

CALIFORNIA LOVER

An Original Screenplay By

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FADE IN:

EXT. PISAC VILLAGE, PERU - DAWN

Early morning light penetrates the nightly fog and illuminates the lush green mountains that surround the village, nestled in the bosom of a slope, where the Andes meet the sky.

A weather-beaten white church stands atop an old Inca temple site, overlooking the village. In front of it there's a large gathering of people, few of them are holding burning torches, and all are CHANTING:

Santo Daniel... Santo Daniel... Santo Daniel...

At the back of the church, unseen by the people, a man jumps out of the first floor window and walks hurriedly away. He wears a sackcloth, has long hair and beard, but his features are unclear.

DANIEL (V.O.)

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But I'm the lowest of all sinners, and deserve to be shot. I'm going therefor, to the one place I know for sure, where someone is waiting for me with a loaded gun. The place where it all began.

He walks with a limp down the hill, away from the church and village. The CHANTING continues.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: 15 YEARS AGO

FADE IN:

EXT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR, SILVER LAKE, L.A. - NIGHT

A shiny black BMW convertible stops in front of the bar, and a parking attendant opens its door.

DANIEL DAWSON, 32, tall and handsome, dressed in an old priest's black suit with a white clerical collar, gets out first.

Two teenage girls follow him out. JANE, 18, is a brunette. DONNA, 19, is a redhead. Either could win the title of "bimbo-of-the-year," judging from the way they're dressed.

(CONTINUED)

Daniel takes his parking ticket from the attendant, and flanked by the girls walks toward the bar's door.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)

Little did I know at the time, that I was on my way to betray my one and only true friend. A woman who knew my secret, but still left the door open for me.

INT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - NIGHT

A Wild West motif New Year's Eve party is in full swing. The crowd, staff and music band are mostly women. Above the bar hangs a large banner: Welcome to the Nineties!

Crossing the floor through the crowd is LAURA JENKINS, 32, short-haired with a sexy, masculine body, highlighted by her cowgirl outfit. She has an amicable, makeup free face.

She reaches the entrance, where two female bouncers hold Daniel, Jane and Donna at bay. Laura nods okay to the bouncers. She can hardly restrain her laughter, before hugging Daniel warmly.

LAURA

I was afraid you weren't going to make it, "Father Daniel."

DANIEL

You should know better, Laura. I always come on time.

LAURA

Bull.

She leads Daniel and the two girls inside. An old grandfather clock behind the bar shows 11:15.

At the bar, Laura orders drinks and hors d'oeuvres, then fingers the sleeve of Daniel's suit.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

DANIEL

A wardrobe girl gave it to me once.

LAURA

In return for a favor, of course.

He nods, smiles cryptically.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA (CONT'D)

Nothing to do with your New Year's resolution, I take it?

DANIEL

A lot, actually. I decided to become a priest.

She laughs.

LAURA

Sure, and I decided to become a nun.

DANIEL

Very well then. We'll live together ever after, you and me.

A wry smile from Laura, as the barmaid passes drinks and hors d'oeuvres to their party. Daniel is quick to down the shot of whiskey she placed in front of him, while Jane and Donna nibble at the appetizers.

As though man-to-man, Laura puts her arm around Daniel's shoulder.

LAURA

Thanks for the loan, by the way. I could never have afforded this party without it, especially the band.

DANIEL

No sweat, Laura.

(beat)

Mind if I join them for one song? Got my harmonica with me.

LAURA

Are you serious?

He nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Let me check.

She heads over to the band.

Jane and Donna seize the opportunity and sandwich Daniel.

DANIEL

Eat and drink all you can, girls. It's on the house tonight.

(CONTINUED)

JANE & DONNA

Wow... thanks.

DANIEL

And dance with each other. It's on the house here, too.

They look at each other, first, then at the dance floor. Indeed, most of the couples dancing there - just as the song reaches its end - are females.

On the small stage the band takes a breather, while Laura talks to their leader. She signals Daniel to come over, and when he does, she introduces him to the band.

Daniel pulls a shiny silver harmonica out of his jacket's pocket, and a pair of shades too, putting them on.

The band begins to play an old blues tune and Daniel, who stands beside their lead-singer, joins them on the harmonica.

He's quite good at it, even if not always in tune with the band. As he plays, though, his eyes survey the dance floor and zero in on the only seemingly straight couple around.

The woman is WENDY JENKINS, 21, wearing high boots, an old-time dress with a generous sweetheart neckline, which accentuates her attractive figure. Two blond pigtails, tied with red ribbons, frame her sensuous face.

Wendy's partner, ROBERT STARK, 28, is her conservative opposite, suit and all. He seems uncomfortable in this place, constantly looking around, yet very much in love.

Both of them join the rest of the crowd in giving the band a warm hand, as Daniel concludes his mini gig and walks off stage and back to the bar.

The barmaid shakes his hand enthusiastically and sets another glass of whiskey in front of him.

Daniel looks around as he swallows it, watches Laura chat and laugh animatedly with Wendy. Robert stands attentively beside them.

When Laura leaves them, Daniel is quick to stand in her way.

DANIEL

Introduce me to the farm girl you were talking to, just now.

LAURA

Forget it. She's off limits to you.

He's even more intrigued.

DANIEL

What's the problem, Laura, she doesn't look like one of your sisters.

LAURA

She is, in fact, my *real* sister!

DANIEL

No kidding... that little ugly duckling, what was her name?

LAURA

Wendy. She grew up to be a swan, as you can see.

(beat)

Our father took her with him to Palmdale, you may remember, years--

DANIEL

I do now, come to think of it.

They head back to the bar.

LAURA

Fucking abuser, that what he was. I saved her at the last moment.

DANIEL

Good thing you did. I'm sorry to hear that.

LAURA

Oh well, he's in jail now. And she's getting married soon.

DANIEL

Is that any reason why we shouldn't be reintroduced?

She shoots him a penetrating look.

LAURA

What happened to Daniel the priest? I thought...

DANIEL

Even death row inmates get a last request, Laura. I want my last dance to be with her.

LAURA

Go ahead, try and separate these two lovebirds for one dance.

(beat)

But don't try anything else, you hear me, or I'll bust your balls.

He smiles. She does not - dead serious in fact.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm not joking, Daniel. Stick to your bimbos.

She turns and walks away.

He drains his glass while watching his girls: Jane dances with another woman, but Donna stands alone, looks anxiously at him.

When the band switches to an old slow number, he walks toward the young couple, dancing closely in each other's arms. He taps gently on Wendy's shoulder.

DANIEL

Wendy Jenkins?

WENDY

Yes...

DANIEL

I'm Daniel Dawson, your sister's best friend. You may--

WENDY

Wow... I didn't recognize you at all. Are you a--

DANIEL

Not yet. Just in costume for now.

WENDY

I see.

(beat)

Meet Robert Stark, my fiancé.

DANIEL

Nice meeting you, Robert.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Same here.

They shake hands.

DANIEL

Mind if I finish this dance with Wendy, Robert?

ROBERT

Huh... not at all. Just so she's back in my arms by midnight.

DANIEL

Done deal.

He gets hold of Wendy, very assuredly and elegantly, and leads her on the dance floor.

WENDY

You didn't ask if I mind, by the way.

DANIEL

I knew you wouldn't.

She absorbs his remark, regards him intensely.

WENDY

Now that I look at you closely, I can remember your father, too. The apple--

DANIEL

The apple getting old, Wendy.

WENDY

Aren't we all?

He nods, pulling her even closer. She tries to distance herself away from him, without much success.

DANIEL

How long are you staying in town, Wendy?

WENDY

Oh... until tomorrow morning. We have to leave early.

(curious, while dancing)

Why do you ask?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

Our annual New Year's food project takes place tomorrow. We can use an extra pair of hands, Laura and me.

WENDY

I don't think so.

He looks around.

Not far from them, Donna approaches the lonesome Robert, and they begin to dance shortly. She's very flirtatious, he's very shy.

Laura dances closely with a young woman, CARA, of Asian origin. She's at ease now, oblivious to what's going on around her.

The grandfather clock shows 11:45.

Daniel stops dancing abruptly, but keeps Wendy in his arms.

DANIEL

I need to make an urgent phone call.

WENDY

And who's stopping you?

DANIEL

You. Find an excuse and join me in Laura's office. We'll ring in the New Year together.

WENDY

Take your dirty hands off me!

He does.

DANIEL

Live a little, Wendy, before you're being jailed for life. That's my advice to you.

She looks away from him in search of Robert, only to find him dancing with Donna, whose hand massages his back.

Wendy turns and looks at Daniel. He smiles and walks away.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A small room, messy with the bar's daily affairs, yet decorated colorfully with artwork.

Daniel steps in, leaving the door open. He first takes out of his jacket a small bottle of Jack Daniel's and sets it on the desk. He then sits down and makes himself at home, as his feet join the bottle on the desk.

He picks up the cordless phone and punches in a number.

DANIEL

(into phone)

I didn't wake you up, did I?...
 Good, Happy New Year then... No, at
 a party... You're too old for
 pretty girls, Dad, remember?

(beat)

Listen to your doctor, okay, and
 keep the drinking down... Sure, see
 you soon... Good night.

He hangs up and looks at his watch, then looks at a framed picture of himself and Laura, all smiles at a high school graduation ceremony, diplomas in hands.

He opens the bottle of whiskey and takes a long pull.

EXT. SMALL N. CALIFORNIA TOWN - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. MUTE. Daniel, 7, runs fast on a deserted sidewalk. He's dressed in school uniform, carries a school bag on his back and a lunchbox in his hand.

He reaches a white church, climbs the stairs in a rush and tries to open the doors. They're locked. He pounds on them frantically, to no avail. He looks around, desperately.

In the b.g., bells RING.

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Daniel sits as before, staring at the open door.

The bells of the grandfather clock CHIME in the b.g., then the MIDNIGHT COUNTDOWN from the crowd at the party is heard, followed by CHEERS and the SINGING of "Auld Lang Syne.

Daniel considers what remains in his whiskey bottle and recaps it.

INT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - SAME

The party continues. Wendy is back in Robert's arms, and both seem happy dancing together.

By the bar, Jane and Donna are befriended by two women.

Daniel stands in the doorway, surveying the dance floor grimly. He peers at Wendy until eventually she's forced to make eye contact with him. Behind Robert's back, she sticks her tongue out at him, smiles mischievously. He smiles back, reluctantly.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Daniel's BMW speeds through traffic on the fast lane.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - SAME

While driving, Daniel draws out of his jacket the half-full bottle of whiskey and offers it to Jane, who sits beside him.

JANE

Nah... I had enough already at the party.

DANIEL

Never mind, it will help you.

JANE

Like, help me with what?

DANIEL

With giving me a blowjob.

She's taken aback, mouth opened.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

C'mon, don't tell me you never tried that on the road before. It's exhilarating.

JANE

For you, maybe, not for me.
(angrily)

Who do you think I am, anyway, that you treat me like that?

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Daniel maneuvers his car to the slow lane, and comes to a screeching stop on the narrow shoulder.

INT. THE CAR - SAME

He grabs Jane's chin with his hand, menacingly.

DANIEL

You walk like a whore, talk like a
whore and dress like a whore, and
you want me to treat you like
Mother Teresa?

She gapes at him, speechless. He lets go of her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Move to the back seat, I'll take
you home to mama.

He turns to Donna, who sits quietly at the back.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(commanding)

Get in front, Jane.

DONNA

Donna.

DANIEL

Whatever.

He leans over the stunned Jane and opens the passenger door.

EXT. FREEWAY - SAME

Jane comes out first, then Donna. For a moment they just look at each other, then look around.

It is dark and ominous.

Donna reacts first and retreats into the car, onto the front seat. Jane follows her in and sits at the back.

Daniel takes off, burning rubber.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - LATER

Daniel drives with the window rolled down, one hand stretched outside, holding the empty bottle of whiskey.

He enjoys the wind blowing in his face and hair, while we can also see the red hair of Donna, going up and down... up and down... beside the steering wheel.

The car disappears into the dark night

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD - DAY

A shiny red pickup truck turns into a narrow street and stops in front of a modern condominium complex.

Daniel, the driver, is the first to get out, dressed casually in jeans and white T-shirt. The front of his T-shirt is lettered with FIRST AID FOOD, and the back has a "Red Cross" on it.

Laura, dressed like him, gets out from the other side. Wendy follows her out, wearing the same T-shirt, though with a short pleated skirt. Her hair waves freely, no pigtails.

She climbs onto the bed of the truck and hands Laura and Daniel a large saucepan, a cardboard box and two holiday baskets.

WENDY

Why don't I help you guys carry it all in?

LAURA

No, sweetie, stay in the car and watch our stuff.

WENDY

Yes ma'am!

She jumps down, showing lots of bare legs and a no-bra-bounce as she lands.

Daniel, of course, observes her carefully.

She gets back into the truck, as Laura and Daniel head toward the building, carrying everything.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Daniel and Laura go up, their load is on the elevator's floor.

LAURA

The last thing I need, is her coming up with us.

DANIEL

Why's that?

LAURA

She's been through enough, Daniel. And she's marrying this straight arrow kind of a guy. It was such a big deal to just get him--

DANIEL

(cuts in)

Where is he, by the way?

LAURA

Had to go back to Palmdale, to manage his store.

DANIEL

And she?

LAURA

Decided to stay another day in the "big city." Surprised me, as a matter of fact.

He hides a smile, just as the elevator comes to a stop and the doors open.

EXT. RED PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Wendy sits in the cab. She looks around, bored. She turns on the radio and tunes in to a station that plays a popular late eighties song. Next she lights a cigarette, blows the smoke out the window.

INT. A KITCHEN - DAY

The song keeps playing on in the b.g., as we see Laura fixing hot and cold food on the stove and around it.

A man in his forties, dressed in sweats, helps her. There's a touch of sadness in his tired looking face.

INT. A BEDROOM - DAY

The song continues. A young man lies, eyes closed, in a double bed. He's pale and thin, his beard cannot hide the deteriorated state of his skin, and his AIDS-related lesions.

Daniel sits down by the bed and takes the young man's wrist in his hand, checking his pulse.

The young man opens his eyes and gazes blankly at him. Daniel smiles warmly and puts the palm of his hand on the young man's forehead.

Beside the bed, the nightstand overflows with medicines and vitamins. Daniel examines them next.

There's a sense of confidence in his assured actions, of someone who knows very well what he's doing.

INT. THE PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

The song plays on but Wendy, no longer smoking, is still bored.

She bends down and picks up a handbag from the floorboard, beneath the glove compartment. She looks inside it, curious, and draws out a small handgun. She stares at it - shocked.

INT. A ONE-ROOM APARTMENT - DAY

The song plays on. At the far end of the small room there's a tiny kitchen area, where Laura is busy with food and dishes.

At the center of the poorly decorated room sits an old woman in a wheelchair, her legs covered with a blanket. Daniel sits at her side, patiently feeding her hot soup.

INT. THE PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - LATER

As the song plays on, Laura and Wendy - who sit closely in the cab - sing along joyously. Laura's arm is over Wendy's shoulder.

Wendy points to the poker-faced Daniel, at the wheel.

Laura elbows him, and he looks at her deadpan. Wendy sticks her tongue out at him and bursts into laughter. Laura joins her.

He smiles, finally, then looks back at the road ahead.

