

ΑΟΙΔΟΙ

Written by

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AOIDOI

FADE IN:

INT. TRUCK VAN BODY - DAY

CLASSICAL MUSIC.

Dust dances through pinhole beams of light. A hot orange glow blankets the cowering riders packed tight like sardines.

BRAKES SQUEAL and **GRIND** the truck to a halt; the overheated passengers lurch, **GROANING** and grasping at one another.

SILENCE; PANICKED WHISPERS RUSTLE THROUGHOUT. COUGHING, HUSHING.

ANNA (30) Hispanic, covers her daughter, **AOIDOI'S (10)** mouth and whispers.

ANNA

Sh-sh, Silencioso ahora pequeño
pájaro cantor, estará bien.

SUB-CAPTION

Sh-sh, Quiet now little song-bird,
it'll be okay.

CLANK, CHUNK, eyes go wide and the group hushes.

A sliver of light breaks the shadows in two as the rear door rises in a **DEAFENING CLATTER. CHILDREN WHIMPER.**

RICCO

Fuera del camión! Date prisa, date
prisa ... fuera, fuera, fuera.

SUB-CAPTION

out of the truck! Hurry, hurry ...
out, out, out.

EXT. TRUCK / MEXICO DESERT - DAY

RICCO (40) is a sweaty, dirty man. A cartel mule who specializes in human trafficking for the drug lords.

He's been wearing the same clothes for weeks.

GUN IN HAND, he scans the passengers as they unload, he is looking for someone in particular.

RICCO

¡Ahí! Ese es el. Agarrarlo, traerlo aquí.

SUB-CAPTION

There! that's him. Grab him. Bring him here!

Men pull **JULIO (30)** from the crowd. An average looking man, Julio is terrified for Anna and Aidoi, his family.

RICCO

Me dicen que estás en este camión y yo digo ¿qué demonios?

SUB-CAPTION

They tell me you're in this truck, and I say, what the fuck?

Ricco slaps Julio with his pistol, knocking him to his knees. Anna and Aidoi scream as blood spatter puffs in the dust.

Julio glances at the women nervously, waving a hand for them to calm.

RICCO

Yo digo no, no, no. No puede estar en ese camión. Está en Los Ángeles con 300 libras. de cocaína Don Marcos. Ahí es donde está Julio.

SUB-CAPTION

I say no-no-no. He can't be in that truck. He's in LA with 300lbs. of Don Marcos cocaine. That's where Julio is.

A man in a suit emerges from a black Suburban and approaches. He is beautifully slick like a serpent with narrow features.

DON MARCOS (50) has the confidence of a pro quarterback with piercing black eyes that could splice a man's soul.

DON MARCOS

Julio ... my friend. I've trusted you with so much and here I find you, doing what? Running? where's my package, Julio?

JULIO

In there, in the truck...
(shaking)
Hidden in the luggage.

DON MARCOS

You have 300 pounds of my cocaine
in there ... in that truck?

(points to other
passengers)

With them. Do they know what you
have in there? What you've taken,
what you run from me with? Do I
have to kill them all because of
your selfish behavior?

JULIO

No-no. Yes-yes ... in there. Yes.
But no. They do not, no one knows
anything. I wasn't running. I was
going to sell it ... for you ...
like you want. You don't have to
kill them, none of them, no,
please.

Don Marcos signals his man to go and check the truck.

Standing quiet as the man climbs into the body ...

BANG! THUNK! SCRAPE! He does not sound like he's being
careful. A few things fly from the back.

The don points to Anna and Aidoi.

DON MARCOS

Do they belong to you.

The tension hanging over them like poisoned razor wire. This
won't turn out well.

Julio shakes his head.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)

Your women, familia ...

He holds his hands over his heart.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)

More precious than gold, yes ...
familia.

Julio is intent, his head shaking like it's on a spring.

JULIO

I don't know them. I am moving them
... for a friend ... for money.

AIDOI

Papa! Papa, I'm scared papa.

JULIO
Quiet girl! Shut up.

The Don smiles and waves one of his man to grab Aidoi.

JULIO (CONT'D)
No, please, not my ... not her.

