four one hundred dollar bills, American, hands them over.

JAKE

And the hat?

The Old Man shrugs, hands over a straw cowboy hat but won't take any more money. Joe puts it on, adjusts the brim. Nods.

Jake opens the van up in a snap with the slim jim. Hotwires it fast, engine rumbling.

JAKE

Pleasure doing business with you.

The Old Man waves to him as he goes.

INT. STRIP BAR - DAY

Late afternoon in a truly dark and dirty strip club. Place is full of unsavory characters drinking the hard stuff.

Sad-eyed strippers work the poles and tourists. Loud music.

A surprising number of dancers and bar staff are MISSING FINGERS. Multiple fingers.

If the patrons notice, they don't remark on it. The front door opens, giving a brief glimpse of light and the revelry outside from people in costumes for All Saints Day.

DEDOS ... The Tattooed Man, strolls in like he owns it. He does. People deliberately move out of his way.

Dedos picks up a drink at the bar without slowing. Shoots it down, hands the glass to someone else.

He heads right for the men's room, slamming the door shut.

AT THE BAR

Jake ... raises his head, which he'd kept low and covered with his cowboy hat. Also makes his way to the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

A very foul excuse of a shitter. Three open stalls, with no doors and clogged toilets, and a long smelly old school urinal trough.

Dedos stands at the urinal, pissing, his back to Jake.

Jake checks the place out. Empty, no one else there. Reaches into his pocket ...

DEDOS

I hear you're looking for me.

Dedos hasn't turned around, ain't looking. Just knows.

JAKE
 Heard that from who?

Jake gets his answer via a

GUN BARREL ... pressed against his skull.

Javier and Ernesto in the doorway, both supremely pissed.
 Javier holds the gun barrel up tight against Jake's temple.

ERNESTO
 You fucked up, my friend. You
 should never have left us alive.

Ernesto shuts the door tight. Dedos zips up. Turns around.

DEDOS
 Whoever you are, you don't have to
 look anymore. You have found me.
 Unfortunate for you.

Ernesto takes Jake's guns away. Dedos asks Ernesto a question
 in Spanish. Ernesto answers.

DEDOS
 Que? Ernesto say you a car thief.

JAKE
 I was once. In another life.

DEDOS
 You out of lives now.

Dedos beckons the group over to the urinal.

Javier and Ernesto grin. Grab Jake by the collar, gun still
 pressed against his head, and drag him over to the urinal.

Kick the back of his knees, forcing him to kneel.

Ernesto grabs Jake's right hand, places it on the lip of the
 urinal trough, which is notched and blood-stained.

Dedos leans down, picks up a wicked machete. Twirls it.

Dedos places the tip of the blade right between Jake's
 fingers, putting the pinkie in great jeopardy.

DEDOS
 I think I will take all your
 fingers, one at a time. After that,
 I drive you down to my kennel. Feed
 you to my dogs ...

(MORE)

DEDOS (CONT'D)

watch you fight them just as they fight, with only your teeth and feet. They are hungry. Haven't eaten in days. Sometimes they tear their meal apart so fast, the man is still screaming as he's swallowed. However, if you answer my questions fully and honestly, maybe I'll slit your throat before I give you to the dogs and save you much anguish. Now. Why are you looking for me?

JAKE

My wife.

DEDOS

Your wife?

Dedos laughs. Ernesto and Javier join in.

DEDOS

I know many wives. And they are glad to know me, too. I'm sorry if that upsets you.

JAKE

You took my wife you son-of-a-bitch.

Dedos leans close. Looks hard.

DEDOS

I know you. You the *maricone* at the mall, asking for phone number.

JAKE

My wife. Where is she?

Dedos notes the tattoo on Jake's hand.

DEDOS

That lying whore. I would ask for her tongue, if she were mine.

Dedos lifts the machete, putting it under Jake's chin.

DEDOS

She is no one's wife, motherfucker. She is Dark's woman.

JAKE

She's my wife and I'm her husband.

Dedos stares a moment. With the machete, he taps on Jake's wedding ring. Chuckles. Barks in Spanish.