EXT. HANCOCK PARK NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE AFTERNOON

As the song comes to an end, the red pickup truck pulls up in front of an old bungalow.

Daniel stays in the truck, while Laura and Wendy get out. Laura carries the handbag Wendy found earlier.

Cara, the woman Laura danced with at the New Year's Eve party, greets them as she comes out of the house, an apron around her waist.

CARA

Dinner will be ready soon, guys.
You must be very hungry.

LAURA

We're starving, actually.

They hug and kiss lightly.

DANIEL

Count me out, Cara, I'm taking the truck and all the stuff back to the bar.

LAURA

We'll be waiting for you, don't run away. And lock--

WENDY

(cuts in)
I'm going with him, Laura.

A moment.

LAURA

What for?

WENDY

To help him, what do you mean?

Daniel looks at them through the open window and smiles over so slightly, scenting blood. Laura hesitates. Cara looks at her and shakes her head.

WENDY (CONT'D)

C'mon, sis, what's the big deal?

(CONTINUED)

LAURA
Nothing, sweetie, no big deal.

WENDY
Then let loose. I'm not sixteen
anymore.

LAURA
I guess not.
(beat)
In half an hour you're back, both
of you!

Wendy runs back to the truck.

LAURA (CONT'D)
You're in charge, Daniel, no dirty
tricks. You hear me?

DANIEL
I hear you well. Told you of my new
year's resolution, didn't I?

LAURA
Right, I trust you. Bring my keys
back, and lock all the doors.

He raises his thumb and takes off.

The two women, locked in a hug on the lawn, watch them go.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - LATE AFTERNOON

Daniel drives. Wendy sits at the other end, one leg atop the
other, looking at the road ahead. But then, despite herself,
she turns and looks at him.

WENDY
Ah... did you know Laura carries a
gun with her?

He nods

WENDY (CONT'D)
What for?

DANIEL
This is Los Angeles, baby, the city
of gangs and guns. And she's the
owner of a bar.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Does she know how to use it, you think?

DANIEL

I wouldn't want to find out. She can be real mean, your sister, if she wants to.

She looks back at the road, thoughtful.

EXT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - SAME

The red pickup truck arrives at the back of the bar. Daniel's BMW is parked there. He and Wendy, in dead silence, carry all the cookware and a few cardboard boxes in.

INT. THE BAR'S KITCHEN - SAME

They bring everything into the small kitchen, and begin to unload it all, when Daniel stops and heads for the door.

DANIEL

I'm going to check the doors inside.

WENDY

Go ahead.

He leaves.

INT. THE BAR - SAME

Daniel turns the lights on, standing in a doorway behind the bar, surveying the place. The aftermath of the party is very much in evidence: The floor is covered with airless balloons, empty bottles and torn paper decorations.

He steps in and draws two bottles: Jack Daniel's and Ginger ale. He first fills one glass with whiskey, then another one only half-full. He pours just a bit of the Ginger ale into the half-full glass, the rest he empties.

He walks out to the front of the counter and sits down on a bar stool, drinks the pure whiskey while stirring the other drink. He stares at the dark, empty doorway behind the bar.

We can hear a dog BARKING in the distance.

EXT. THE SMALL N. CALIF. TOWN - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. MUTE. Daniel and Laura, both 7, get off a school bus, dressed in school uniform and carrying school bags and lunch boxes. They chat for a moment, then depart to their adjoining houses. We follow Daniel.

He opens the gate, as a border collie on a leash greets him happily, barking. He tries to open the front door but it's locked. He knocks on it a couple of times, then rings the bell. No one opens the door. He tries a side door. It's locked, too.

He shouts "Mom!" - we don't hear him, though. Instead we hear:

WENDY (V.O.)
All the doors are locked, I take
it?

INT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - AFTERNOON

Wendy fills the void in the doorway, looking at Daniel.

DANIEL
Huh... sure. Come have a drink.

WENDY
We'll be late for dinner.

DANIEL
So what?

He points to a barstool beside him. She hesitates, reasoning his last question, but then steps in and sits down. He hands her the other glass.

WENDY
What's in it?

DANIEL
Ginger ale. You want a touch of
whiskey, too?

He's about to pour more whiskey into her glass, but she puts her hand on his, stopping him.

WENDY
No, it'll make me tipsy right away.

He looks steadily at her hand, holding his. She releases her grip slowly, as they clink their glasses and drink. She almost spits it all back out, but gets hold of herself.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (CONT'D)

Wow... if that's a Ginger ale,
I'm--

DANIEL

A Mexican Ginger ale, in fact, of a
special kind.

She gives him a doubtful look, but then takes another sip.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So what made you stay today?

WENDY

My sister. I haven't seen her in a
long time. I miss her terribly

His eyes drift down to her crossed, exposed knees.

DANIEL

She didn't give you any of her
jeans, though?

WENDY

Hers are too big on me.

(beat)

Anything wrong with the way I'm
dressed, sir?

DANIEL

Quite the opposite

He downs his whiskey, then fills his glass with more.

WENDY

You're her only male friend, she
tells me.

DANIEL

Apparently so.

WENDY

Like brother and sister, almost.

He shrugs, ill at ease. Drinks again.

WENDY (CONT'D)

She says you were the only one who
stuck up for her, in high school,
when she came out.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

She stuck up for herself, actually.

He sets his glass down on the counter and walks over to a jukebox in a corner. He feeds it with quarters.

An old *Platters* song, *The Great Pretender*, fills the air.

He returns and extends his hand to her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Let's dance.

WENDY

Forget it. We'll be late.

DANIEL

Pretend it's last night.

She takes another sip, then looks up at him - her eyes radiate availability.

He takes her hand in his, lifts her up into his arms and leads her to the center of the dance floor. They begin to dance. It takes but a moment and they are one.

WENDY

I fooled you last night, didn't I?

DANIEL

Doing what?

WENDY

Not following you to the office.

DANIEL

I didn't expect you to do that. I knew you'd come back, though.

WENDY

How?

DANIEL

I saw it in your tongue.

She giggles.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

We're back at midnight.

WENDY

Are we?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL
Yes. Happy New Year.

WENDY
Happy New Year.

They kiss. Lightly at first, then strongly and at length. He pulls her down with him to the floor, without stopping to catch a breath.

But when he lifts her skirt she stops him.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Do you have a rubber?

DANIEL
I had a vasectomy, years ago. You shouldn't worry.

WENDY
I worry about unsafe sex.

While still on top of her, he picks up his wallet from the back of his jeans, and in a practiced move unfolds it, showing her a plastic card.

DANIEL
Safe sex is boring, baby, but here's my HIV negative card anyway. I'm being tested each month.

She examines it, but then he lifts her T-shirt over her head and buries his face in her breasts. They have sex: passionately but to the point - no acrobatics.

Over at the jukebox, the song reaches conclusion.

EXT. LAURA'S HOUSE, HANCOCK PARK - SUNSET

Daniel's BMW pulls up in front of the house and comes to a stop, top down, while the motor keeps running. Daniel is at the wheel, Wendy sits beside him.

DANIEL
You'll have a happy marriage now, Wendy, I can assure you.

WENDY
Get lost.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

And not a word to your sister, of course.

WENDY

Don't worry, you had a flat tire.

(beat)

Aren't you coming in?

DANIEL

(shakes his head)

I don't want to spoil the moment.

She regards him. And in spite of herself, a content smile registers on her face.

WENDY

Not hungry, huh?

DANIEL

I am. But I only eat in restaurants.

WENDY

I see...

She gets out of the car, but leans back over the closed door.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Will I ever see you again, monster?

DANIEL

I doubt it. I never fuck the same woman twice, on principle.

She tries hard to conceal her hurt.

WENDY

Why don't you use the word sleep, instead--

DANIEL

Because I never sleep with women, either. I sleep alone.

He shifts the gear into first. She takes a step back.

WENDY

A man of principles you are?

He nods.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (CONT'D)

What are you afraid of, then?

He's caught off guard, momentarily.

DANIEL

Nothing.

He drives away.

She watches him go.

EXT. NINTH ST., L.A. - DUSK

Daniel parks his car in front of a Salvation Army building. He gets out of the car, opens the trunk and lifts out a few holiday baskets.

He walks over to the building, where there's a long line of poor people of all ages and colors, children included.

He spots the children and hands them the holiday baskets. They are overwhelmed with joy, their parents with gratitude. Daniel though, is quick to say goodbye.

On his way back to the car he stops momentarily by the Salvation Army Chapel, at the other side of the building. He stares at the open doors, his fingers plow his hair nervously.

He takes a short step forward, as though about to enter the chapel, but then halts. He turns and hurries back to his car.

He starts it up and speeds away, disappearing down the road.

DANIEL (V.O.)

The heavenly taste of Wendy's lips
stayed with me for a while longer,
which was a bit unusual, and
should've turned my red lights on.

EXT. ALAMEDA AVE., BURBANK - DAY

Among the cars exiting the Ventura Freeway and entering Burbank's Media district, we can spot Daniel's car. He drives along the avenue, and then turns into the underground parking level of a modern office building.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)
But after four months, full to capacity with hard work and easy sex, her memory all but evaporated into thin air.

INT. EXTRAS CASTING AGENCY - DAY

Daniel enters the office, clad impeccably in an Armani black suit, one hand holding a briefcase, the other hugging a beautiful black cat.

His appearance creates a commotion, as everybody in sight runs for cover in cubicles and behind desks. In a reception area, behind a glass screen, people of all ages and colors are waiting in line.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)
I underestimated her, though. She was a tough player.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - SAME

He enters his ultra modern office, with a large window that affords a panoramic view of the valley and the Verdugo Mountains above it.

He puts his briefcase on a spacious desk, where the most prominent object among the documents and the computer terminal is a white marble statuette of a naked "Aphrodite."

Daniel releases the cat, who runs to a corner of the room, where a bowl of cat food is set on the floor.

As Daniel sinks onto his black leather chair, in comes TRAVIS GREEN, 25, wearing glasses and sloppily dressed in jeans and flannel shirt, a baseball cap on his head. He sits opposite Daniel.

DANIEL
Where are we, Travis?

TRAVIS
In the middle of the day, Daniel, and in deep shit.

DANIEL
Why don't you tell me something I don't know already, for a change.

(CONTINUED)

TRAVIS

No such thing. Exhibit one: our "friends" in New Vision are raising hell about the numbers.

DANIEL

What's wrong with our numbers?

TRAVIS

We promised 25 young males, and they received only 18, half of them old. They requested 15 homely, west side kind of ladies, we supplied mostly young valley girls. He--

DANIEL

Who's he?

TRAVIS

Mark Levi. If you won't call him right away, he's threatening to send them all back today, and switch to Stars Extras.

Daniel gets up and approaches a large abstract painting that dominates one wall, looking at it thoughtfully.

DANIEL

Call Levi, and tell him--

TRAVIS

He won't speak to anyone but you. I tried.

DANIEL

Try again.

Travis nods.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Tell him the second bus we hired yesterday, because of the distance, got stuck on the way to the set with the rest of the extras. Then get the right numbers from him again.

TRAVIS

I got them. We don't have them in our stock.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

We will by this evening, don't worry. Just call him and suck him up a bit, I'll handle the rest.

A 50-year-old Latina, GLORIA, enters the room carrying a tray. She sets a cup of coffee and a croissant on Daniel's desk, then fills the cat's bowl with food.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Gracias, Gloria. How's your husband doing, any better?

GLORIA

(heavy Hispanic accent)
So so, sir. Still in hospital.

She walks toward the door.

DANIEL

If you need another cash advance, just let me know.

She nods, humbly, and hurries to leave the room.

Daniel slides back into his chair.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Okay, roll the rest of the calls.

TRAVIS

(reads from a piece of paper)
Marsha at Straight Line, Sherry from International Talent, Don at Warners, Felicity at home and Wendy at the Burbank Inn.

DANIEL

Wendy... Wendy who?

TRAVIS

Stark. She insists you know each other.

As Daniel reflects on it, Travis gets up and hands him the piece of paper.

DANIEL

(takes it)
Is the cattle call in progress?

(CONTINUED)

TRAVIS

Day and night.

DANIEL

Good, keep me informed. And connect me with Dave at Stars Extras.

TRAVIS

Right away.

He exits.

Daniel glances at the list while drinking coffee.

There is a BUZZ. He picks up the phone, listens a moment.

DANIEL

(into phone)

Okay, put him through.

(beat)

Hi buddy, what's up?... Fine, how're Felicity and the kids doing?... You must be a happy man... Listen, I need some numbers, Dave, urgently... I know you have them, don't bullshit me... You owe me one, remember?

(beat)

Of course we'll split the check... I need 10 old ladies, Jewish looking from the west side, and 15 young males, UCLA type... I'll let my man handle the details with her, all right?... Sure, lunch on me tomorrow... Regards to Felicity.

He hangs up, but a BUZZ is heard again right away. This time he hits a button on the phone, as he bites into the croissant.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(into phone mike)

What now?

TRAVIS (V.O., THRU SPEAKER)

Wendy Stark again, can't get rid of her. Says she's Laura's sister, must talk to you.

DANIEL

All right, put her through.

He sets the croissant aside, drinks more coffee.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (V.O., THRU SPEAKER)
Hi Daniel, how are you?

DANIEL
Who is it?

WENDY (V.O.)
It's me, Wendy. Laura's sister.
Remember?

DANIEL
Can't say I do.

WENDY (V.O.)
New Year's Day, on the bar's floor.
You almost raped me?

He puts his feet up on the desk and reclines in his chair.

DANIEL
I never rape anyone, mind you, on
principle. You enjoyed it as much
as I did, if not more.

WENDY (V.O.)
Sure, under the influence of--

DANIEL
(cuts in)
Short and sweet, and never to be
repeated. I thought I made this
point clear?

WENDY (V.O.)
Oh yes, you did

DANIEL
(edgy)
Then get a life, will you? Don't
waste my time.

He's about to end the conversation, when he remembers something.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(softer)
Laura told me you were supposed to
get married, if I remember
correctly.

WENDY (V.O.)
You do. I did get married.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL
Congratulations.

WENDY (V.O.)
Thanks. I'm pregnant, too.

A moment, as he swallows more coffee, and with it her last remark as well.

DANIEL
Big deal. I bet your hubby--

WENDY (V.O.)
(sharply)
Big deal indeed, I can promise you.
And if you won't show up here, it
would be an even bigger deal!

DANIEL
What the hell are you talking
about, woman?

WENDY (V.O.)
I'm talking about my next call, to
my sister, letting her know who the
real father is. Someone who
promised not to use dirty tricks
anymore.

He puts his feet down, speechless for the first time.

WENDY (V.O. CONT'D)
She has a bad temper, you know, and
she carries a gun with her.

DANIEL
Does she...?

WENDY (V.O.)
You know she does. And she can use
it, too.

DANIEL
That's nonsense.

WENDY (V.O.)
Maybe yes, maybe not. You want to
give it a try?

DANIEL
No, I'd rather solve this matter
peacefully.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (V.O.)

I thought you would. So be here at
the Burbank Inn, room 608, in 30
minutes. Sharp!

She hangs up.

He bangs his fist on the desk, and the 'Aphrodite" statuette
falls down on it. He picks it up, unbroken.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Wendy lies on the double bed, dressed casually, one hand on
the telephone. Beside it on the nightstand rests a red
diary, with a matching pen on it. She picks up the pen and
opens the diary. She's about to write something but then
freezes, as a new idea hits her.