He cries, Aidoi cries, Anna sobs.

ANNA
No! Please! Please! I'm her mama,
please!

A man yanks at Anna's hair, silencing her.

SCREEE! The man searching the truck drags two heavy bags to the door and gives a thumbs up.

DON MARCOS
Ahhh, good-good-good. You still
have a job. And I'm going to hold
your little princess here until it
is complete.

Julio and Anna break down while the Don takes Aidoi by the arm and drags her to the car. They roar away.

Ricco presses a gun to Julio's head while he and Anna whimper and watch the car race away in a cloud of dust.

JULIO
Let me take the truck. Please.
Leave them here...
(waves at the other
passengers)
I'll deliver it, tomorrow...my
daughter! Please!

Ricco's grin is vile.

RICCO
Tomorrow? They were supposed to be
delivered two tomorrows ago. There
is no more tomorrow.

INT. BLACK SUBURBAN

Aidoi cries with Don M's arm around her like some apathetic grandfather. He watches her cry and feigns concern.

BANG! A GUNSHOT BANG! TWO. The rear window lights up like a lighting storm is exploding behind them.

The girl jumps and the Don tightens his grip, holding her cheek in his palm.

DON MARCOS
No-no-no, it'll be alright. Quiet
now. There-there, now.

END TEASE

FADE IN:

EXT. US CITIZENSHIP OFFICES BUILDING - DAY

ESTABLISHING: SIGN READS - U.S. CITIZENSHIP and IMMIGRATION SERVICES - The building looks like an old boxing club used to operate here and the INS never saw fit to upgrade the place.

SUB-CAPTION: DALLAS, TEXAS 4 YEARS LATER

A line of LATIN AMERICAN DREAMERS extends from the sidewalk in and up the stairs. ICE AGENTS drag some rough looking, gang types through the line.

IT IS BUSY.

INT. US CITIZENSHIP OFFICES BUILDING - DAY

The **ATMOSPHERE** is a **NOISY CHAOTIC** mix of **LATIN AND ENGLISH VOICES, TALKING, CRYING, ARGUING**. Social Service workers deal with migrant families while the ICE GANG deals with the **LATIN GANGS ARCHETYPE**.

DADA (25) Chews at the tattered neck of her U of T (University of Texas) t-shirt. She is reading a form letter from her doctor. **DADA'S A SOCIAL WORKER**.

CONTENTS OF THE NOTE READ:

FLAG - INFERTILE: CAUSE: HYPOTHYROIDISM --- AUTOIMMUNE ---- PITUITARY ----

Her eyes well with tears.

A light skin mulatto, Dada chooses to wear her head bald as a sign of solidarity to her African heritage.

SKEET
(good natured)
Got one for ya, Papa.

Dada discretely wipes a tear away, looking up with a **SUBTLE SNIFFLE**.

ICE Agent, **SKEET (30)** sets a [now] **14 YEAR OLD AOIDOI** in a chair. She is deadpan and silent.

SKEET NOTICES THE LETTER; HIS LOOK IS EMPATHETIC.

DADA SHIELDS IT, EMBARRASED.

DADA

It's, Dada, ass-hol ...

(she looks at the girl and
stops herself)

Officer, Skeet. It's African, means
curly hair.

She runs her hand over her silky smooth scalp. Skeet smiles, bumps Aoidoi on the arm and jokes with her.

SKEET

¿Cómo lo sabríamos con una cúpula
pulida como esa?

SUB-CAPTION

How would we know with a polished
dome like that?

Aoidoi giggles quietly, her eyes downcast.

DADA

What did you just say? What did he
say?

SKEET

Just told her what a beautiful name
you have, Mrs. Dada.

(off Aoidoi)

Te veré más tarde. Bueno.

Aoidoi takes Skeet's hand and he drops his 6'2" Texas frame down and hugs. A cowboy and former Marine, Skeet could have played Butch Cassidy in the remake.

Dada notices their connection; she is soft in her ridicule.

DADA

Didn't know you cowboys took so
much interest in our southern
brothers and sisters.

He whispers something to Aoidoi and she hugs him again.