Ernesto rips Jake's wallet out of his back pocket. Opens it. Finds a picture of Connor. Gives it to Dedos. He examines it.

DEDOS

A son? Dark will be happy. You see, since the woman belonged to Dark, so all whelps she gives birth to also belong to Dark.

Dedos leans close, very close to Jake's face.

DEDOS

I will go fetch him, too. There is much one can do with a son.

Jake flushes, his temper red-lining.

In a flash Jake snaps his head forward ... BUTTS DEDOS on the nose. Dedos falls back onto his butt, blood spurting.

With his free hand, Jake grabs the pistol in Javier's hand, forces it away from his temple, pointing up at the ceiling.

Ernesto punches Jake. Jake lowers his head and takes it on the top of his skull, the hard part.

Ernesto curses in pain, holding his bruised knuckles.

Javier chokes Jake with his other hand, gun still pointed up. Jake braces against the trough, pushes to his feet.

Dedos gets to his knees. Jake kicks Dedos on the nose, same spot. Knocks him right back on his ass.

Javier's pistol, pointed at the ceiling, goes off.

Ernesto gets his pistol out. Aims it at Jake. Gets too close.

Jake grabs that weapon with his free hand, pulls it right into Javier's side. Jake squeezes. Ernesto's gun fires ...

SHOOTS JAVIER in the side. Blood spatters. Javier releases Jake, holding his gut in pain.

ERNESTO

Javier, no!

Jake elbows Ernesto on the chin, knocks him flat on his back.

A HOWL OF RAGE from Dedos as he leaps to his feet, whirling his machete. Dedos rushes forward, hacking down at Jake.

Jake slips to the side of the cut, leaving ...

Javier in the path of the descending blade. Javier has just enough time to scream before being cleaved.

Blood spatters the walls.

Ernesto, on his ass, feebly tries to aim his pistol. Jake kicks it out of his hand. It skitters across the floor into one of the stalls.

Dedos swings his blade at Jake. Jake ducks and rolls away. The blade slices Ernesto on both forearms. He wails.

Dedos stalks Jake, stabbing, cutting and cursing.

Jake slips into a toilet stall, searching for the gun. Can't find it. Ducks down. The machete stabs into the stall wall.

Jake steps back, yanks off the toilet seat. Turns to face Dedos. Dedos swings, but clangs against the side of the stall, not enough room to really slice and dice. He stabs.

Jake blocks it with the toilet seat. Snaps it right back. Catches the tattooed prick in the nose again.

Dedos screams in fury, stabs viciously.

Jake catches the blade in the "O" ring of the toilet seat. Twists and leverages the machete down and out of his hand.

Yanks Dedos forward. Jake grabs Dedos by the neck, pushes his head into the dirty water of the toilet. Dedos flails.

JAKE

Where is she!

Jake yanks Dedos's head up.

JAKE

Tell me!

Jake dunks Dedos back into the foul water. Dedos bellows. Puts both hands on the toilet and pushes back up.

Dedos elbows Jake in the gut. Jake knees him. Dedos falls to his back on the floor, Jake raining down blows.

Dedos spots Ernesto's pistol on the floor, two stalls away. Shoves Jake off of him, slides under the stall wall, crawling for the pistol on his belly.

Jake sees what Dedos is after. Grabs his leg. Dedos kicks him off. Jake rolls away, picks the machete up.

Dedos grabs the pistol. Lurches to his feet.

Jake steps out of his stall at the same time Dedos exits his.

Dedos raises the pistol ...

Jake swings the machete ...

DEDOS'S HAND AND PISTOL FALL TO THE FLOOR.

Dedos collapses against the back wall, clutching his wrist at the stump. Howling.

JAKE

Where is my wife!

Dedos, going into shock, looks up at Jake.

DEDOS

The whore deserves to burn.

That tips Jake over the edge. He HACKS at Dedos until he's nothing but a stain. Dead. Jake steps back, breathing hard.

Ernesto, on the floor, tries hard to pick up Javier's fallen pistol. Ernesto's fingers don't work so well now, due to cut tendons, keeps dropping the gun. He sees Jake, backs away.