EXT. BURBANK - DAY

Daniel drives his car down a bridge on Olive Avenue, and
turns toward the Burbank Inn.

INT. WENDY'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

She stands by the bed, wearing a light bathrobe.
Water RUNS in the b.g.

Her clothes are thrown all over the bed, and she adds to
them her panties and bra. On second thought, she rearranges
those items on the bed in a certain, more prominent way. She
smiles, pleased with the results.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - SAME

The elevator doors open and Daniel steps out, searching for
a room. He finds 608 and knocks on the door. No answer. He
knocks again, no answer. He tries the doorknob and the door
opens.

INT. WENDY'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME

Daniel steps in, looking around. He notices Wendy's clothes
and underwear, spread "carelessly" on the bed. But she's not
in the room.

The sound of water RUNNING comes from the bathroom.

(CONTINUED)

He moves closer to the bed and picks up the panties, rolls them playfully around his index finger. Smells them, too, and smiles. Tosses them down.

DANIEL
(loudly)
Anybody home?

No answer. He steps closer to the bathroom door, which is halfway open.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Wendy, are you there?

The water stops running.

WENDY (O.S.)
Sure, come in.

He enters.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Wendy is in the steamy bathtub, shampooing her hair. Daniel stops in the doorway, looking in.

WENDY
(matter-of-factly)
Don't be shy, Daniel, sit down.

She doesn't even look at him, as she goes about her business, not shy at all. She turns the water on and washes her hair.

Daniel, with zero options, sits down on the toilet seat, dressed up as he is. For a while he just stares at her, as she floats leisurely in the tub now.

DANIEL
Ah... I'm a busy man, Wendy, I've got a million things to do. I can't sit here all day and watch you taking a bath.

WENDY
(raises a leg)
Why, not a pretty sight?

DANIEL
It sure is. But I've got a business to run, and if this is your idea of a punishment, then I suffered enough already.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Not nearly enough, Daniel. You tricked me and used me, and now you're going to pay for it.

A moment, as he twists uncomfortably on the toilet seat.

DANIEL

You're such an innocent girl, I tell you. It was *your* idea to join me back at the bar.

WENDY

That's right.

DANIEL

So pay the price yourself.

WENDY

I'm paying it every day, don't worry.

(beat)

Why did you say you had a vasectomy?

DANIEL

Because I did.

WENDY

No way, and that's why I'm pregnant, to my great surprise.

DANIEL

Why, aren't you on the pill?

WENDY

No, it's bad for my health. Ever tried condoms?

DANIEL

Once or twice. But it was like eating with gloves on, not the real thing.

(beat)

And they have holes in them, too, sometimes.

WENDY

And so do stories

She turns in the tub, looks at him directly for the first time.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Admit you lied to me, Daniel.
Otherwise, the only true friend you
have in this world, *my sister*,
would come after you like a human
tornado.

He contemplates her words.

WENDY (CONT'D)

We both know the truth, c'mon, it's
only a matter of admitting it to be
so.

DANIEL

(beat)

I'm guilty as charged.

A long moment

WENDY

You never had the operation, did
you? You just run around with your
fly open, spreading babies all over
the place.

DANIEL

Not necessarily. Most women know
how to take care of business.

She takes a long dip under the soapy water, before emerging
out again for air, exposing her upper body. He gets up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Got to go now.

WENDY

No way, criminal. Hop in.

He's surprised, but not entirely - remains still.

She splashes some water on his beautiful suit. He takes a
step back, looking at her annoyed. She sticks her tongue out
at him, smiles mischievously.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You like it in the raw, don't you?

He returns her smile finally, nodding, then undresses
slowly.

She watches him steadily, until he joins her in the tub. But
when he tries to lie on top of her, she pushes him down and
positions herself on top of him.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (CONT'D)

I'll show you a woman who knows how
to take care of business, Mister.

She kisses him on the neck, and on the chest, and down to
his navel. But then she stops and leans back.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Wow... you really are a monster,
you know.

DANIEL

(pleased)

You bring out the best in me, no
doubt.

She smiles, pleased too, and sets things in motion - with
some acrobatics, this time.

EXT./INT. HOTEL ROOM BALCONY - DAY

A gentle breeze plays with the drapes in the f.g., while
hazy sunshine steams up the Valley, stretched far out in the
b.g.

Wendy, wearing her bathrobe, sits at a small table and eats
dessert with relish. On the table are the remnants of a
meal.

Daniel sits opposite her, dressed only in his boxer shorts,
a towel over his bare shoulders, wearing sunglasses. He
holds the extended hotel's phone, talking.

DANIEL

Excellent. So we're all set for
tomorrow then... Yes, I'll split
the check with him. Good job,
Travis. What else?

(beat - alarmed)

Laura too, what did you tell
her?... You didn't tell her where,
though, did you?... Okay, I'll give
her a call. Adios.

He hangs up and puts the phone down, troubled.
Wendy examines him carefully.

WENDY

Anything wrong?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL
Nothing wrong.

WENDY
Are you sure?

He nods, drinks coffee. She is done with the ice cream.

WENDY (CONT'D)
I've got such a craving for ice
cream lately, it's sickening.

DANIEL
Quite the opposite, its natural.
And good for you and your baby.

WENDY
Look who's talking. How come you
know so much about it, Doc?

DANIEL
Everybody knows that. Though I went
through Medical School, also.

WENDY
Wow... why are you doing this
casting stuff, then?

DANIEL
(ill-at-ease)
Why indeed... Easy access to women
and money, I suppose. No
obligations otherwise.

She regards him intensely.

WENDY
You're a professional sinner, you
know.

DANIEL
Of course, like Rasputin.

WENDY
Who's he?

DANIEL
He was a Russian monk. He believed
that sinning, by and large, reduces
the relative quantity of sin in the
world. I go by that principle.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Here we go again, another principle.

(beat - smiles)

You broke one of them today, by the way.

DANIEL

Doing what?

WENDY

Doing it with me for the second time.

DANIEL

That's right. You tricked me, though, this time.

WENDY

How come?

DANIEL

Your tongue, again, I suppose. And...

He hesitates.

WENDY

C'mon, monster, out with it.

DANIEL

The fact that you're pregnant, and married.

WENDY

Pregnant and married?!

DANIEL

Yeah, and you were in the tub. I never tried this triple combo before.

She's taken aback.

WENDY

You didn't, huh... and what's the score?

DANIEL

A perfect ten.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY

Get lost.

She gets up and leaves the balcony.

He stays put, content.

INT. WENDY'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Wendy is almost dressed, trying to zip up her tight red dress. Her pregnancy is hardly noticeable.

WENDY

(to herself)

Shoot, I'm getting fat already.

Daniel enters the room, buttoning his shirt.

DANIEL

Let me help you.

WENDY

Go ahead.

He zips her dress up, gently, and for a moment stays behind her, contemplating kissing the back of her neck.

But she moves before he can make up his mind.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Gosh, it's getting late. My hubby will kill me.

She packs her things, hurriedly

Daniel drops down on the bed, watching her.

DANIEL

He's not the type, is he?

WENDY

Of course not. But he's got this gun collection, you know, and it scares me sometimes.

DANIEL

Why did you marry him, anyway?

WENDY

He's crazy about me, and works hard for a living. I need some stability in my life.

(CONTINUED)

She stops by the door, ready to leave. She looks around.

WENDY (CONT'D)
I guess that's all, got everything.

DANIEL
What about this?

He picks up her diary from the nightstand.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Shoot, I almost forgot the most important thing.

She leaves her bag by the door, steps to the bed and takes the diary from him.

WENDY
Thanks, Daniel.

DANIEL
Sure. Buzz me when the baby arrives.

She measures him anew, as a satisfied smile plays across her face. She sits down beside him on the bed.

WENDY
Hey, you might be human after all, you know. Let me kiss you goodbye.

DANIEL
No goodbye kisses, please, it makes me sick.

WENDY
(beat)
Okay.

She puts her hand on his crotch and shakes it.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Goodbye then, monster, I enjoyed it.

DANIEL
So did I.

WENDY
Long and strong, this time, wouldn't you say?

He nods, surprised somewhat to hear her saying that.

WENDY (CONT'D)

And to be repeated. Now that I've
got your balls in my hand.

She smiles - he does not. She takes her hand off his crotch,
gets up and heads for the door. She turns once more as she
opens the door.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You'll hear from me one day,
Rasputin. Be sure of that.

She blows him a kiss, then exits and closes the door.

He looks steadily at the door, troubled.
We get closer to it.

EXT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - NIGHT

Much less crowded at the entrance than on New Year's Eve, no
valet attendant and no bouncers at the door. Two women, hand
in hand, enter. Daniel follows.

INT. THE BAR - NIGHT

Only women are crowded at the bar, around the tables and in
the love seats, which occupy most of the space now. The pool
table in the far corner is deserted.

On the small stage stands Cara, Laura's companion,
addressing the audience. She wears a black leotard, a long
whip in one hand, a piece of paper she's reading from in the
other.

Daniel sits down at a table in a corner, away from the
crowd, receiving some unfriendly glances.

Laura is busy behind the bar, together with the bartender.
She spots Daniel and leaves shortly with a drink in her
hand.

She sets it down on his table, looks grimly at him and
refuses to shake his hand or hug him, when he gets up to
greet her.

DANIEL

I'm in trouble, I can see.

LAURA

You bet. Sit down.

He does so, smiles awkwardly.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL
What's got into you?

LAURA
A fucking bug.

The smile disappears from his face.

DANIEL
Is that how you treat all your
quests, Ms. Jenkins, or this
special treatment is--

LAURA
Shut up and look me straight in the
eye, Daniel. Tell me where you've
been this afternoon.

DANIEL
What is it here, the inquisition?

She pounds her fist on the table.

LAURA
Answer me!

He hesitates, moves his hand toward the glass. But Laura is
faster and grabs it first.

LAURA (CONT'D)
No drinks till you confess.

DANIEL
Confess to what?

LAURA
To seeing my sister this afternoon.

She drills him with a stare, which he finds difficult to
escape.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Save yourself a cheap lie, Daniel.
Travis told me she called you, and
that you left the office to meet
her. Is it true?

DANIEL
If you know, why do you ask?

LAURA
Because I want to hear it coming
from your mouth, dammit, that's
why. Where did you meet her?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

A coffee shop in Burbank,
somewhere.

LAURA

What for?

DANIEL

She wanted to see me.

LAURA

She did... why?

DANIEL

On that new year's day, you may
remember, when she joined me here.

LAURA

Of course I remember, a terrible
mistake on my part. Go on.

DANIEL

Well... we talked a little, and she
told me she always wanted to be an
actress. I--

LAURA

An actress?

DANIEL

That's right. I told her if and
when she becomes serious about it,
to let me know. With my
connections, maybe I can help her
start out on the right foot.

LAURA

Sure you can, big shot, always
ready to help young talent start
out on the right foot.

He smiles, pleased.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Wipe this stupid smile off your
face, Daniel, or I'll use this
whiskey to do it for you.

She raises the glass. He looks at it, then at her, no longer
smiling.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA (CONT'D)

Strange... she never said anything to me about it.

DANIEL

Maybe you're not that close, after all.

LAURA

What the hell do you mean by that?

DANIEL

I mean... maybe she doesn't trust you that much, doesn't approve of your life style, I guess.

LAURA

You bastard!

Impulsively, she hits the glass that's in her hand on the edge of the table, and it breaks in half.

On stage Cara freezes, whip and poem in hands. Everybody else looks toward them, including the bartender, who leaves the bar and gets closer to them.

Laura, eyes on fire, leans forward over the table. She holds the broken glass at Daniel's face.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You once messed around with Cara, macho man, a woman I love dearly.

(beat)

I stupidly forgave you then, remember?

He nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)

But not any more. If you're lying to me now, if you touched my little sister with your dirty prick - I'll kill you. I swear to God!

He gets hold of her hand suddenly, and strongly, pushes the broken glass away from his face.

DANIEL

Are you threatening me, Laura?

LAURA

You damn right I am. Don't ever see her again.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

Go tell her that, will you... she initiated the contact in the first place.

LAURA

I will, but don't you dare fuck around with me again, Daniel, I'm warning you. Unless you're tired of living.

DANIEL

I'll let you know when that happens.

LAURA

Good.

She withdraws her hand and he lets go of it. She heads back to the bar, only to return quickly with a dustpan. She picks up the broken pieces of glass.

Cara resumes her performance, from the beginning of her act. She puts on a nun black outfit, using a large wooden cross instead of the whip, reciting her poem.

Daniel remains seated, watching Laura, who's back behind the bar now, fixing a drink. She has an unlit cigarette in her mouth.

EXT. THE SMALL N. CALIF. TOWN - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. MUTE. The town is visible in the b.g., dominated by the white church. In the f.g., there is a tree house without walls, rather primitive.

Daniel and Laura, both 14, lie there barefooted, wearing shorts. She has a leaf in her mouth. He takes it out of her mouth, about to kiss her. She's surprised. They kiss - a first-time kiss.

She stops him suddenly, giggling, though we don't hear her. Instead we hear:

LAURA (V.O.)

Here's a replacement for you.

INT. THE BAR - NIGHT

Laura sets another glass of whiskey in front of Daniel and sits down. She avoids looking at him, lights her cigarette.

He takes his drink in one long shot. Both are quiet for a while, watching and listening to Cara.

LAURA
Did she tell you she got married
last month?

He nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)
She's pregnant, too.

He considers the empty bottom of his glass.

DANIEL
So fast?

LAURA
An accident, if you ask me.

DANIEL
Do happened, accidents.

LAURA
Yes... they do.

She takes a long drag, releases rings of smoke that float in the air above them.

DANIEL
Congratulations, anyhow. You'll be
an aunt soon.

LAURA
Yeah, I'm looking forward to it,
actually.
(beat)
What about you?

DANIEL
What about me?

LAURA
It's your turn now. Even someone
like you should settle down one
day, get married maybe, have
children.

He laughs

(CONTINUED)

LAURA (CONT'D)
Why do you laugh?

DANIEL
Don't you remember?

LAURA
Remember what...?

DANIEL
One afternoon on the tree house,
after our first kiss. We took a
vow.

A flash of remembrance passes across her eyes, as she smiles
for the first time.

LAURA
Yeah... you're right. I do remember
now. Never to get married, wasn't
it... if not to each other?

DANIEL
Right. But you broke that vow, with
Cara.

LAURA
C'mon, that's different. I didn't
know who I was, then. I meant not
marrying another man.

DANIEL
Maybe so. But me, I always knew who
I was, knew it's all in my genes. I
inherited this disease, you know.

LAURA
I do.

DANIEL
Marrying someone will be worse.
Like a crime, almost.

LAURA
You might be right, actually.

DANIEL
Except you, of course

LAURA
What's that suppose to mean?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

It means... with you I can live forever, I guess. The dyke and the dick in holy matrimony, it may work.

He chuckles. She is not amused.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Sorry, I was always bad at telling jokes. You know that.

She nods, kills her cigarette in his empty glass, then picks it up and gets up herself.

LAURA

I'll bring you another one.

DANIEL

No need, I'm off.

He gets up too. She eyes him squarely for a moment, then gets closer to him and puts her hand on his shoulder. After a moment, they finally hug each other.

LAURA

I want to see you more often, Danny boy, that's why I called your office in the first place.