SKEET

Really ... you know, Dada, as long
as we've worked together.

(beat)

(MORE)

SKEET (CONT'D)
 Just don't believe everything you
 hear, Curly.

He ruffles Aidoi's hair and reaches for Dada's, stopping short.

SKEET (CONT'D)
 Mmm, not going there ...

Dada smiles and shakes her head. Skeet turns to leave

DADA
 Skeet.
 (he stops)
 Sorry, that wasn't fair.

He nods, slapping his hat in his hands.

SKEET
 Dada ... It's a pretty name.

She watches him go and turns to Aidoi who smiles.

DADA
 You have a name sweetheart?

AIDOI
 Aidoi ...

Aidoi's smile fades.

DADA
 Aidoi? That's an interesting one.
 How do you spell ...

She looks over, Aidoi, to the clock which reads, 6:37 ...

DADA (CONT'D)
 Aww-shit. Never get there by 7:00,
 shelter's closed.

She shrugs it off with an easy grin. Aidoi looks cautiously hopeful.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING: Luxury high-rise apartment building.

Dada's beat up car looks like an ally cat at a cat show in this high dollar lot filled with luxury rides.

The car suits her as she wearily climbs out and opens the door for Aidoi whose eyes trace their way up the reflective outer surface.

AIDOI
You live here?

Dada ponders the question and purses her lips.

DADA
Yeah ... kinda. Trying to figure
that out, kiddo.

Aidoi alludes to the mess of clothes in the back seat and raises a brow.

DADA (CONT'D)
I said, kinda.
(grabbing a pile of the
clothes)
Home is where the heart is, right?

AIDOI
I have neither mother nor father
now.

Dada looks stunned at the way she speaks the words.

DADA
What?

AIDOI
The Don, he slew them.

DADA
Slew them? You mean someone,
someone killed your parents? Like
in real life?

AIDOI
My heart would forget this
heaviness.

Amazed at the age in her words, Dada pauses, sadly perplexed.

DADA
Forget, your Parents?

She drops the pile of close and takes Aidoi's shoulders, emotional.

DADA (CONT'D)
You can never forget your parents.
(beat)
(MORE)

DADA (CONT'D)

And where on earth did you learn to talk like that, girl?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

KEYS RATTLE and the door opens to a brilliant white apartment that looks more like a modern art gallery than a home.

Aoidoi looks in numb with Dada's hands resting on her shoulders, urging her in.

DADA

Go on sweetie, it's okay. Go on, I was just kidding, I really do live here.

Aoidoi looks her up and down with skepticism.

AOIDOI

Hmmm. Body or mind?

DADA

Stop doing that. Weird.

A VOICE FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE APARTMENT.

ARYAN (O.S.)

Baby ... that you?

DADA

Yeah, hey.

ARYAN (O.S.)

I glad you're home, I missed you.

Aoidoi smiles at Dada who flushes and winks at her.

ARYAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm starving. Did you bring anything? You're late, I thought you were making dinner.

Dada deflates as Aoidoi's eyes drop away.

DADA

Sorry, dear. It was hectic today.

FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING FORM THE INTERIOR.

DADA (CONT'D)

I didn't have time to grab anything.

ARYAN (O.S.)
 Again, didn't have time be cause
 you're taking care of a bunch of
 dirty ...

Aryan rounds the corner and comes into view.

ARYAN (CONT'D)
 Illegal border jump ...

He stops short, face to face, eyes locked with Aoidoi. He
 stomps away. **YELLS.**

ARYAN (O.S.)(CONT'D)
 And now you're bringing them into
 my home!

DADA
 Our home.

ARYAN (O.S.)
 Seems like everyone's home, now.
 Got a mariachi band on the balcony
 too? A chiquita cooking up a batch
 of masa in the kitchen?

DADA
 Knock it off, Aryan. I'm sorry
 okay! Don't take it out on her,
 she's a kid for Christ's sake.

Dada helps Aoidoi with her bag and coat.

DADA (CONT'D)
 It's all right, don't worry about
 him, he gets stressed. Work. Now,
 let's get you something to eat.