ERNESTO

No. Jacob, please no.

Jake places the machete blade up tight against Ernesto's throat. Picks up the pistol.

JAKE

Who is this Dark?

ERNESTO

Jacob, I didn't know who she was, you must believe me. I didn't even know you were married! I haven't seen you in years and-

JAKE

Who is he?

ERNESTO

Dark is ... the head of Mano Negra de Muerte, has been for years. His real name is Enrique Reyna, but no one dares call him that. He's a brutal man, makes Dedos look like a parish priest, on my soul.

JAKE

Where is he?

ERNESTO

I tell you and you spare me, yes?
In honor of our past friendship?

JAKE

Tell me.

Jake kneels down close to him, beckoning. Ernesto whispers hurriedly into his ear. When done, Jake leans back.

ERNESTO

It's the truth, hand to God.

Jake nods. Stands. Thinks a moment.

Spots Dedos's hat. Picks it up and his pistols. Goes to Dedos. Takes out his blackberry. Brings it close to the dead man's face. Takes a picture.

Stands, stares at Ernesto, still cowering.

ERNESTO

Jacob, please. I told you everything I know.

JAKE

You also told me, when you first walked in here, that I should have never left you alive.

ERNESTO

Jacob. We were at one point friends. This bloodshed, it isn't who you are-

Jake fires a bullet into Ernesto's skull, killing him.

JAKE

It's who I am now.

Jake walks quietly to the door. Opens it, surprising

TWO STRIPPERS

standing close to the door, listening. Both women, while not old, have a lot of mileage on their face and bodies.

Jake doesn't move, unsure of what to do.

The older of the two, URSULA, peeks past Jake. Sees what's left of Dedos. Speaks Spanish to the younger one, ALIZ.

Aliz nods, looks back over her shoulder. Women dance and music pounds, loud and harsh. No one else heard anything.

They both step inside, shut the door. Aliz stands guard at the door. Ursula walks past Jake, kneels to stare at Dedos.

She glances back at Jake.

JAKE

He took my wife.

After a moment, Ursula holds up her hand.

URSULA

My fingers. He took.

She's missing three. She searches around. Finds the detached hand of Dedos. Picks it up, puts it into her purse. Smiles.

Stands, barks Spanish at Aliz. Aliz nods, slips out.

Ursula goes to the door, holding it shut. Jake goes to speak, she shushes him. They wait. A knock. She cracks it open. Aliz. Ursula gestures for Jake to follow.

INT. STRIP BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jake slides out of the men's room after Ursula. Aliz hangs a sign on the bathroom door.

It reads "OUT OF ORDER" in both Spanish and English. She shuts the door tight.

Ursula takes Jake's hand. The women lead Jake out the back.

EXT. BACK PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jake finds his stolen van, climbs in.

URSULA

Where you go?

Jake takes out his blackberry. Brings up the picture of Dedos and Kara on the screen. Shows it to the women.

JAKE

To find her.

Ursula nods. Walks to the other side, climbs in. Aliz objects. They argue heatedly. Ursula shakes her head.

After a moment, Aliz also gets in. Ursula nods to Jake, points the direction he should go. Jake starts the van.

EXT. TIJUANA STREETS - NIGHT

Jake drives slowly through crowded streets. The sun is setting and festivities have officially begun.

People dance and parade in costumes honoring the dead, the spirits of those who have passed onward before them.

Lots of death masks. Lots of music and fire and drink.

Jake hits an intersection too packed with people to drive through and parks the van.

They climb out, Jake slinging the guitar case over his back. He checks his watch. Almost six. Ursula points to a

WALLED COMPOUND

at the far end of the street. With guarded gates and a courtyard within. A band and tables of food and drink.

Jake looks around at the crowd, the food and game stands. People celebrating. Sees what he's looking for. Pushes through the crowd. Ursula and Aliz follow him to a

SMALL SHOP

Inside an OLD MAN paints a devil's mask on the face of a young BOY, adding last touches to a fantastic makeup job.