DANIEL

You will, Mama, I promise.

He holds her a moment longer in his arms. She lands a quick kiss on his lips.

Care pauses, watches them intently.

They depart: Laura heads for the bar, Daniel for the door.

EXT. DANIEL'S OFFICE BUILDING, BURBANK - NIGHT

The building is dark, generally, except for one lit window. Daniel's black cat rests there on the windowsill. We zero in on it.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - SAME

He sits at his desk, in front of the computer. We close in on it just as he double-clicks on *My Documents*.

The cursor slides quickly until it finds the document "*California Lover*." He double-clicks on it, too.

The document opens with a list of sections and numbers. He clicks on Section C: Married Women, total number: 214. He finds a subsection: Married & Pregnant, total number: 7.

He smiles, then hits the keyboard. On the screen appear the words: Married, Pregnant & in the bathtub, total number: 1. Name: Wendy Stark.

He hits Save and reclines in his chair, satisfied. He stretches his feet up on the desk, then draws his silver harmonica from a drawer. He first cleans it carefully with a handkerchief.

DANIEL

Okay, Rasputin, here goes.

He begins to play the song *Memories*, from the musical *Cats*.

His cat jumps onto the desk and squats between a closed chessboard and the Aphrodite's white statuette, listening.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Wendy kept her dubious promise, unfortunately, and called me seven months or so later. Right after my visit to the nursing home. It was the last time I saw my father alive.

We get closer to the chessboard.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

An open chessboard, with chessmen spread on it.

JOSEPH, 68, his silver hair and beard frame a once virile face, stares at Daniel, who sits opposite him.

JOSEPH

Are you about to invent the wheel all over again, huh... thinking so hard?

His mouth is slightly twisted when he speaks, his speech impaired at times. Daniel answers him by moving his queen.

(CONTINUED)

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I see... you're trying to trick
your old man, sacrificing your
queen like that. You naughty boy.

He smiles, child-like, as he rubs his hands.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

It won't work, son, you lost this
one.

He takes Daniel's queen with his knight, his hand shakes a
bit while doing so.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Check-mate!

He eyes Daniel mischievously. Daniel couldn't care less.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You forgot everything I taught you,
son.

DANIEL

Almost everything, Dad.

Their eyes dig long and deep into each other's.

We hear three HAND-CLAPS and a loud VOICE in the b.g.

NURSE (O.S.)

Lunchtime, children.

The NURSE, a heavy-set woman with a determined face, stands
in the middle of the big room, surrounded by elderly people,
most of them older than Joseph: watching TV, knitting,
playing cards or just dozing off

Some of them can move on their own, with the help of walking
aids or wheelchairs, while others need the help of the
staff.

Joseph leans forward over the chessboard, half-whispering.

JOSEPH

Listen, son, I meant to ask you for
quite some time...

(hesitates)

You don't think you can find me a
better place, huh... with younger
and prettier nurses, do you?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

You don't need younger and prettier nurses, Dad. You need good nurses, with nothing else on their minds except taking care of you.

JOSEPH

All right, got ya... no need to be so grumpy.

(beat)

You were always like that, you know, even as a kid.

Daniel holds his lips real tight in order not to respond, while Joseph fishes around in the pockets of his Nursing Home outfit for something.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I've got something for you... before you go.

NURSE

(loudly)

On your way, Joseph, I'm still waiting.

JOSEPH

(to Daniel - whispers)

What do you reckon, son... is she, I mean, with a voice like that, is she sexually active at all?

Daniel is too embarrassed to answer that.

From one of the pockets of his Joseph brings out a small, worn out box. He hands it to Daniel.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Huh... your mother gave it to me, son, on our wedding day. I want you to have it.

Daniel just stares at it for a moment, surprised.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Do me a favor, Daniel, take it. My days are numbered.

Daniel takes it, not enthusiastically.

DANIEL

Don't talk nonsense.

The Nurse stops behind Joseph, her hands on his wheelchair.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE

Say bye bye to your son, Joseph,
your lunch is getting cold.

JOSEPH

I'll be right with you, "Herr
General." Hold your horses.

Daniel looks up at the Nurse, who looks back at him,
irritated.

Another Nurse, tall and skinny, halts on the other side of
Joseph. They pull him back a bit, together.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(to the nurses)

One is enough, girls, at my age.

He turns back to Daniel.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Open it, son.

DANIEL

In a moment, Dad, go have your
lunch.

(to the nurses)

Thank you. I'll talk to you later.

They turn and wheel Joseph toward the doorway, one on each
side of him.

Daniel opens the box and finds a small cross inside, its
silver already faded somewhat, hanging on a delicate
necklace. He picks it up in his fingers, examining it.

INT. A MINISTER'S OFFICE - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. MUTE. On the couch a half-naked couple are having
sex. The unidentified man is on top.

A wooden cross hangs above them on the wall.

A telephone RINGS. It's on the desk, beside it an open
bottle of whiskey and two empty glasses.

The man - Joseph, Daniel's father, only younger - ceases all
actions, and turns his head toward the desk. But then,
something else catches his eyes and he looks toward the
window.

Daniel's face, 7, is pressed against the window outside. He
looks at his father with wide open eyes.

The telephone RINGS again.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Daniel picks up the car phone. He is by himself, driving, dressed as he was dressed in the nursing home.

DANIEL

Daniel speaking... Wendy Stark...
How the hell did you get this
number?... Travis, I see, he's
going to pay for it... True, I'm
not far from Palmdale, on my way to
location.

(beat)

Well, congratulations, how is
she?... Forget it, I'm running late
already... See *my baby*, what do you
mean by that, exactly?

(beat)

Well, okay, but no fooling around
this time. A quick glance at the
baby, a cup of coffee and adios.
That's the deal, take it or...
Okay, shoot your address and
directions.

EXT. ANTELOPE VALLEY - DAY

Daniel's shiny BMW makes a sharp U turn on a narrow 2-lane highway, and speeds ahead. The road cuts in half a barren desert, with cloudless skies above.

DANIEL (V.O.)

In retrospect, of course, I wish I
had never agreed to see her and the
baby. I should've listened to
Laura, the only woman I ever loved.
But I was careless then, and didn't
take her warnings seriously enough.

EXT. PALMDALE - AFTERNOON

Daniel's car arrives at an upscale neighborhood, and pulls up in front of a two-story, red tile-roofed stucco house, similar to the other new houses on both sides of the street.

Daniel gets out of the car and heads for the house.

(CONTINUED)

The door opens before he has a chance to ring the bell. Wendy appears in the doorway, wearing a flowery light gown, healthy looking if a bit overweight. She smiles broadly.

WENDY
Come in, monster.

He doesn't respond but steps in. She closes the door.

INT. NURSERY - SAME

Wendy leads Daniel in, holding his hand. The room overflows with baby dolls, stuffed animals and all things pink. They stop by the crib. A month old baby is sound asleep there.

WENDY
Isn't she something else?

DANIEL
Absolutely.

WENDY
No, really.

DANIEL
She really is, like her mother.

WENDY
And her father, too.

Their eyes dive deeply into each other's for a moment.

DANIEL
What's her name?

WENDY
Diana. Princess Di would be proud of her, don't you think?

DANIEL
You bet.

WENDY
Coffee?

He nods. She leaves the room. He takes a closer look at the baby.

INT. THE STARKS' LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A spacious room, decorated expensively, but lacking a sophisticated taste. There are flowerpots and bouquets everywhere.

Wendy carries in a tray with two cups of coffee and one piece of cake. Daniel follows her in, and she shows him to the couch. She sits close to him - does little to hide her curves.

They taste the coffee in silence. He tries the cake.

DANIEL

Humm... not bad. You made it?

She nods, proudly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Lucky guy, your husband.

(beat)

Where is he, by the way?

WENDY

At work.

DANIEL

What time does he come home,
usually?

WENDY

Much later, don't worry about it.
It's not your style.

DANIEL

Just wanted to make sure it's all
right. In case--

WENDY

In case of what?... Of course it's
all right. You're a friend of my
sister, what's wrong with that?

DANIEL

Noting wrong with that.

WENDY

Good. You dropped by to see the
baby, that's all.

DANIEL

Absolutely.

(CONTINUED)

Their eyes meet again, knowing very well how far her comments were from the whole truth.

WENDY

Don't tell me you're afraid of being caught, or something?

DANIEL

I don't know what you're talking about.

WENDY

Afraid of something else, maybe?

DANIEL

I'm not afraid of anything.

WENDY

Oh yes, you are.

She lays her hand gently on his arm. He doesn't object.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You're afraid of falling in love, I think.

DANIEL

You must be out of your mind.

WENDY

No, I'm not. We're alike, actually, you and me. We--

She is interrupted by the sudden cry of the baby.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Shoot, Wendy, dinnertime.

She gets up and leaves the room.

He drinks the coffee and eats the rest of the cake, while surveying the room. His eyes zero in on the mantelpiece and above it, where there are two antique guns and a machete hanging on the wall.

Wendy comes back, meanwhile, carrying the crying baby in her arms. She sits down in an armchair, beside a modern baby swing, her back to him. She nurses the baby, who immediately stops crying.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Would you be kind enough, Daniel, and hit play on the C.D. player over there.

(CONTINUED)

He gets up and does so, over at the entertainment center, and soon the music of *Vivaldi's Four Seasons* fills the room.

WENDY (CONT'D)

They say classical music is good for babies, you know. Supposed to increase their I.Q.

DANIEL

She's getting a good education already, I can see.

WENDY

Yeah, and it eases her way back to sleep.

He moves closer to them both, and positions himself in front of Wendy, watching her nursing. She looks up at him and their eyes lock for a moment. She smiles. He returns it.

The baby is asleep now, and Wendy lays her down gently in the swing's seat. She turns it on, and it swings the baby automatically, monotonously.

She's now free to cover her breast.

WENDY (CONT'D)

They're so full of milk, it really hurts. I wish she'd suck more.

DANIEL

Maybe I can help?

She sizes him up for a long moment.

WENDY

Are you nuts?

DANIEL

(deadpan)

Yes. And so are you.

She hesitates, but then smiles.

WENDY

Come over here, big baby.

He sits down on the floor by her side, and leans his head back on her thigh. She takes her breast from under her gown, lowers it to his mouth. He sucks on it, closing his eyes.

Vivaldi's *Winter* reaches crescendo in the b.g.

(CONTINUED)

WENDY (CONT'D)

I should've listened to my big sis,
you know. She warned me that when
it comes to women, you're the
devil.

His face beams with pleasure.

INT. LIVING ROOM - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. The music keeps playing in the b.g.

A most gentle face of a woman, with long brunette hair,
looks down on someone very closely. She smiles broadly, and
says something - though we don't hear her voice.

Instead we hear:

WENDY (V.O.)

She said you pluck women like one
plucks grapes from a bunch,
randomly, one by--

The music STOPS abruptly.

INT. THE STARKS' LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Wendy and Daniel, as before, look surprised toward the
entertainment center.

WENDY'S HUSBAND, ROBERT, STANDS THERE - one hand on the C.D.
player, the other holding a bouquet of red roses. He's in
shock, his eyes almost pop out of his head, his mouth opens
as though about to say something - but nothing comes out.

Daniel jumps up from the floor and hurries toward the
doorway. Robert just follows him with his eyes, unable to
react.

Daniel stops suddenly in the doorway, turns back and looks
at Wendy.

She looks down while buttoning her gown. She then looks
sheepishly up at her husband. He just stares at her - the
bouquet falls to the floor.

Daniel leaves.

EXT. THE STARKS' HOUSE - SUNSET

Daniel rushes out into the street. He stops by his car and searches for the keys in his pockets. He finally finds them, but they drop down on the ground. He hurries to pick them up.

He gets into the car, fires it up and burns rubber out of there.

We watch the house steadily, and hear an unclear mixture of shouting voices and breaking glasses.

Then silence prevails and night falls.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE STARKS' HOUSE - MORNING

Early morning sun illuminates the house and the street. All is still and quiet, but for a passing car, a woman pushing along a stroller and a man walking his dog.

The man pauses in front of the Starks' house, while his dog pees on the white picket fence surrounding the lawn, where the open sprinklers play hide and seek with the sunbeams.

Suddenly, a GUNSHOT RINGS OUT, tearing the morning stillness apart. Then another SHOT.

Both the man and his dog freeze, looking at the house. The woman stops, too, no longer pushing the stroller.

We can hear, faintly, a BABY CRY.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel sits at his desk, glancing through some papers.

Travis sits opposite him, staring at a piece of oak wood on the desk, with a slogan engraved on it: WHATEVER IT TAKES!

Daniel stands up and hands Travis the papers.

DANIEL

Excellent job, Travis. Send them all to the set tomorrow.

TRAVIS

But not all of them meet--

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

No buts, Travis, this is not your USC film school. They need the numbers over there, and we need the money right here.

TRAVIS

Got you.

He gets up, too.

DANIEL

Whatever it takes, remember?

TRAVIS

(sarcastically)

How can I forget.

He heads for the door and exits.

Daniel approaches the large abstract painting, hanging on the wall in such a way that it can slide sideways. He does just that, revealing a large board on the wall, covered all over with photos of extras: full body shots and close-ups, all of them of young women.

EXT. PALMDALE - DAY

A crowd has gathered in front of the two-story house, surrounded by a fleet of police cars, fire engines and ambulances.

Two bodies, covered with blue sheets, are being wheeled on gurneys out of the house and into the ambulances. They soon take off, with sirens WAILING.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

He sits at his desk, holding a picture of a teenage girl, dark-haired, wearing a tiny yellow bikini.

DANIEL (INTO PHONE MIKE)

This is Daniel Dawson speaking,
Rosie, president of E.C.A.

ROSIE (V.O., THRU SPEAKER)

E.C.A.?

DANIEL

Extras Casting Agency.

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE (V.O.)

Oh my god...

DANIEL

Something came up unexpectedly, Rosie, and we need someone like you, with some talent and credentials.

ROSIE (V.O.)

Yeah, I...

DANIEL

You may even get a line or two, be prepared.

ROSIE (V.O.)

Anytime, Sir, anywhere.

DANIEL

In my office, nine pm sharp.

ROSIE (V.O.)

So late?

DANIEL

You're not a shy girl, Rosie, are you?

ROSIE (V.O.)

Huh... (giggles) no, not at all.

DANIEL

Good. I've got many girls ready to come over, you see, and--

ROSIE (V.O.)

No, I'll be there, don't worry.

DANIEL

Excellent. And bring the yellow bikini you were wearing in that picture you left with us.

ROSIE (V.O.)

(giggles again)

Sure... I will.

He hangs up.

INT. MORGUE

Robert Stark's face: he is dead. The Medical Examiner covers his face with a blue sheet.

He then lifts the sheet that covers another body, and reveals Wendy's face. Dead too. Her eyes are still open, though.

Laura looks at her, almost as pale as her dead sister's face. Her trembling lips try hard to block a terrible cry. She kisses Wendy's lifeless lips gently, then smooths her eyelids closed. She nods, as her red, teary eyes fill with anger.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Daniel stands in front of his desk, leaning back on it, his fly halfway open. He holds a full glass of whiskey in one hand, a cordless phone in the other.

In front of him, at the center of the office, stands ROSIE: 18, long black hair, wearing a short dress.

Behind her and to the side stands a Video Monitor, showing Daniel. Not far from it there is a Video Camera, on a tripod, directed at Daniel.