ARYAN (O.S.)
 And make sure you wash her. We
 don't know what they carry ... you
 know, lice, TB, from ...

DADA
 Got it!
 (off Aoidoi)
 Let's get you to the shower. I'll,
 make you something while you're ...
 do you have any clean clothes in
 there? I can wash this stuff.

Aoidoi stares at her in knowing silence.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**RUNNING WATER FROM THE SHOWER.**

Her tattered dress on the floor, Aidoi sits on the toilet in her dirty underwear.

Unzipping her backpack and shuffles through a few odds and ends before pulling a brown paper sack and staring intently at the contents.

She pulls out a crisp, clean folded flower dress and lets it fall open. She loses herself in a dream.

She sets aside and retrieves a folded magazine cover and opens it.

It's an old *Saturday Evening Post* cover (**TITLED: SUNDAY MORNING**) which shows a family headed out for Sunday church.

Her eyes rest on a girl in a dress and drift to the mother who follows her toward the door.

She smiles, puts the dress and cover neatly back in the bag and gets in the shower.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dada is draining spaghetti in the sink and turns to see Aidoi, showered and back in her dirty clothes.

DADA

Oh crap, don't you have anything clean? I'm sorry, I should have ...

AIDOI

It's okay.

Aidoi stares at the floor.

DADA

Okay sweetie. Let's eat. We'll figure something out after dinner, okay?

Aidoi looks at her with a hopeful hint of a smile.

Aryan comes into the kitchen and locks his eyes on Aidoi with disapproval.

ARYAN

I'll take mine in the den.

Dada is methodical and bow string tight as she drops his noodles on a plate, slaps them with sauce and flops his plate on the counter.

DADA

Eat it in the parking lot for all I care.

Their mutual loathing in the moment could melt steel. He leaves the plate and the room..

ARYAN (O.S.)

(loud)

In the morning. Gone.

The women sit quietly nibbling their dinner before Dada slips her hand over Aidoi's and squeezes.

Aidoi looks nostalgically at her hand and a tear forms.

DADA

Let's go out. I'll clean this up later.

(leaning in, whispering)

Let him clean it up.

Aidoi smiles sheepishly.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - NIGHT

The women walk out of the food court sipping on Coke's.

DADA

So what do you like? You a dress chick, or a jeans and T, type?

Aidoi shrugs as they continue passing storefronts.

DADA (CONT'D)

Oh come on, you gotta like something.

Aidoi looks blankly at her.

DADA (CONT'D)

Tell you what. I've been wearing this ...

(runs her hands over her shirt and jeans)

... for three days now, so we'll do this. I pick for you, you pick for me. Coppice?

AOIDOI

Si.

She sniffs her arm pits and giggles. Aidoi laughs.

DADA

Well let's just see what they ...

(pauses, Aidoi isn't next
to her.)

Hey. Stay with me girl, you're not
mine to lose.

Aidoi stands staring through the window of a book store,
eyes locked on a front cover.

Dada puts an arm around her shoulder.

DADA (CONT'D)

You act like you've never seen a
book before?

Aidoi is looking at *The Illiad*. She looks up and nods.

AOIDOI

Babble not a word further.

(chuckles)

I've seen lots of books.

DADA

Hm. You have have you?

AOIDOI

Odysseus said that to Thersites. In
that book.

DADA

Said what? Who?

AOIDOI

Don't babble. I've read a lot of
books.

She grins and walks off with Dada staring curiously after
her.

EXT. IMMIGRATION NATURALIZATION OFFICE - DAY

On the sidewalk of the office, Dada walks, shading Aidoi
from a fight between ICE officers and a red-neck man **JOEL**
(35) in custody.

The shirt on the bearded man reads: **OUR BORDERS - OUR LAND.**
Skeet wrestles him to the ground and cuffs him.

REDNECK

What the fuck man! Skeet, come on
dude! Fuck! You're American ain't
ya? Whose fucking side you on
anyway?

SKEET

Not yours.