The Boy jumps up when done and his DAD pays the Old Man. The Boy bounces out, his father close behind, to join the parade.

Jake steps inside, sits in the chair.

The Old Man greets him in Spanish. Jake takes out his blackberry. Pulls up the picture of Dedos's face.

Points at Dedos's tattoo. Points to his own cheek.

The Old Man stares at the pic for a long time. Glances at the women. Sighs. Shakes his head. Jake takes out a wad of cash.

Old Man keeps shaking his head. Says something in Spanish. Ursula answers. They debate. Jake keeps peeling off bills.

Finally the Old Man stops him. Takes the cash.

Gets his ink and brushes together, moves close. Ursula whispers to Aliz, who steps outside, shuts the door.

EXT. TIJUANA STREETS - NIGHT

Later, with Ursula and Aliz on each arm, Jake staggers toward the compound clad in the black duster, Dedos's hat pulled down low. Sunglasses. Guitar case on his back.

In one hand, a bottle of tequila. In the other, Dedos's machete. On his cheek, a remarkable reproduction of the TAT.

In the shadows, he looks like Dedos himself.

They follow scores of other festival people who flock through the entrance of the Walled Compound and on into ...

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Lots of people celebrating, music and drink plentiful. Men lurch by and shout joyfully at Jake, who keeps his head down.

They pull back under a terrace of a building. Look around.

In the center of the courtyard, a big pit with a stake in the center ... built for a fire.

An entrance to the buildings, where an obviously more VIP version of the party is in action.

GUARDS stand at the entrance with weapons, checking people before they enter the building proper and VIP areas.

Jake weaves toward the entrance, leaning on the women. Head down. Not looking up. They walk right by the GUARDS.

A YOUNG GUARD notices, challenges them. They keep walking. Young Guard follows them, barking Spanish. Ursula and Aliz now respond, chattering back at him.

Young Guard grabs Ursula by the arm. In a flash ...

The machete blade is out against Young Guard's throat. Jake holds it there tight, but still hasn't looked up.

A FAT GUARD on the other side shouts at Young Guard, who replies, holding up his hands. Jake looks over to Fat Guard.

Fat Guard raises his hand, which is missing two fingers, and waves Jake and the women on through.

They continue on to stairs, leading up to a

SECOND FLOOR TERRACE

that wraps around the connected buildings and oversees the entire courtyard. Ursula and Aliz conspire. Aliz disappears.

URSULA

She find where.

Jake nods. A loud, shrieking horn goes off ... the kind of steam whistle that used to be on old trains. People perk up.

The horn wails again. A HUGE STRETCH HUMMER LIMO pulls into the courtyard. People cheer and shout.

A MAN stands in the open ceiling window in the limo, waving his arms and urging the crowd. Ursula points.

URSULA

Dark.

Jake leans forward on the rail for a better look. The Hummer Stretch Limo pulls to a stop.

DARK (50) climbs out, a powerful-looking man. Wavy black hair and a beard. Smiles like the world-beater he's sure he is.

Two HUGE BODYGUARDS climb out with him, black suits, sunglasses, obviously packing heavy heat.

Dark addresses the crowd in Spanish. They cheer.

Aliz appears, beckons them from at a corner at the other end of the terrace. Ursula leads Jake by the hand. Some drunken men shout greetings at Jake, but he ignores them.

BENITO, a tubby merc, finds this curious behavior from his friend Dedos. Follows them.

Jake and Ursula join Aliz, who confers fast with her friend.

URSULA

Downstairs.

The three walk down a set of stairs. Benito follows. Shouts out at them. Ursula replies and they don't stop.

Benito hurries down, catches them at the bend in the stairs.

Aliz tries to flirt but Benito brushes her off. Directs a question at Jake, who ignores him, pretending to be drunk.

Ursula tells Benito as much in Spanish, but Benito's attention is fixated on Jake's face.

Jake'S SWEATING. And the makeup is RUNNING as a result.

Benito's eyes widen. Reaches for the pistol in his belt. Jake swings the machete. Benito catches his wrist.