Rasputin the cat squats in front of the monitor, watching it.

DANIEL

The camera doesn't lie, Rosie, do you understand what I mean?

ROSIE

Yes Sir, I do.

DANIEL

Good. You get a chance like that once in a lifetime, you have to grab it with both hands.

ROSIE

I know, Sir, I'm ready. Do you want me to take this off?

She lifts her dress, revealing her tiny yellow bikini. But Daniel stops her.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

No, not yet.

She lets her dress drop down, disappointed somewhat. He tastes the whiskey.

DANIEL

Let's assume, Rosie, that you grew up in a convent, among nuns. And yet, you're a real woman, you see, flesh and blood. And then one day, a truck driver stops by, and suddenly--

SUDDENLY THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN, and Laura flies into the room. Travis follows her.

DANIEL

What the hell--

Laura pushes Rosie aside and stops in front of him.

LAURA

(shouting)

That's the hell, you son-of-a-bitch!

She draws her handgun out of her handbag and aims it at him.

Rosie SCREAMS and runs out of the room. The cat follows suit.

Daniel retreats behind his desk and puts the cordless phone down, still holding the glass.

DANIEL

If this is some kind of a joke, Laura, you better--

LAURA

You better shut up, bastard!

She narrows the gap between them, leaning forward on his desk. He lifts the glass.

DANIEL

Maybe a shot of whiskey will help you calm down, so you can tell me what it's all about.

LAURA

Screw your whiskey, Daniel. It's about my sister, you fucking snake.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LAURA (cont'd)
She's dead, do you hear me?...
Dead!

The blood runs out of his face, as he puts the glass down.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Killed by her jealous husband,
who's dead too!

DANIEL
I'm terribly sorry, Laura, what
happened?

LAURA
This happened.

She draws Wendy's red diary out of her handbag and throws it
on his desk.

LAURA (CONT'D)
The police found it at the scene of
the crime, "Rasputin."
(beat)
You're the hero of this
masterpiece, and the father of the
child, too!

She cocks the gun.

LAURA (CONT'D)
You killed them both, Daniel. You
are a murderer!

DANIEL
I killed nobody, Laura. Who are
you, anyway, the police?

LAURA
That's right. You have anything
else to say, before I shoot you?
Tell me how sorry you are, maybe?

DANIEL
No.

He shoots the whiskey that's in his glass straight at her
face, and ducks for cover.

The whiskey hits her eyes, but she FIRES the gun anyhow.

The bullet hits the Aphrodite statuette and smashes it to
pieces.

(CONTINUED)

Daniel jumps behind his chair as Laura recovers and SHOTS again, this time hitting the computer terminal, which goes up in smoke.

She now has a clear view of him, and about to shoot once more, when Travis suddenly jumps on her from behind. The bullet she FIRES hits the ceiling, as she and Travis fight for the gun, knocking the video camera down.

We hear a number of SHOTS, after which Travis lies wounded on the floor.

Laura gets up and so does Daniel.

DANIEL
(begging)
Calm down, Laura, for God's sake.

LAURA
Calm down, you hypocrite, only in my grave.

She aims at him, in close range.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
Freeze, don't shoot!

He stands in the doorway, feet apart and hands stretched forward with a drawn gun. He is black, 55, in uniform.

Laura's eyes travel over to him.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)
Drop the gun, lady, nice and easy.

She hesitates, still holding the gun, then lowers it down.

The Guard moves slowly toward her - but suddenly she raises the gun again, very fast, and pulls the trigger.

The hammer CLICKS on an empty chamber.

DANIEL
(shouts)
Don't shoot, man!

The Guard turns to him, caught off guard, about to shoot.

Laura drops the gun and raises her hands. He gets hold of her quickly and forcefully, pulls her away. She turns her head back.

LAURA

I'll get you, Daniel, and kill you.
Whatever it takes!

As the Guard leads her out, one of the office personnel rushes in. Daniel throws the cordless phone over to her.

DANIEL

Call 911, hurry!

He kneels beside Travis, who lies on the floor in a pool of blood, groaning - hardly breathing.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hang in there, buddy, don't give
up.

He tears his shirt open and tries to block the bleeding, then holds Travis in such a way that enables him to breath easier. He's confident, knows what he's doing.

EXT. BURBANK, OUTSIDE THE OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

An army of police cars and ambulances is at the scene. Flashing lights color the darkness. A crowd of people has gathered around them. The Media, too.

Two police officers lead Laura out of the building, in handcuffs.

A reporter, KATIE GOMEZ, young and feisty, hurries after them with her TV camera crew. She fires some questions in their direction, but the officers ignore her and push Laura into their car. They speed away, siren HOWLING into the night.

Paramedics wheel the wounded Travis out of the building, Daniel at his side. They rush him into an ambulance and take off.

Daniel remains on the front steps, staring blankly ahead.

Katie and her crew approach him, blinding him momentarily with their spotlights. She shoots a barrage of questions at him, but he turns away from her in disgust.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

There are no doors between the rooms, hardly any decoration. The walls and ceilings are all white, in the bedroom as well, where there's a single bed, exercise bike and plenty of books everywhere.

Daniel lies in bed, on his back, motionless. His eyes are fixed on the ceiling.

A small wooden cross hangs above him on the wall, and on the nightstand rests the worn out box his father gave him. He looks at it.

Behind it stands a framed picture, in faded B&W, depicting the outside of a church: the one we saw earlier in his flashback. Daniel's father, the minister, stands there, holding the hand of Daniel, 5-year-old.

DANIEL (V.O.)

He was a minister, my father, who broke my mother's heart at an early age with his numerous affairs. He never understood the meaning of the words: The sins of the fathers are visited upon the sons.

He folds the picture down on the nightstand, opens the box and pulls out the silver necklace with the small cross. He hangs it over his neck, laying the cross on his chest, and laces his fingers together over it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SALVATION ARMY BUILDING - DUSK

Daniel, dressed in black, stands in front of the Salvation Army Chapel: where he stood once before. He hesitates again.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)

Heavenly Father, against thee and thee only I have sinned. I come humbly before thy throne repenting of all unrighteousness, asking for your forgiveness.

He enters.

INT. CHAPEL - DUSK

Very dimly lit. A homeless man sleeps on a pew at the back, and two old ladies sit in the front pew, praying.

They watch Daniel, as he places two burning votive candles by the altar.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)
 I have recklessly forgotten your
 glory, Oh Lord. But just as the
 Father received the prodigal son
 back into his heart and home,
 please allow me another chance to
 do thy will.

He looks up at Jesus on the cross, hesitates momentarily, then makes the sign of the cross and kneels down in prayer.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: 7 YEARS LATER

FADE IN:

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, L.A. - DAY

The white church dominates the surroundings in this poor neighborhood of the Westlake district, near downtown.

There's a makeshift daycare center beside the church, and in the front yard a playground facility of sorts. A number of young mothers, and countless babies and kids, are all over the place. All of them are either Latinos or Asians.

Behind the daycare center, adjoining the church, there's a small rectory.

INT. RECTORY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Daniel stands by the kitchen table, preparing sandwiches.

He has a full beard, with some silver in it and in his hair as well, adding a touch of maturity to his still impressive appearance. He's dressed in casual civilian clothes.

DANIEL (V.O.)
 I chose the Catholic Church, and
 studied at Saint John's Seminary,
 because I wanted to walk in Jesus'
 footsteps - not in those of my
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL (V.O.) (cont'd)
father - and avoid women
altogether.

He arranges the sandwiches in a large cardboard box, then washes fruit in the sink.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)
I thought the ambiance and life
style of the priesthood would cure
me of my obsession, and would
protect me from acting out my
sexual desires.

He places the fruit in the box, beside the sandwiches, adds plenty of small juice cartons and takes it all with him as he exits.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH - DAY

Daniel enters the playground, carrying the box. He places it on a long wooden table, receiving some help from the young mothers in spreading the food over it.

There's no need to call the kids to the table. They rush over, fighting for good seats. There's a need for the women to hold them back, though, and calm them down when Daniel says the blessing.

DANIEL
Bless us these, thy gifts, for
which we are bound to receive from
thy bounty, through Christ, our
Lord. Amen.

All who can speak say "Amen," and make the sign of the cross, then attack the food and drinks like there's no tomorrow.

Daniel steps back, pleased to see them satisfy their hunger. He seems preoccupied, however.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)
I didn't see Laura in 7 years, and
if not for this needless article in
the Times, and the interview the
Church had forced me to give,
things would have probably had
remained the same.

Something draws his attention to the nearby street.

EXT. GRAND VIEW ST. - SAME

A red pickup truck, with plenty of scars, slows down when it passes in front of the church. It stops some distance away from the church, but still visible.

Behind it, in the b.g., looms downtown Los Angeles.

The unidentified driver remains inside the truck, while a woman passenger gets out and walks toward the church. She's dressed as the mother-of-all-whores, including an outrageous blond wig. She carries a small purse and a sizable briefcase.

The unexpected sound of her high-heels manages to silence even the noisy kids. Some of them freeze when she passes through the open gate, and lays her hand nonchalantly on Daniel's arm, speaking while also chewing her gum.

CARA

Hi Father, need to talk to ya.

DANIEL

Go ahead, daughter.

CARA

Not here. Inside.

He regards her quietly, as though recognizing her without knowing exactly where from.

DANIEL

We can step aside if you like, over there by the tree.

CARA

No, I wanna confess.

She gets even closer to him, breathing heavily. He takes her hand, gently but firmly, off his arm.

DANIEL

All right, let's go inside.

He walks toward the church. She follows him.

The kids resume their joyous mayhem, while the mothers remain glued to the odd couple walking into church.

INT. ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH - SAME

Sunlight, filtering in through the narrow windows, only partly illuminates the small church.

Daniel and Cara walk down the center aisle. Her heels click loudly, shattering the silence of the empty church.

When they reach the front pew, Cara sits down and puts the briefcase beside her on the floor. She grabs Daniel's hand.

CARA

Can't we sit here, Father?

DANIEL

I thought you want to confess.

CARA

Yeah, I do, but I have to see you.
Sit down.

She actually pulls him by the hand toward her, so he sits down, not too close to her though.

She takes the chewing gum out of her mouth first, and sticks it underneath the pew. She then moves closer to him, making it even harder on him not to notice her pushed-up breasts.

CARA (CONT'D)

As you can tell, Father, I ain't a saint.

DANIEL

Neither am I, daughter. Go ahead.

CARA

Oh no, you are a saint, that's what the paper said. I've read all about you, how you take care of these poor kids and all.

DANIEL

I'm glad you're reading the newspaper, daughter. What can I do for you?

CARA

I don't have a safe place to hide this case. Thought you can help me.

She points to the briefcase.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL
Why should you hide it?

His question hangs in the air without an immediate answer, while she opens her purse, and first takes out a packet of condoms, which she throws nonchalantly between them on the pew. She then draws a small bottle of perfume, and rudely sprays it over her wide-open neck-line and bare armpits.

CARA
(matter-of-factly)
You've been around a bit, Father,
haven't you?

DANIEL
I have, daughter, of course.

CARA
That's why I think you and I, you
know, can understand each other
well.

DANIEL
I hope we can.

CARA
Good.

She takes a packet of cigarettes out of her purse and lights one. The smoke floats in the direction of a sunbeam, right above them.

CARA (CONT'D)
I need to stop selling my body,
Father, I'm sick of it.

DANIEL
I'm glad to hear that.

CARA
And I've got my daughter to take
care of, too.

DANIEL
Even more so.

CARA
You're so sensitive, Father. The
paper said you are.

She puts her red-nailed fingers on his knee, rubbing it gently. He's quick to remove them, but she gets hold of his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CARA (CONT'D)
You must help us, Father.

DANIEL
I'll do whatever I can.

CARA
Good... will you keep this case for me then, just till midnight?

He stares at her, baffled.

DANIEL
What do you have in there?

CARA
Never mind that, Father. I scored big with a bunch of foreigners, and that's how they paid me.
(beat)
You can't imagine what they asked me to do, those big shots.

DANIEL
Save me the details, daughter.
(beat)
I guess it's not something that you can put in a bank, is it?

CARA
I don't have a bank account, Father, I'm a working girl. I don't pay taxes, either. Can't you dig that?

He nods, slowly, while looking deeply into her eyes. She looks sideways.

CARA (CONT'D)
I can't carry it around with me all day, see, don't want my daddy to find out about it.

DANIEL
Your daddy?...

CARA
My pimp, never mind. I'm gonna tell him they split the country without paying me.

A moment.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

Open it, then, so I can see what's inside.

CARA

I can't open it, Father, I... I forgot the combination, I need a specialist for that. Give me a break, will you?

She coughs, or pretends to do so, and throws the cigarette down on the floor. Daniel is quick to cover it with his shoe.

She gets even closer to him.

CARA (CONT'D)

If you'll keep it for me, Father, I'll be back around midnight to pick it up. That's all I'm asking you to do.

DANIEL

I fail to see how that can help you.

CARA

I'll be free then, believe me. I'm going to run away with my daughter. I won't have to sell my body no more.

He contemplates her momentarily.

She gets up and walks over to the altar, kneels down and prays quietly. He gets up, too, looks at her steadily.

She makes the sign of the cross, comes back and brushes her body against his.

CARA (CONT'D)

At midnight, Father, I'll come over and pick it up.

(beat - whispers)

I'll give you a special trick then, in return.

DANIEL

I thought you're going to quit, doing that.

(CONTINUED)

CARA

It'll be my finale, Father, my swan song. You're so lucky!

A hint of a smile appears on his face. He takes a step back.

DANIEL

Wait for me here, I want to give you something myself.

CARA

What?

DANIEL

Some money.

CARA

No Father, no need. You'll get it free of charge, when I'll be back for this case.

She picks up her purse and throws the condoms, cigarettes and perfume bottle in.

CARA (CONT'D)

I will knock three times on these doors, Father. Leave the gate open for me.

She heads for the doors, hurriedly.

Daniel kneels in front of the crucifix, praying quietly.

DANIEL

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

He crosses himself.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH - DAY

Cara crosses the front yard.

The kids disregard her, and keep on playing. But not so the women, who watch her steadily and talk quietly among themselves.

Cara walks over to the red pickup truck and gets in.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - SAME

Cara sits down in the passenger seat. Laura sits behind the wheel. It seems she's aged beyond her years, with much gray hair, stress lines and black circles around her eyes.

LAURA
(anxiously)
Well?...

CARA
It's him alright.

LAURA
The bastard. Did you fix him?

CARA
It was hard, I tell you. He's a reformed sinner if ever I met one.

LAURA
I don't believe it, Cara, no way.

She starts the engine.

LAURA (CONT'D)
What about the case, do you think he'll try to open it?

CARA
I'm not sure. He's not a fool, you know. I told him it's locked.

LAURA
As long as he'll open the door and let you in at night, we'll be okay. I'll take it from there.

CARA
I'm not sure about that, either.

LAURA
Why, didn't you promise him some action?

CARA
I sure did.

LAURA
Then he will, the pervert, don't worry. He won't be able to control himself, I know him all too well.

She takes off.

EXT. GRAND VIEW ST. - DAY

The red pickup truck speeds away.

EXT. THE CHURCH - SAME

Daniel stands by the entrance, watching as the truck merges into the heavy traffic along Alvarado Street.