Skeet sees Dada and Aidoi watching and grabs the red-neck by
the hair. **NOT TOO HARD, NURTURING-SCOLDING.**

SKEET (CONT'D)

Hey-hey! We have ladies present,
Joel! Calm it down, show some
manners, ya-hear!
(off Aidoi with a smile)
Godess Aidoi: et glorificatus sum
in conspectu tuo.
(off Joel, hair in hand)
Say you're sorry, Joel. Apologize!

Joel looks truly humbled and embarrassed.

JOEL

Sorry. I'm sorry ... ladies.

Aidoi approaches them with a calmness and subtle grace.

AIDOI

Officer Skeet ... gloria mea.

She kneels in front of Joel.

AIDOI (CONT'D)

"Save your great self, fair lord."

JOEL

Say what? Hear that Skeet? Fair
lord. Huh? She knows how it is,
that I ain't like you-all says.

SKEET

She doesn't know you.

AIDOI

You have it in you.

Joel just looks at her stupefied.

AIDOI (CONT'D)

Potential. You plow in the wrong
field.

A calmness blankets the situation.

JOEL
What's your name.

AOIDOI
Aidoi.

JOEL
That ain't Mexican is it? What's it mean?

AOIDOI
Look it up.

Skeet and Dada share a glance before Dada takes Aidoi by the arm.

DADA
(softly)
Come on. You don't want to know him.

AOIDOI
Why?

DADA
(off Skeet)
I think we need to talk.

Skeet smears blood from a scratch across his face and smiles beautifully through the scarlet hue.

SKEET
Let's do lunch?

INT. CAFE - DAY

An old dairy lunch spot on the outskirts of town. No fancy suits, just the people who own and work the local ranches.

Skeet sits across from the unlikely femme fatales, delightedly curious about their choice of clothes. He jests through his BLT.

SKEET
You two dress each other or what?

AOIDOI SMILES - DADA FROWNS: They answer simultaneously.

AOIDOI/DADA
Yes.

Done eating, they get to the point of Dada's curiosity.

AOIDOI

It's Latin.

DADA

Latin?

(eyeing them both)

You're telling me that you two
speak Latin. No one speaks Latin.

AOIDOI

Doctor's do.

SKEET

And Lawyer's.

DADA

Yeah, I know ...

AOIDOI

And pharmacists. And professors ...
who teach Latin.

DADA

I get it, all right. Some people,
very specialized people, speak
Latin. But you two? Do tell.

Skeet looks at Aoidoi and shrugs.

SKEET

Well, for my part I can't tell you
why she does. We haven't had quite
enough time together to figure that
out.

DADA

But you have had enough time to
become old Roman pen-pals, I mean,
come on.

SKEET

Once again, for my part, I
graduated from Rice.

DADA

Okay?

SKEET

Major in environmental analysis,
minor in philosophy, philology,
shit like that.

DADA
And you graduated?

Skeet gives her the stink eye.

DADA (CONT'D)
It's a joke. With all that, why are you doing this? ICE?

SKEET
My thesis was on the environmental impact of immigration, border crossings along the Rio Grande. Kinda fell into place from there.

AOIDOI
You wanted to help?

SKEET
Wanted to see if I could. So what about you?

Aoidoi looks uncertain, fidgeting like there's a skeleton she wants to keep hidden.

DADA
It's okay sweetie, don't be embarrassed because you speak Latin ... NO ONE's embarrassed because they speak Latin. Just tell us, you can say whatever, I mean, we've seen, we've heard a lot.

SKEET
Ain't nothin I ain't heard and nothing to be afraid of. Or ashamed of. I don't judge ... and I've known papa here long ...

DADA
Dada.

SKEET
Enough to know she doesn't either.

AOIDOI
Papa?

DADA
He does that to piss me off.

AOIDOI
But it doesn't. You like it don't you? It's coquettish.

Dada flushes and her eyes hit Skeet and shift.

DADA

Stop that! Now you're embarrassing me.

Aoidoi enjoys the awkwardness of her adult friends.

DADA (CONT'D)

So anyway, enough about that. What's your story? Start with the Latin.

AOIDOI

It doesn't start with the Latin.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The roads lay crossways like a rusty crucifix, the top smoky from the dust of the Don's exiting SUV.