A battle over the blade.

The women shrink back. Benito shoves him against the wall. The guitar case strap breaks, slides off of Jake's back.

Jake swings the bottle of tequila. Breaks it open on Benito's head. Dazes but doesn't take him out.

With his other hand, Benito pulls out a pistol, aims it.

Jake drops the machete, grabs the pistol and traps the slide, making it impossible for Benito to chamber a round.

Benito punches him. Jake stabs him in the throat with the broken neck of the tequila bottle. Leaves it as blood spurts.

Benito gurgles, falls. Aliz guides the dying man into a nearby wooden chair. Pulls his hat down low on him.

Ursula joins them. Jake picks up his guitar case and they walk quickly away down a hallway to

JUST OFF THE COURTYARD

The crowd sways and dances to the music. Lots of noise. Jake and the women stop outside a low window that looks into a first floor room.

Aliz points at the window ...

INSIDE A BANQUET ROOM

Dark sits at the head of a table, hosting festivities with a few other FATCATS and women who are obviously party favors.

Dark's two bodyguards help themselves to the buffet. Everyone's calm, everyone's relaxed.

And at the table to the right of Dark ...

KARA ... sits, head down.

Dressed in an evening gown. Defeated and hollow. Her left hand is bandaged, missing the pinky finger.

Jake ... drops back out of sight, squats under the window. Looks at Ursula and Aliz.

JAKE

Thank you for your help.

He lays down the guitar case. Opens it.

JAKE

Go. Get on out of here, okay?
You've done enough.

URSULA

What. You do?

INT. BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

Dark chats amicably with guests, Cuban cigar in his teeth. Leans over, tweaks Kara's cheek with his fingers.

Pulls out an expensive lighter, lights the Cuban. Dark's Fatcat friends guffaw as they also light cigars.

JAKE

Excuse me.

Everyone looks up. Jake stands in the doorway in the black duster, cowboy hat, smeared dark makeup and holding an M16.

JAKE

I'm here for my wife.

Jake points the M16 right at Dark. Everyone freezes.

Dark gestures to his bodyguards, who have their hands in their jackets. Speaks Spanish. They relax.

DARK

And you are ...?

Kara looks up, eyes full of despair.

JAKE

Jake Collier. You Enrique Reyna?

The room shifts, uncomfortable. Dark's eyes glitter.

DARK

My name is Dark. The last man who called me Enrique Reyna to my face, I force-fed him his own genitals.

JAKE

A sad story, but he probably wasn't pointing an automatic weapon in your direction at the time, was he?

DARK

(after a moment)

He wasn't. It most certainly does make a profound difference.

Darks breaks into large grin and laughs. The room joins.

DARK

That hat, I know the man it belongs to, he is an associate of mine.

JAKE

Was. He's hamburger now.

Takes a minute for Dark to get that, and when he does, he slaps his knee and laughs hard. Explains to the others.

Kara raises her eyes at the story, dark emotions stirring.

DARK

Oh, I like you, I do. You may not realize it, but you've done me a great favor. Please, come, join us.

JAKE

I'm not planning to stay and I'm not here to do you any favors.

DARK

Perhaps, but you did regardless. That man you kill, Dedos, the owner of the hat, he was fast becoming a problem for me. Very brutal and ambitious, Dedos was. It would have been necessary and difficult to remove him. You took care of that for me, so I am in your debt. Please, come in and let's discuss your grievance in a civilized manner. You may even keep your weapon as a sign of our trust.

Jake hesitates. Steps further inside.

DARK

Please, sit. If I understand correctly, you contend that we have your wife here with us?

Jake glances around. People have relaxed, and the bodyguards have resumed their assault on the buffet.

JAKE

That's my wife.

Jake sits down in a chair opposite of Dark.

DARK

This woman, here?

Dark, suspicious, nods at Kara.

JAKE

Yes.

KARA

No. It's not true, he's lying. He's crazy, *mal de la cabeza*.

DARK

Yet here he is.

Kara chatters in Spanish. Dark holds up a finger.