He then retreats into the church and closes the doors.

INT. THE CHURCH - SAME

He stops by the briefcase, picks it up and lays it down on the pew. He looks at it for a moment, then bends over it and places both thumbs on the two locks, about to flip them open.

But then he freezes suddenly - just stares at the briefcase.

He finally picks up the briefcase without opening it and puts it underneath the pew. He exits the church.

EXT. THE CHURCH - SAME

The kids in the playground welcome Daniel back, quick with requests for him to play with them. He's happy to oblige, and pushes them on the swings.

An old but shiny black Cadillac stops by the church, sounding its horn a couple of times. Loud hip-hop music blares from its speakers.

One of the women in the playground quickly gathers three kids and takes them with her to the car. Daniel helps her, carrying the youngest of the children in his arms.

Out of the car come two young Latinos, clad in gangsta attire, with close-cropped hair and gang name tattoos on their sleeveless arms. They signal something with their fingers to Daniel and he tries to imitate them, which makes them laugh.

He hands the small child to one of them. They exchange punch-fives with him, then slide back into the car and take off.

Daniel watches them drive away, then returns to the playground and rejoins the kids.

EXT. THE CHURCH - NIGHT

Very dimly lit. Daniel's hand, holding the briefcase. He places it in front of the church doors, leaves it there. We hear the doors closing.

EXT. GRAND VIEW ST. - NIGHT

A lone car drives down the street, and pulls up in front of the church. It's a pickup truck, its engine and lights turn off right away.

For a moment, all is dark and quiet in and around the truck. Then someone inside strikes a match and lights a cigarette.

INT. THE CHURCH - SAME

All we can see are Daniel's hands, holding a burning votive candle. The hands light another candle with it, and place both candles down by the altar.

INT. THE PICKUP TRUCK - SAME

All we can see are Laura's hands, holding a handgun. The hands push a clip in and chamber a round, then put the gun on her lap, keep holding it.

EXT. BY THE CHURCH - SAME

The passenger door opens and Cara gets out of the pickup truck, smoking a cigarette. She's dressed as before, with the addition of a cheap little jacket, which covers her shoulders.

She passes through the open gate and walks toward the church.

INT. THE CHURCH - SAME

Only the two votive candles burn by the altar, in front of Saint Mary the Virgin.

No one is seen around, at first, but as we get closer to a dark corner, we notice the reflection of the candles' flames in Daniel's eyes.

INT. A DIFFERENT CHURCH - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. MUTE. A flower-draped casket rests by the altar. Votive candles burn in front of Saint Mary the Virgin. The Minister (not Daniel's father) stands in the pulpit, sternly talking to the crowd of weeping mourners.

Daniel, 7, dressed in black, suddenly springs from his first pew seat and runs madly in the aisle toward the church door.

Everybody in the congregation looks back at him, surprised, including his father, Joseph, who stands up by the casket.

Daniel reaches the door but a parishioner stands in his way. Daniel pounds on the door, crying, as he tries to get out.

In the b.g., we can hear LOUD KNOCKS on a door.

INT. THE CHURCH - NIGHT

Daniel steps out of the dark corner, dressed in a black robe. He stands still, bewildered, looking at the front doors.

There are more LOUD KNOCKS, angry and rapid ones. So he finally walks to the doors and opens one of them, just slightly, but enough to see Cara's head and shoulders.

CARA

Oh Father, thank God you're in. I was afraid you'd never open the door.

She takes a drag at her cigarette and lets out the smoke, which blows in his direction and enters the church.

CARA (CONT'D)

C'mon now, open the damn door. What you waiting for?

DANIEL

You've got your briefcase, what else do you want?

CARA

I'm a professional, Father, and proud of it, too. I gave you my word.

She throws her cigarette down and takes off her jacket, exposes her bare shoulders. She then draws a small bottle of Jack Daniel's from the jacket and takes a sip, in his face. She offers it to him.

(CONTINUED)

He shakes his head - his steady eyes don't even blink.

CARA (CONT'D)

Look, I'm almost naked, ready to play my part of the deal.

DANIEL

We don't have a deal.

CARA

Sure we do. If you prefer me to suck on you, no problem. Just open the door.

She tries to push the door open, but he holds it steadily.

DANIEL

Go home now, and take care of your child.

CARA

You don't know what you missing, Father.

DANIEL

Oh yes, I know. But I walk on faith now, you see, I don't miss anything.

We can hear, in the b.g., the door of the pickup truck opens.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

God be with you, daughter.

He tosses something in her direction, and quickly shuts the door and locks it. He leans with his back on the door, as we hear Cara punishing the door with her fists.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Lord, King of Heaven, come and enter me and cleanse me from all sin and save and bless my soul.

He crosses himself.

EXT. THE CHURCH - NIGHT

Cara stops pounding the door and picks up the small packet Daniel tossed in her direction. She opens it and finds some money inside.

(CONTINUED)

She hesitates momentarily, then picks up the briefcase, hurries down the steps and out of the gate.

Laura, standing outside the pickup truck, gets back inside. Cara too.

INT. THE PICKUP TRUCK - SAME

Both sit down: Laura behind the wheel, gun in hand, Cara beside her with the briefcase on her lap.

LAURA

What happened?

CARA

Nothing happened. He left it outside, refused to let me in.

LAURA

What did he say, the creep?

CARA

He walks on faith now, that's what he said.

LAURA

Bull, Cara. Did you offer him sex?

CARA

(annoyed)

Sure, baby, even a blowjob. He said he doesn't need it any more.

LAURA

I don't believe it for a second. His favorite position, he once told me. Straight from the bottle.

CARA

Well, you better believe it. He's changed.

LAURA

No way. What about the whiskey?

CARA

Nope. Didn't even blink.

LAURA

I'll be damned. It made him stronger, he used to say, the combination of women and whiskey.

(CONTINUED)

CARA

He's strong without it now, maybe.
He gave me this.

She shows her the money. Laura examines it.

LAURA

He always was a big spender, still
is. That shows you he hasn't
changed much.

She opens the door, gun in hand.

CARA

Where the hell you think you're
going?

LAURA

After him.

Cara puts her hand on Laura's arm, holding her still.

CARA

Don't be crazy, Laura.

LAURA

Why not?

CARA

Because he locked the doors, you
can't get in. Our elaborate plan
has failed, admit it.

LAURA

Never. I'll shoot my way in.

CARA

Didn't you spend enough time in
jail already? Are you nuts?

LAURA

Sure am.

CARA

Then count me out.

She angrily snaps open the briefcase, takes off her blond wig and throws it in. We catch a glimpse of a Playboy magazine, partly covering a few plastic bags, full of white powder.

Cara looks intently at Laura, who still ponders her next move, holding the door open.

(CONTINUED)

CARA (CONT'D)

(softer)

We have Diana to take care of. He was right.

Laura closes the door and sticks the gun in her handbag. Her expression, though, hardens into resolve.

LAURA

I'm going to get him, Cara, no matter what. I just need a better plan.

She starts up the car.

EXT. GRAND VIEW ST. - NIGHT

Headlights split the darkness, as the pickup truck drives away.

When the sound of the engine dies down, we can hear a sporadic burst of GUNSHOTS in the distance.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's a modest room, yet warmly decorated. There's a single narrow bed, two bookcases, and on the wall the cross we saw earlier, as well as a painting of Jerusalem.

Daniel sits at a writing desk under a lit lamp, an open Bible in front of him. He stares out the window, preoccupied.

The sound of GUNSHOTS dies down.

DANIEL (V.O.)

All I knew at the time, was that Laura spent only minimum time in jail, since Travis survived and she had to take care of the baby girl, Diana, whom she adopted. Why then, was she still after me?

We get closer and closer to the window.

INT. DIANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

We enter the room through the open window. Moonlight penetrates as well, illuminating the room.

DIANA, 7, sleeps peacefully in bed. Laura stands by the bed, watching her. She covers her with a blanket, and then kisses her forehead gently. She leaves the room.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Cara - clean of makeup, wearing a nightgown - lies in the double bed, reading a book.

Laura stands in the doorway, looking at her.

CARA

Come to bed, baby. It's very late.

LAURA

I don't feel like going to bed right now.

CARA

Then just give me a goodnight kiss, all right?

(beat)

I did my part, after all, didn't I?

Laura steps forward and sits down on the edge of the bed.

LAURA

You deserve an Oscar, cookie. I'm proud of you.

She kisses her tenderly on the lips. But when she tries to get up, Cara holds her still.

CARA

Don't worry too much, okay. Loosen up a bit.

LAURA

Okay.

CARA

Promise?

Laura nods.

(CONTINUED)

CARA (CONT'D)

Forget him, that's all. Pretend we never found him.

Laura gets up from the bed and heads for the door. Cara stares after her, not in peace at all.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Laura enters the room - tastefully and warmly decorated, if on the cheap - and sits down on the sofa, a drink in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other. She takes a sip and a drag, then grabs a section of a newspaper from the coffee table and looks at it.

We can see a B&W picture of St. Nicholas Church, with Daniel in the foreground, surrounded by kids and young mothers.

The headline of the article reads:

NEW FATHER TO L.A. KIDS

Laura's cigarette burns a hole in the picture, then another one and another one - until the smoke turns into fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WESTLAKE DISTRICT - DAY

A Korean convenience store is on fire. Despite that, people run out of the store, on the intersection of 3rd street and Rampart Blvd., with food and goods in their hands.

A black Cadillac passes by, spreading gunfire in the air. It hits another car in the intersection, causing some young gang-members to spring out of both cars, and plunge into a fierce fight: Latinos against Asians, using fists, bats, knives and finally guns.

In the b.g., a cloud of black smoke rises above the city's skyline. Over it, several helicopters hover like a swarm of bees.

INT. LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The TV set is on, with a live coverage of the violent outburst in the Westlake district and in East L.A. The camera is hectic, from a helicopter flying above a boulevard of mayhem.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Cara, come over, quickly!

She sits on the sofa, barefooted and in shorts, watching the TV screen.

Cara comes in and right after her Diana, too (still only 7 or so), with a pencil in hand.

Diana's hair is arranged in two long, blond braids, on both sides of her beautiful face, highlighting a pair of bright blue eyes.

CARA

What happened?

LAURA

Riots again, in the Westlake district and East L.A.

CARA

I'll be damned.

Both of them sit down, Cara on the sofa beside Laura, and Diana on the rug in front of them, hugging her knees.

DIANA

Why are they doing this, Mom?

LAURA

The new anti-immigration laws, I believe. The Supreme Court upheld them today.

DIANA

What's upheld?

CARA

Supporting a lower court decision, sweetie. Making it the law of the land.

Laura starts channel surfing with the remote, until something catches her eyes and she stops and stays afloat on one channel. A live coverage of St. Nicholas Church is in progress, by the same woman reporter we saw before: Katie Gomez.

We can see Father Daniel carrying small children out of the daycare center, and rushing them into a mini van.

Police are at the scene as well, as fire from all directions about to engulf the area around the church.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA
Go back to your room, Diana.

DIANA
Why Mom, I want to watch it.

LAURA
You watched enough.

She turns the TV set off.

DIANA
I'll see it anyhow, later. Why do--

LAURA
Because homework comes first,
that's why.

She gets up, and helps Diana do so as well.

DIANA
You're always so protective of me,
really.

LAURA
I know. That's my job.

Diana leaves the room, reluctantly. Laura turns to Cara.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Did you see him?

CARA
I sure did.

LAURA
Come then, I need to talk to you.

She exits. Cara follows.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Cara comes in and closes the door. Laura undresses in a hurry, and puts on a pair of jeans, a flannel shirt and cowboy boots.

CARA
Where do you think you're going?

LAURA
After him.

(CONTINUED)

CARA

You're out of your mind, you know.

LAURA

I know. But this is my last chance.

Cara closes the gap between them.

CARA

Leave him alone, Laurie, he's a good man now. Didn't you see how he's saving the lives of these children?

LAURA

I saw it.

CARA

Then forgive him, for God's sake. Let's get on with our lives.

LAURA

I can't. He killed my sister and her husband. And I will never forgive him for that.

CARA

He didn't *kill* them, and you know that. Robert did!

LAURA

As far as I'm concerned, he did it. I told him to stay away from her... I warned him.

Cara puts both her hands on Laura's arms and shakes her.

CARA

You're out for revenge, that's all. Admit it.

LAURA

In part, yes.

CARA

Then snap out of it, dammit, and get real. You've got better things to do.

LAURA

No, I don't.

(CONTINUED)

She pushes Cara aside, determined, and fishes around under a pile of cloths in the closet. She finds a toolbox, unlocks it and draws her handgun out. She inspects it assuredly, then inserts a clip and puts it in her handbag.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Take care of our daughter.

CARA

She's not my daughter. She's *your* daughter!

It hits Laura like a bullet. Frozen, she stares at Cara in disbelief, taking it all in.

LAURA

Don't say that, Cara. You'll be sorry later.

CARA

(shouts - in distress)

I won't be sorry, dammit. I'm leaving!

Laura moves closer to her and tries to hug her, but Cara avoids her and rushes to the bed. She falls on it, crying.

Laura hesitates for a moment, then walks over to the bed and sits down there on the edge. She strokes Cara's hair gently.

Cara raises her head, tears well up in her eyes.

CARA (CONT'D)

You love *him*, not me, that's the truth. You always did!

LAURA

But... baby, what the hell are you talking about?

CARA

The truth. And don't baby me anymore, Laura. You're so obsessed, so...

She drops her head on a pillow, sobbing. Laura stays put, thoughtful, her hand on Cara's shoulder.

The door opens slightly and quietly, and Diana peeks in, staring at the two women.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

AERIAL VIEW: The city is burning, downtown and around it.

INT. LAURA'S PICKUP TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

Through the windshield, we can see the magnitude of the destruction. It's pandemonium, as looters run amok in and out of stores.

The rapid sound of GUNFIRE is mixed with the constant sound of SIRENS.

Laura, while driving, searches for something. It is a very difficult and dangerous drive.

EXT. WESTLAKE DISTRICT - SAME

An out of control fire burns in a housing complex on Alvarado Street. People are in panic, jumping out of windows and running outside half-naked.

A fire engine is there, the police too, but not in full force.

Among the fire fighters who battle the flames and try to rescue the people, we spot Father Daniel. He works tirelessly and fearlessly, running in and out of the building, rescuing children.

INT. LAURA'S TRUCK (MOVING) - SAME

Through the windshield we can see the housing complex on fire, as the truck comes to a stop nearby.

Laura watches quietly, the flames reflected in her face and eyes. She starts - seeing something.

EXT. THE HOUSING COMPLEX - SAME

Daniel runs out of the building, carrying a crying baby in his arms. He chokes, his black suit partly on fire.

He carries the baby safely to the sidewalk, where he hands him over to someone in the crowd of people, standing there watching.

But then, as he turns to rush back into the building, he halts abruptly - his eyes catch something unexpectedly.

(CONTINUED)

HIS POV:

The red pickup truck pulls up dangerously close to the burning building, down in the alleyway. Someone inside stares back at him.

INT. THE TRUCK - SAME

Reverse angle, through a car door window, as Daniel looks on. The window rolls down.

EXT. THE TRUCK - SAME

As the window rolls all the way down, Laura extends her hands out, aiming her gun.

HER POV:

Daniel turns and begins to walk back into the burning building.

A SHOT RINGS OUT. Then another one.