DARK

English please, so our friend here can follow what is obviously a matter of great importance to him.

KARA

He's sick, a crazy white man who lost his wife years ago and snapped in his head. He's obsessed, been stalking me for years, I had to quit a job because he wouldn't leave me alone.

JAKE

Kara, what are you talking about-

KARA

That's not my name! You've confused me with someone else and you need help. I'm not who think I am. You should just go. Leave this place.

JAKE

What are you doing, we're married-

KARA

No, you and I are not. We are.

She puts her hand on DARK'S ARM. It hits Jake hard. Dark, suspicious, sees that this news tears Jake up.

DARK

This woman you claim to have married is, in fact, my wife. We were unfortunately separated for a time, but have now reconciled.

KARA

You need to leave this place. Now.

Kara and Jake's eyes meet. She pleads silently.

JAKE

(after a moment)

I know what you're doing. I know why. You don't have to make this sacrifice. I won't leave you. You're the mother of my son-

DARK

Son?

KARA

No. He's lying, believe me-

DARK

You have a son? Can you prove it?

With one hand, Jake pulls out his wallet. Flips to a picture. Dark takes it. Holds it up next to Kara, who drops her eyes.

Compares the picture to her. Obvious resemblance.

DARK

I gave you everything. I would have given even more. I loved you. And this is how you betray me?

Dark tosses the wallet back to Jake. Fumes. Snarls a massive string of Spanish curses. Pounds the table. The room stills.

DARK

Dedos was right, you are a lying whore. I should have let him deal with your impertinence in his way.

Dark leans forward, arms on the table, to Jake.

DARK

As a measure of my gratitude for your help with Dedos, here is my proposal. I will allow you to walk out of here, alive, and keep your son. That is no small concession on my part, I assure you.

JAKE

And my wife?

DARK

Her destiny lies with me. Obviously her sins must be atoned for.

JAKE

No. Hell no.

KARA

Jake, please go-

Dark snarls at Kara in Spanish. Turns, smiles at Jake.

DARK

My apologies for the interruption. So, you refuse my offer?

JAKE

She's my wife, I won't leave her.

DARK

Your wife? You do not even know her real name, do you not? If you do, please tell me what it is.

Jake says nothing. Dark leans back, holds his hands out.

DARK

She lied to you. About everything. She's a thief, a liar and a whore. She ran away from her obligation to me just as she did with you. After what she's done, still you risk everything for her? Now that you know who she really is?

A moment. Jake takes a deep breath. Lets it out.

JAKE

Yes. I know who she is, inside, where it counts. Always have.

DARK

I know her better than you, I took her off the streets, gave her money, education and my name. I gave her a life. And when I told her it was time to start a family, she ran away. Ran away! From me! Her husband! For that alone she should burn. In spite of that, when she was found I welcomed her back with an open heart. With hope and love. And now I find she bore the child of another? No. It is too much. A man of honor like myself cannot let such an insult pass.

JAKE

You're pond-scum, I'm sure you'll get over it.

DARK

(after a moment)

That is twice you've insulted me. Do you really wish to throw away your life for this whore?

JAKE

This M16 semi-automatic fires at a velocity of three thousand feet per second, causing massive wounding and hydrostatic shock on flesh. Effective up to six hundred yards.

Jake stands, slowly. Dark also stands.

JAKE

I'm only six feet away. Call my wife a whore again and I'll turn your skull into a fucking canal.

DARK

You think me a fool, that I'd allow you to walk in here, invite you to sit, without a weapon trained on your head at all times?

Jake hears a click ... behind him, in the doorway, a GUARD aims a pistol at the back of his head.

DARK

I don't think so.

In the instant Jake is distracted, Dark snakes out a hand, grabs Kara by the wrist. Pulls her quick in front of him.

DARK
Put the weapon down.

KARA
Jake, don't. Shoot me instead.

Dark hides behind her. Jake doesn't have a clear shot at him. The bodyguards also pull their pistols.

DARK
Put. It. Down.

Outside, a show of FIREWORKS begins, loud. People cheer.

KARA
Kill me, Jake, please. Just shoot
me and get out of here!

Jake hesitates ... lowers the rifle a fraction. Dark smiles.

KARA
Just kill me!

URSULA (O.S.)
No!

URSULA ... appears behind the guard at the door, machete in hand. Hacks the guard in the neck, dropping him.

HELL UNLEASHES in a rain of bullets. The hacked guard, on the floor, shoots Ursula. She screams.

Jake FIRES at the Bodyguards, killing both men.

Swings the M16 and takes out a couple of Fatcats pulling pistols. Their arm-candy dates scream and drop to the floor.

More Guards run in, firing wildly before they're dropped with military precision by Jake with his rifle.

He runs out of ammo, ejects the clip.

A Fatcat rises up, pulling a gun. Jake slams him in the face with the butt of the M16.

The Fatcat goes down hard on his well-fed ass.

Jake sees

DARK ... holding Kara by her hair. Dark pulls out a pistol.

Jake ... drops the M16. Pulls out a Beretta.

Both men raise their pistols simultaneously and ... FIRE.

Jake takes a bullet in his left shoulder, goes down.

Dark gets dinged on the head, knocked back. Releases Kara before he hits the ground hard.

Kara goes to her hands and knees, crawling away from him.

Two more GUARDS RUSH IN. Jake, on his back, swivels and fires. Hits them in the shins. They fall to the floor.

Jake empties the clip into their heads, killing them. Rolls to his feet, his left arm useless.

Kara stands the same time as Jake. Quick moment of hesitation between them.

JAKE
Hey beautiful.

Kara rushes to him, hugging hard. Jake looks down at ...

Ursula on the floor. A bullet hole in her chest. She's going fast. Aliz next to her, crying. Jake kneels close.

JAKE
Why?

URSULA
No woman. Belongs. This place.

Ursula looks at Aliz, then back to Jake. Jake gets it. Nods.

Ursula touches Aliz's face, talking quiet, breathing hard and slow. Ursula smiles. Stops breathing. Aliz cries.

A guttural CURSE in Spanish from behind the banquet table.

Dark stands, hand to the side of his head. He's lost an ear.

Jake raises his Beretta, pulls the trigger. Empty.

Dark brings his gun up. Jake throws his at Dark, who ducks.

Jake runs, launches himself over the table at Dark. Crashes into him. Knocks the pistol from his hands.

Dark grabs Jake by the throat, pushing him back over the table. They roll over the top to the floor.

Jake lands hard on his wounded arm. He cries out.

Dark picks him up, shaking him like a dog. Jake knees him.

Dark pushes hard, and the momentum carries the two men through the door, out of the room and into ...

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

... the middle of the celebrating crowd, punching and kneeling. People move out of the way fast. Dark hammers Jake.

Throws Jake hard into the Stretch Limo Hummer. Jake bounces off the side, goes to the ground, writhing in pain.

The band quits playing. The crowd watches, silent.

Dark boasts his bad-assery in Spanish to the crowd. Kicks Jake a couple times for good measure. Plays to the crowd.

Rips open his shirt, revealing a large gang tattoo.

He picks Jake up by his hair. Shakes him. Takes the duster down, trapping Jake's arms.

Rips the front of Jake's shirt open, revealing ...

The words "**ASNO TERCO**" tattooed on his chest. Dark laughs.

DARK

An appropriate epitaph.

Grabs Jake by the throat. Kara, behind Dark ...

BREAKS a BOTTLE of liquor over his head. Liquid flies everywhere, covers everything.

Dark drops Jake, staggers a few steps. Backhands Kara, who goes down. Jake shrugs off the duster, runs at Dark.

They ram into a table, grappling furiously. Dark sticks his thumb into the hole in Jake's shoulder. Jake cries out.

DARK

I will make you watch her burn
before I cut you into pieces.

Jake grits his teeth, takes the pain. Pulls out his right hand, which holds ...

JAKE

That smells like homemade
moonshine, which means--

DARK'S LIGHTER ... stolen from his jacket.

JAKE

Nobody's gonna be able to call you
Dark for much longer.