BACK TO LAURA: She FIRES rapidly, six rounds in all.

EXT. THE HOUSING COMPLEX - SAME

A bullet hits Daniel - then another one. He stumbles and falls down in front of the building.

With all the mayhem going on, no one notices him at first. He's just another body lying down on the ground.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SAME

The red pickup truck speeds away, and soon disappears in the dark alleyway. The burning city is in the b.g.

EXT. THE HOUSING COMPLEX - LATER, NIGHT

Paramedics rush Daniel into an ambulance. It takes off shortly, its siren WAILING. The housing complex is engulfed in flames.

The sound FADES OUT and the FRAME FREEZES - as it turns slowly into a still picture of the burning housing complex.

INT. ST. VINCENT MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

The picture of the burning housing complex is printed in a newspaper, with an insert photo of Father Daniel. The headline reads: SAINT DANIEL OF L.A.

A Security Guard puts the paper down on the floor, and stands up at attention, in front of a closed door.

In the corridor ahead of him there's a big commotion: A flock of TV cameramen, TV reporters and print journalists surrounds CARDINAL DOWNEY of Los Angeles and MAYOR MADRIGAL, who walk toward the guarded door. With them is an entourage of dignitaries and their assistants. Among the reporters we can spot Katie Gomez, ahead of the pack.

KATIE

Cardinal Downey, your honor, is it true the Pope is going to beatify him?

CARDINAL DOWNEY

He is still alive, thank God.

REPORTER A

A miracle in itself, Cardinal, in the eyes of the people. A Kind of resurrection, wouldn't you say?

Cardinal Downey doesn't like that question at all.

REPORTER B

Mayor Madrigal, are you going to award him the commendation for bravery?

MAYOR MADRIGAL

You just wait and see.

They arrive at the guarded door, where two doctors, coming from the other side of the corridor, join them.

The Security Guard, in awe, opens the door and steps aside. They all go in.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Daniel lies in bed. He's pale and in pain, but his eyes are open and he's not connected to any life-support system. An elderly black nurse, MS. HILL, is at his side, wiping the sweat off his forehead.

(CONTINUED)

The dignitaries surround his bed, while the hot spotlights bathe the room, as the cameramen and reporters fight for position. Photographers' flashbulbs explode.

The first one to speak is DR. RESNIK, standing by the bedside, between the Cardinal and the Mayor.

DR. RESNIK

Let me assure all of you here that you're allowed into this room, only because of the amazing and unexpected progress that Father Daniel has made in the last couple of days.

(beat)

It is not us who saved his life, but rather his immense courage and high spirit.

KATIE

Doctor, are you implying some superior divinity saved him?

DR. RESNIK

(annoyed)

I'm not implying anything, and save your questions for later.

(beat - refocuses)

Medically speaking, I will only say that we pulled two bullets out of his back and the back oh his neck, both miraculously stopped short of his spinal cord. And that in spite of the heavy loss of blood, we expect him to fully recover and resume an active lifestyle.

He steps back just a bit, as the Cardinal moves forward and lays his hand gently on Daniel's immobile arm.

CARDINAL DOWNEY

Father Daniel Dawson of Saint Nicholas Church, it is with great honor and pleasure, that I'm to convey to you our Holy Father personal concerns and good wishes.

Silence follows, highlighting the importance of the moment.

CARDINAL DOWNEY (CONT'D)

You have made us all proud, in his words, and even more so: humble. For if not for the grace of God,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CARDINAL DOWNEY (CONT'D) (cont'd)
and the mercy of his son Jesus, you
were not to be here among us today.

He places a red sealed envelope on the nightstand beside the bed.

CARDINAL DOWNEY (CONT'D)
You saved children from the fire,
Father, and God--

REPORTER B
(cuts him short)
The people declared him a Saint
already, Cardinal Downey, will the
Church follow suit one day?

The Cardinal hesitates momentarily, clearly annoyed by this rude interruption.

INT. LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Laura and Diana sit side by side on the sofa, watching the live TV coverage from Daniel's Hospital room.

DIANA
Is he, Mom?

LAURA
Is he, what?

DIANA
A Saint?

Laura's face twists in anger. She mutes the TV set.

LAURA
No, I don't think so.

DIANA
Why, he saved all those children
from the fire?

LAURA
So did the firemen.

DIANA
But that's their job, Mom, isn't
it?

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

(annoyed)

Yes, Diana, that's their job. But it doesn't make him a saint.

DIANA

A hero, then.

LAURA

Maybe. Let's hear the Mayor.

She turns the TV sound back on. We can see and hear the Mayor, as she raises one of her hands, holding a plaque.

MAYOR MADRIGAL

... And it is therefore my great honor and privilege, on behalf of all the citizens of Los Angeles, to present you Father Daniel with our special commendation of bravery!

She places the plaque on the nightstand as well. Photographers flash them with light.

KATIE

Was it a drive-by shooting, Mayor Madrigal? And have those presumed gang members been arrested yet?

MAYOR MADRIGAL

You should direct this question to the chief.

CLICK - the TV set turns off.

Laura stares at it, transfixed, remote control in hand.

Diana looks at her with a big question mark in her eyes.

DIANA

Why Mom, I want to see him.

LAURA

(preoccupied)

You saw enough of him already.

DIANA

How come? He didn't even speak yet.

LAURA

He's too weak to speak.

Diana doesn't buy that. She gets up, annoyed.

(CONTINUED)

DIANA

Cara always allowed me to watch TV,
that's the truth. It's not my fault
that she left you!

She storms out of the room. Laura stays put, in agony.

INT. DANIEL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

Beside Daniel's bed sits FATHER JOHN, 60, whom we saw before
in Cardinal Downey's entourage. He's dressed in black, his
hair gray. No one else is in the room.

FATHER JOHN

You'll be sent to our retreat
center in Oregon, of course, for
your recuperation.

DANIEL

(sotto voce)

You may have heard the Doctor,
Father John. He expects me to be
able to resume my duties soon.

FATHER JOHN

No, my son, you'll need some time
in complete silence, to reflect on
it all. Then you'll be reassigned.

DANIEL

Reassigned?...

FATHER JOHN

Indeed. We leave our mark and move
on, in the hope that people caught
the spark.

DANIEL

I had hardly begun my work here,
Father. I have so much more to do.

FATHER JOHN

Someone else will walk in your
path, son. The Society of Jesus
teaches us that no man is
indispensable. And you're a Jesuit
first, aren't you, not a social
worker?

Daniel reflects on it a moment.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL
I'm a servant of our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Father John smiles and lays his hand gently on Daniel's arm.

INT. DIANA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Diana lies in bed. She closes a book and hands it to Laura,
who sits beside her on the edge of the bed.

LAURA
Goodnight, baby, and sweet dreams.

DIANA
Goodnight Mom.
(beat)
I'm sorry.

LAURA
Sorry for what?

DIANA
You know, what I said about Cara.

LAURA
No, you were right saying that.
It's all my fault, really.

DIANA
Why do you say that?

Laura takes a moment to consider.

LAURA
There are things I can't explain to
you yet, Diana. Maybe one day I
will.

DIANA
When I grow up?

Laura nods.

DIANA (CONT'D)
Do you think she'll ever come back?

LAURA
I don't know, sweetie. I sure hope
so.

(CONTINUED)

DIANA

I do too. But if not, can I have a father instead, like the other kids at school?

Laura is at a loss for words. The conversation has gone far beyond her readiness, or ability to conduct at the moment.

LAURA

We'll see. At the moment, I'm your mother *and* your father.

She kisses her goodnight then turns off the bedside lamp.

INT. ST. VINCENT MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Ms. Hill, the elderly nurse we saw earlier taking care of Daniel, comes out of the Medicine Room. She carries a tray, a glass of water on it and some pills.

A young and pretty nurse, Jane, stands in her way. (We may have seen her before, we cannot be certain at first.)

MS. HILL

Yes, dear, what is it?

JANE

Do you mind, Ms. Hill, if I take this to Father Daniel?

MS. HILL

Whatever for?

JANE

It will be such an honor for me, as a devout Catholic.

MS. HILL

I see.

She regards her with eyes that saw plenty before, and notices the small golden cross, hanging down her neck.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)

You have nothing else to do at this time, I take it?

JANE

No ma'am, my shift is over. But I'm ready to stay up all night, if need be.

(CONTINUED)

MS. HILL

All right, dear, I've got so many things to take care of. I can do with some help.

She hands Jane the tray.

MS. HILL (CONT'D)

See that he takes these, and anything else he may need.

JANE

Sure, Ms. Hill, I'll take care of all his needs. Thank you.

MS. HILL

On your way, then. And report to me later.

She heads toward the Nurses' Station, while Jane walks the other way.

INT. DANIEL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As before: Daniel lies motionless on his back, eyes shut.

Jane enters the room, carrying the tray, and closes the door. She locks it, too, with a push of the button.

She approaches the bed as Daniel opens his eyes, surprised somewhat to see her.

JANE

Did I wake you up, Father?

DANIEL

No, not really, I was just daydreaming.

JANE

Well, it's night already, and time for your medicine.

She helps him up a bit and fluffs his pillows, so he can lean back on them comfortably. She stays beside him when he takes the pills.

JANE (CONT'D)

What were you daydreaming about, Father, may I ask?

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

Oh... about my childhood.

JANE

A favorite subject of mine, too,
you know. I was so innocent growing
up.

She checks his pulse next and takes his temperature.

While doing all that, it does seem as if she brushes against him just a little too close. The two top buttons in her shirt are now evidently opened, revealing quite a bit of skin, as well as the small golden cross.

She writes her findings on the clipboard attached to his bed, then leans over him.

JANE (CONT'D)

(whiskey voice)

Do you need anything, Father?

DANIEL

Yes, Nurse. Would you mind open the drapes, so I can see the city? And the window, too, just slightly.

JANE

Of course.

She does so, revealing a panoramic view of downtown L.A. at night. Calm now - no fires are visible, and no gunshots are heard.

JANE (CONT'D)

Anything else, Father?

DANIEL

Thank you, Nurse. Can you find a classical station for me on the radio?

JANE

Sure.

She turns the radio on and searches for a classical station, until she finds one. The tune of a beautiful Flute Concerto fills the room.

DANIEL

Pardon me asking, Nurse, but what happened to Ms, Hill, who took care of me all along?

(CONTINUED)

JANE

Huh... she's got a lot to do, right now. She asked me to help her.

DANIEL

So you're my nurse, tonight?

JANE

Yes, tonight I'm all yours, Father. And my name's Jane.

DANIEL

So would you mind taking a chair, Jane, and sit down over there by the window?

JANE

Yes... if that's your wish.

DANIEL

Indeed it is.

She first dims the light in the room, then pulls a chair and sits down by the window, where it is slightly opened.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

My last request, Jane, if you don't mind.

JANE

Not at all, Father, that's what I'm here for.

DANIEL

Would you... would you be kind enough and... take off your cap?

She takes a moment to consider, not surprised though. A hint of a smile appears on her face.

JANE

If it will make you happy, Father.

She takes her white nurse cap off and shakes loose her brunette wavy hair. She crosses her legs, too, and exposes one of them well above the knee. She watches the view, as the breeze plays gently with her hair.

He just stares at her quietly.

INT. THE DAWSONS' LIVING ROOM - (FLASHBACK) NIGHT

In B&W. MUTE. Daniel, 7, lies on the floor by the fireplace, a pencil in his mouth and an open notebook in front of him. He stares at the embers burning in the hearth.

A woman, late twenties, sits comfortably on the couch with her feet up. She knits a sweater. Her long wavy hair, brunette, frames a gentle face - a face we saw earlier in Daniel's flashbacks.

Behind her, rain drops stream down the French window.

She stops knitting and looks at Daniel, smiles and says something to him - though we don't hear her voice. Instead we hear:

JANE (V.O.)
What are you thinking of, son?

He looks up at his mother.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Daniel is in bed, as before, looking at Jane bewildered.

DANIEL
I beg your pardon?

Jane, who sits by the window still, smiles at him.

JANE
I asked, what are you thinking of, sir?

DANIEL
Oh... I was thinking of how so much cannot make a man happy, Nurse, and how so little can.

JANE
I'm not sure I follow you.

DANIEL
Maybe you can follow Mark, then. He asked: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

JANE
I can certainly understand that.

She gets up and approaches his bed determinedly.

(CONTINUED)

JANE (CONT'D)

Don't you recognize me from
somewhere, Father, by any chance?

He sizes her up intensely, searching his memory.

Without her nurse cap, her hair down, it seems as if we can recognize her now as Jane, the brunette girl Daniel brought with him to the New Year's Eve party at the beginning, together with the redheaded girl, Donna.

DANIEL

No, I don't believe I do. Why do
you ask?

JANE

Because I have a strange feeling
that we crossed each other's path,
once.

DANIEL

It is possible, I suppose.

She gets even closer to him, stands beside his bed.

JANE

In fact, I do remember something
you told me back then.

DANIEL

And what was that?

JANE

Let me see... "You walk like a
whore, talk like a whore and dress
like a whore... and you want me to
treat you like Mother Teresa?" Yes,
that's what you asked me.

A painful memory registers clearly on his face, which he cannot hide, as hard as he tries.

She leans closely over him, the golden cross glistening as it swings in her cleavage.

JANE (CONT'D)

I will never forget these words,
Daniel, as long as I live. But you
know what, I'm a mature woman now,
and willing to do anything you care
to ask me.

He does all he can to conceal his trembling, but it still shows.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

Pray for me, daughter. I am weak.

She studies him for a moment. He's very pale, breathing hard, with beads of sweat on his forehead.

She finally kneels down by the bed and takes his hand in hers. She shuts her eyes, as if in prayer.

But then, just as his breathing calms down a bit, she kisses his hand first, then kisses his arm up and up until she herself is up on the bed, about to kiss his lips.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(with great difficulty)

No, stop it. I am sick. I will ring the bell!

He extends his hand to do so, but she falls back on the floor, her head on the edge of the bed. She cries quietly. He lays his hand on her head.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, please protect her soul. And have mercy on me, too, oh Lord. Don't subject me to test after test.

We get closer to the open window, where the lights of the resurrected city flicker again in the darkness.

Silence prevails, but for the sound of the Flute Concerto.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: 7 YEARS LATER

FADE IN:

EXT. PISAC VILLAGE, PERU - SUNRISE

Early morning sun sprays golden light over the green Andean hills that surround the Village - the one we saw in the beginning.

The mist and light create a halo, purple in shade, around the white church that stands atop the old Inca temple site.

DANIEL (V.O.)

I woke up before dawn to the vision of a terrible dream, still so vivid in my mind.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - SAME

Only his face, framed by his long hair and beard, is visible in the semi darkness. He stares up at the ceiling, lying in bed, obviously disturbed.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)

In my dream, I met Satan in the marketplace of Jerusalem. He stood in my way, smiling, saying he's going to meet me again shortly in the City of Angels.

He hears something, and turns his head and eyes toward the source of light that now illuminates him.

EXT. THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE - SAME

Not so far from the church we find MARIA, 18-19, sitting on a rock, bathed in golden sunlight. Her long black hair partly covers her exotic, Incan face.

She plays a crude flute, her tune simple but unique. Around her a few sheep and goats chew the grass peacefully.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - MORNING

It is a small room, without any decoration but for the wooden cross and the painting of Jerusalem. There's a narrow iron bed, a bookcase crowded with books, a sink and a cupboard.