Jake flicks the lighter to a big flame. Thrusts it at Dark.

His alcohol-drenched clothing LIGHTS UP immediately.

Dark BURNS fast and furious. He screams, stumbles away. No one from the crowd moves to help him.

After a few steps, Dark drops to his knees, burning even brighter. Falls. The fire burns hot. The crowd watches him.

The screams fade away as Dark dies before them.

Kara helps Jake up. Aliz joins them. They all watch. After a moment, Aliz steps forward.

She SPITS on what's left of the corpse.

One by one, others from the crowd step forward and do the same. Even those guards who are left alive.

They all spit on him, one by one. Dark had few, if any, friends still alive in this place.

Some WOMEN working there beckon Aliz. They help Aliz lead Kara and Jake out of the compound.

The band starts playing again. Festivities continue on.

INT. MEXICAN DOCTOR'S CLINIC - NIGHT

Jake sits on an examination table, while a DOCTOR pokes and prods him, fixing the hole in Jake's shoulder. Jake winces.

Kara, close by, watches the process with worried eyes as a NURSE checks Kara's bandaged hand.

Aliz sits close by, waiting.

No words between the husband and wife.

Only silence.

INT. AIRPLANE (FLYING) - DAY

Aliz sits up close to the pilot, more than a little nervous about this tiny puddle-jumper of an airplane.

Jake and Kara sit together, not far but not close.

A tight, almost visible silence between them.

INT. JAKE'S TRUCK (MOVING) - DAY

Jake, left arm in a sling, pulls into a long dirt drive. Kara sits next to him, in the middle. Aliz on the far side.

Though they sit close, an obvious distance between them.

The taut quietness between the two blankets everything.

Kara notices the tattooed note "**I LOVE YOU**" on Jake's hand.

Realizes he put it there permanently. It hits her inside.

Kara reaches out, touches it. Smiles at him. First one.

Jake smiles back.

Ice breaks.

Kara sees a bit of the tattoo on Jake's chest that reads "**ASNO TERCO**" poking out from his shirt. She hides a giggle.

JAKE

What?

KARA

I can't believe you tattooed that.

JAKE

Still don't know what it means.
What does it say in English?

Kara looks to Aliz. Both giggle.

ALIZ

Stubborn ass.

JAKE

Ah, well. That fits.

KARA

I told you to wash it off.

JAKE

I wanted to keep everything of
yours that I could. Everything.

Kara digests that. Quiet for a moment. Takes a breath.

KARA

I met him when I was very young,
when I had nothing ... He
overwhelmed me, bought me things
... I had no idea who he really
was, what he was ... I couldn't
bring children into that world.

She takes a second to collect herself.

KARA

So I ran. Met you. Built a life.
But I had to go back when they
found me. He would have ... done
things to you and to our-

JAKE

I know.

KARA

I couldn't bear it. And when I said
those terrible things to you, I
didn't mean them, I was trying to-

JAKE

Sand.

KARA

What?

JAKE

Colored pebbles of sand. That's all
the past is. Sand. Makes a picture,
and when we're done with that
picture, whatever it is ... we take
a deep breath, blow and let it all
go with the wind. Right?

Kara nods, her eyes full. Puts her hand on his.

JAKE

Get something for me out of my
shirt pocket?

She reaches into his pocket. Pulls out ... her wedding ring.

JAKE

I kept that for you.

She wipes her eyes, slides the ring on her finger. Kisses his
cheek. Jake honks the horn as the truck pulls up to ...

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Brody hollers from the garage, ambles over, Luiz close by.

CONNOR ... on the porch steps with his puppy, stands when he sees the truck. Carefully sets his dog down.

Connor looks close to see who's in the truck.

Starts to run. Fast.

CONNOR

Mommy! Mommy! Mommy and Daddy!

Runs for the truck as fast as his legs will take him.

Kara climbs out, arms outstretched.

Connor leaps into them.

Hugging and kissing and shouting.

Jake joins Kara and Connor in a big huge hug.

Picture of a happy family united.

FADE OUT.