Daniel sits at a small table by the window, holding a steamy mug. Sunlight streams at him, exposing his figure, dressed in a black robe. In front of him on the table there's an open bible, but he doesn't read it: he looks out through the window.

He can see Maria in the distance, sitting on the rock, still playing the flute.

EXT. THE EDGE OF THE VILLAGE - SAME

From afar, we see a man and a boy approaching Maria. She stops playing the flute, and climbs down from the rock.

As the boy, a 10-year-old with a stick in his hand, gathers the sheep and goats closer to the rock, the man leads Maria by the hand toward the village.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - DAY

He's wearing a white robe now, laying a white tablecloth over his small table. Next, he places a first aid kit on the table and opens it. He spreads the contents on the table.

As he arranges everything carefully and methodically, it does seem as if he's preoccupied with other thoughts. He stops every so often and stars at the window.

INT. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, PISAC VILLAGE - SAME

A very modest place, which nonetheless is colorful and spotless, and has the kind of richness that results not from money, but rather from deep religious feelings and sincere devotion.

Maria puts down a burning votive candle in front of an icon of the Virgin Mary. At her side kneel her parents, poor peasants of Incan descent, the signs of hard work and lean existence marked clearly on their weather-beaten faces and worn out cloths.

All three of them kneel in prayer at the altar, but while the parents' eyes are closed and their lips move, Maria's lips are sealed while her deep brown eyes are wide open - staring at a painting of Jesus on the cross.

She is mesmerized by his image, with the long hair and beard, fair complexion, blazing blue eyes and the halo around his head.

EXT. PISAC VILLAGE - SAME

The white church and the empty plaza in front of it dominate the village, with its mostly poor huts and shacks.

Adjoining the church there's a small rectory, where a line of sick children and adults is forming, stretching all the way from the front of the door to the center of the plaza.

Maria's parents lead her out of the church and join the line at its end.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - SAME

On the bed lies a boy, 6, holding his wounded leg up in the air, trying hard not to cry. On the single chair by Daniel's table sits the boy's Mother, praying constantly.

(CONTINUED)

Daniel takes care of the boy's bleeding wound: cleans it, spreads an ointment over it, and then bandages it real well.

He helps the boy to his feet, as the mother kisses his hands repeatedly, and begs him to take a small basket of bananas from her. He refuses, yet she leaves it on his table anyhow.

He blesses them both, as the mother helps her limping son out.

Daniel closes the door and drops down on the chair, tiredly looking at the window.

DANIEL (V.O.)

I was tired of being the healer of their souls *and* their bodies. And I was wondering, Almighty God, if it was under your command that Satan came to visit me at night, in order to torment me all day.

While his voice is being heard, we move slowly outside through the open window.

EXT. PISAC VILLAGE - AFTERNOON

We fly high a above the village. The breathtaking view of the Andes, with the small village nestle in the bosom of a slop, unfolds underneath us like a colorful, iridescent peacock's tail.

When we lands back at the village's plaza, only Maria and her parents are still waiting patiently outside Daniel's door, drenched in magnificent golden light of the setting sun.

The door opens and Daniel, looking pale and unsteady, appears in the doorway.

Maria's parents push her slightly toward him. They speak Spanish, Daniel too (with English subtitles).

FATHER

Please, Father, our daughter Maria.

DANIEL

What's wrong with her?

FATHER

She is, well... she won't speak.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

What do you mean by that. Is she
mute?

Both parents nod humbly. Daniel lays his hand gently on Maria's head. She looks up at him, awe-struck, unable to take her eyes away from him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

God bless her soul, then. She is in
his hands, not in mine. I can't
help her.

MOTHER

(begging)

Help us, dear Father, please.

She hands him a plate full of dried fruits, which he rejects. So she gives it to Maria.

FATHER

She is nineteen, Holy Father, and
no one wants to marry her.

DANIEL

They are fools, then, dear man. Go
home, and bring her back for Sunday
Mass, don't hide her any longer.
Her time will come.

FATHER & MOTHER

Please, Father Daniel, help us. In
the name of God!

And they actually push their daughter inside, kissing Daniel's hands and robe, helping him follow her in. He closes the door.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - SUNSET

Maria puts the plate of dried fruits on the table, and takes one into her mouth. She sits down on the bed, chewing it, looking at Daniel with her big, innocent eyes.

He stands by the door and looks at her.

DANIEL

(quietly)

Lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil. In the name
of the Father, and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(CONTINUED)

He crosses himself, then takes the chair and sits down opposite Maria, close by the bed. She smiles at him, as she swallows the dried fruit.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Can you hear me, daughter?

She puts her fingers on his lips and looks deep into his eyes. She then moves her fingers all over his face, fascinated by its fair complexion, stroking his long hair and beard - so much like the painting of Jesus on the cross, which she saw in church.

He looks at her, petrified and confused, then takes her hand in his and puts it down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Answer, Maria, can you hear me?

She smiles and lies down on the bed, on her back, and takes a deep breath. She wears only a thin, simple dress, which cannot hide how grown-up she is as a woman.

Daniel leans forward and lays his hand on her forehead. He strokes her long black hair gently. The silver cross his father gave him is now visible, dangling down his neck.

She grabs it and brings it to her lips, causing him to bend even closer to her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Did the devil send you, woman...
the one I saw in my dream?

She answers him by letting go of his cross. She takes his hand and moves it down to her chest, where she has a little wooden cross of her own, hanging on a leather string.

Daniel is shaking all over, uncontrollably, horror in his eyes. He leans over her and kisses the little cross, and while he does so, she hugs him strongly and naturally with both arms - causing him to lie on top of her, his head on her chest.

They remain like that for a very long moment, motionless. Only her hand moves slowly, as she strokes his hair gently. She kisses his head, too.

He trembles, and begins to sway slowly. Then - as if in a continuation of his rhythmic motions - he lifts her dress up, just as her legs spread apart.

EXT. OUTSIDE DANIEL'S DOOR - DUSK

Maria's parents kneel on the ground, in front of the door, praying.

Suddenly, Maria's SCREAM cuts the still air like a knife, coming from inside.

Both parents jolt and raise their eyes to the door in awe - dumb-stricken.

Around them, other villagers who heard the scream stop dead on their heels. They look toward the couple in front of the door.

All is quiet and still again for a moment.

Then the door bursts open and Maria appears in the doorway, tears stream all over her face. Her whimpering cry is partly in joy and partly in horror - it is difficult to differentiate between the two.

Her Father hugs her, crying himself, as the Mother collapses on the ground.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - SAME

Daniel lies in bed, motionless, his face down.

Unclear voices, coming as if from a crowd of people, gets louder outside his door.

He springs up suddenly. His robe is bloodstained, and so is the bed. In terror, he searches for something in a drawer by the sink. He finds a large kitchen knife. He sits on the chair by the table, holding the knife.

DANIEL (V.O.)

The priests of Cybele, I've read
somewhere, used to cut their
testicles off, then throw them out
through the window. It was part of
their initiation. But not for me.
For me - it would be my punishment.

He hesitates, though, as he looks up the window.

EXT. PISAC VILLAGE - NIGHT

The whole village, it seems, children and grown-ups alike, is gathered in front of the church. There are numerous torches burning around and on the church's steps, where the villagers placed all kinds of food and gifts.

All of them, together, CHANT:

Santo Daniel... Santo Daniel... Santo Daniel...

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

A sole candle illuminates the room. Daniel sits at the table, the kitchen knife in his hand - dripping blood. His fingers are full of blood, as well, and so is the sleeve of his white robe. He's in great pain.

Beside him on the table there's a glass full of yellowish liquid, and a number of empty pill bottles around it.

He's the picture of agony, as he stares at the bloody knife.

INT. THE DAWSONS' LIVING ROOM - (FLASHBACK) DAY

In B&W. MUTE. Joseph, Daniel's father, bursts into the room, wearing a minister outfit.

On the couch lies Daniel's mother, spread eagle on her back, dressed in a white gown. Her knitting rests by her side. She's lifeless.

One of her hands is drooped to the floor, her wrist cut open - blood still dripping from it on the pool of blood underneath it.

Joseph turns his head toward the doorway, where Daniel, 7, stands: his school bag on his back, the lunchbox in his hand. He screams: "MOM...!" - no voice is heard, though.

Instead, we hear a raven's SHRILL CRY.

INT. DANIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

We hear and see the raven, as it lands on the windowsill.

Daniel, seated by the table as before, looks bewildered at the bird.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

(deliriously)

Is that you, Rasputin... coming
back to visit me at last?

The raven turns toward him, his beak dripping blood.

Daniel, horrified, turns his attention to the glass with the yellowish liquid. He contemplates it momentarily, then raises it - his hand shaking terribly - but stops short of his lips.

He hesitates, as he listens to the CHANTING of the crowd outside:

"Santo Daniel... Santo Daniel... Santo Daniel...

EXT. THE VILLAGE - DAWN

On the edge of the misty village, around the rock where Maria sat yesterday, her sheep and goats chew the grass peacefully. But she's not with them.

The boy is there, sitting on the rock, throwing stones around.

EXT. THE VILLAGE - SUNRISE

The early sun drives the mist away from the main plaza. In front of the church only a few of the torches are still burning, but most of the people are still there, praying and chanting.

From the back of the church - as in the beginning - Daniel jumps out of the window and walks away, limping.

DANIEL (V.O.)

I realized that the villagers had declared me a Saint already. So I thought it would be better for them to believe I'd gone to heaven. My destination is hell, though, and the one place I know for sure, where someone is waiting for me with a loaded gun.

He walks down the hill, away from the church and village. The CHANTING continues, as it FADES into the next scene.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR, L.A. - NIGHT

Revelers, in a steady stream, approach the bar on foot. There are no cars around, moving or parking. The place has changed for the better, as if the neighborhood has received a colorful, artistic uplift.

Most of the well-dressed people who enter the bar - women as well as men - are wearing costumes. Among them we can spot a beggar, also, or a street evangelist.

He's approaching the bar barefooted, dressed in dirty and torn sackcloth, with long hair and beard.

DANIEL (V.O.)

After a year of wandering penniless from country to country, and from town to town, mute as a reclusive monk, I finally reached my destination on All Saints' Eve.

The bouncers at the entrance, a woman and a man, stop him momentarily, before they allow him in.

INT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - NIGHT

It is crowded and festive, with traditional Halloween decorations and no artificial light - just plenty of candles and pumpkins burning.

We follow the beggar, who now plays a silver harmonica, as he works his way through the crowd, creating quite a stir. The sea of joyous people parts and lets him through.

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)

When I arrived here dressed in costume, on that fateful New Year's Eve party, everybody thought I was a priest. Now that I am a real priest, though without a church and parish, they all think I'm in costume. So they let me in.

He finds a free chair and a small table in a corner, somewhat away from the main crowd, and sits down there.

On the table there's an empty bottle of Jack Daniel's, with a full glass beside it. He picks up the glass and studies it. He smells it, too.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL (V.O. CONT'D)

I felt Laura's presence all around me, though I haven't seen her yet. I was aware that news reports of what happened at the Peruvian village made headlines even here, in Los Angeles. Come to think of it, she may have left this glass for me.

He takes a sip, then smiles, obviously enjoying the taste - evidenced by the fact that next he drains the glass empty in one long pull.

After that, though, his head drops down on the table.

INT. THE BAR - TIME UNCLEAR

Empty of all celebrants and decorations. Out of a blue door behind the bar Wendy appears. She's dressed in white, bride-like, smiles happily.

Daniel, young and dressed in tuxedo, leaves his empty glass on the counter and moves toward her. He picks her up in his arms and they begin to dance the Waltz, swirling round and round in the center aisle of an empty Church.

When they reach the doors he lifts her up in his arms. He's about to carry her out into the blazing sunshine, when a voice stops him.

LAURA (V.O.)

Party's over, man, time to go home.

He turns around, carrying Wendy in his arms, but to his utmost surprise Laura now stands right there behind an empty pew, naked, holding a crying baby in her arms.

She sticks her tongue out at him, mischievously, as we hear her voice again:

LAURA (V.O. CONT'D)

C'mon you, wake up.

INT. THE BLACK WIDOW BAR - EARLY MORNING

Daniel raises his head slowly from the table and looks up - not sure at all where he is.

(CONTINUED)

Up close for the first time, we notice that his hair and beard are very messy and dirty, and that his lips are cut and swollen. He still wears the silver cross his father gave him.

In front of him stands Laura, dressed - like old times - as a cowgirl. Their eyes meet and dig deeply into each other's for a very long moment.

She has to lean on the table to support herself, when she realizes who he is.

LAURA (CONT'D)
You... at last.

He nods.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I shouldn't be surprised, but I am.
I hope...

She hesitates.

DANIEL
Do what you have to do, Laura. I am
a guilty man.

She considers him a while longer, before turning around and heading for the bar.

The place is empty of people and totally quiet. The lights are on, though a few pumpkins are still burning here and there.

Laura rushes back, carrying her handbag. Inadvertently, she hits a chair and almost falls down. She kicks it out of the way and keeps walking.

She stops in front of Daniel, opens her handbag and draws out the same old handgun she used against him before.

She raises it slowly and aims at him.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Say your prayer, Daniel.

She cocks the gun.

He looks at her straight - the expression of invincibility long gone from his eyes, yet he's not afraid. His lips move soundlessly.

DIANA (O.S.)
Don't shoot, Mom! Are you crazy?

Both Laura and Daniel look toward the bar, from where the sudden SHOUT came from.

Diana stands there in the open door, behind the bar, a dish and a towel in her hands. She puts those down and hurries toward them.

She's 16, similar to Wendy in face and body. She wears a bright, pumpkin-color costume.

DIANA (CONT'D)
Stop it, Mom, he's just a beggar!

She stops beside Laura and stares at Daniel. He holds her stare - perplexed.

Silence hangs in the air for a while as Laura, still aiming the gun at Daniel, moves her eyes from Diana to him. And back again.

Then, ever so slowly, she lowers the gun.

LAURA
He's not a beggar, Diana, he's your father. Your *real* father.

DIANA
My father?!...

LAURA
Yes. Also known as Saint Daniel of L.A. I told you about him.

Though dumbfounded, Diana manages to move closer to him. She puts both hands on the table and leans forward, searching his eyes. She finds in them a new sign of life.

He tries to get up, but he's too weak and falls back on the chair.

DIANA
Surely you can forgive him now, Mom, after all these years?

A long moment. Laura knows she is right.

DIANA (CONT'D)
You promised me you would, remember?

LAURA

Yes, I do. He suffered enough
already.

He looks at Diana, who's beside herself, tears in her eyes.
He turns his eyes to Laura.

DANIEL

I'm tired, Laura. You once asked
me--

LAURA

You're going to live, Daniel, now
that you've met your daughter.

DIANA

Yes father, you have *me* now. And I
have you! Let's all go home.

A hint of a smile appears on his face, as Diana helps him to
his feet. She supports him with one hand around his waist,
and one holding his hand over her shoulder.

They head for the door, as Laura follows them.

DANIEL (V.O.)

For the wages of sin is death, and
I deserve to die. But God came up
with a different resolution in my
case, and condemned me to live.

Laura opens the door for them, allowing golden sunlight to
bathe them as they go out into the sun.

She looks around for the last time, then turns off the
lights and exits, closing the door.

FADE OUT