At the tip of the descending arm, the truck and Ricco pointing a gun at Anna.

SLOW MOTION:

POP! She drops in a spray of red; Julio jerks and turns to her. **POP!** He crumbles lifeless atop her dead frame.

Perched above Anna's hand, Julio's drips scarlet finger to finger.

The gunman walks away gesturing at the terrified passengers to off-load the drugs into his car.

AOIDOI (V.O.)

I didn't understand it. Not then. I think I knew what happened but the picture my mind made kept them alive. I didn't try to understand it.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

ESTABLISHING: The sun slips behind a solitary estate in the vacuum of the Mexico desert. The place looks pre Alamo but updated for the tastes of a cartel boss.

The black SUV passes a series of armed guards and stops in front of the fortress-like front doors.

AIDOI (V.O.)
 He brought me to one of his homes.
 He called it his, palacio en el
 abandonado; his, palace in the
 godforsaken ... It was more like a
 mansion.

10 year old Aidoi steps from the car, her face a bicameral
 fix of fascination and fear.

AIDOI (V.O.)
 For me it was a prison.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

Don Marcos leads Aidoi through long, plush halls and into
 larger, more extravagant halls. They stop at a pair of large
 gilded doors.

CLICK-CLACK. The room watches Aidoi's eyes expand as she
 marvels at what will be her prison for the next four years.

Books everywhere; it's a multi walled library with shelves of
 books two stories high.

Renaissance furniture and an alcove fireplace that burns
 bright and hot accentuate the grandeur of the room.

DON MARCOS
 (he pushes Aidoi)
 In! Go!

He pushes her through the door.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)
 This is your home now.

He points to a small door across the room.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)
 El indoro. Food will be brought to
 you.

His eyes sweep over her filthy attire. **HE SNIFFS.**

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)
 And those clothes. Don't sit until
 you are clean.

The doors are impatiently closed, **CLICK-CLACK**, and locked.

DON MARCOS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Do not touch anything until you are
 clean!

Aidoi stares at the gold inlay of the giant doors and a tear
 furrows through the dust of her cheek.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAFE - DAY

Aidoi's face is wooden as she ponders.

AIDOI
 I was not allowed to leave.

SKEET
 For how long?

AIDOI
 More than three years.

Dada is jolted.

DADA
 Three years? You didn't leave the
 room for three years. How old are
 you?

AIDOI
 I'm not sure ... I was allowed to
 use a bathroom ...
 (she smiles)
 It had a shower.

The adults switch a glimpse.

DADA
 A shower ... Jesus.

She shakes her head.

SKEET
 Were you alone? In the room, was
 there anyone else?

AIDOI
 Just me. And the books. Rosa
 brought food, and ... she kept me
 company when she could.

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - DAY

Aidoi rests on a chaise lounge with her arms wrapped about her knees, clean and wearing the fresh clothes of a boy.

CLACK-CLACK, THE DOOR LOCK AGITATES: ROSA (55), enters wearing a maids uniform. She sets a tray of food on a table.

There is a tray of untouched food where she leaves the knew one. She looks concerned.

ROSA
You must eat.

Aidoi is silent, her eyes weighted to a book on the coffee table. (**ILIAD and ODYSSEY**)

Rosa folds some pico into a tortilla and offers it to her.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Please. This isn't good. Eat.
You'll starve and I'll be sad.

She touches Aidoi's cheek and holds the food closer.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Please, just a bite. Please. It
hurts me to see you this way.

Aidoi shift her gaze to Rosa.

AOIDOI
I can't read.

Rosa looks about the room; rows upon rows of books, brilliant colors and old titles, tiny pictures on some, torn and worn spines on others. She smiles at Aidoi.

ROSA
I see, no television here. This is
what we'll do. You eat ... then ...
I'll teach you to read.

AOIDOI
Teach me? To read?
(beat)
How long will I be here?

Rosa shakes her head.

ROSA
Just eat. I'll teach you what I
can. Until ...

Aoidoi takes a small bite and nibbles.

AOIDOI
Until what.

ROSA
I don't know.

Rosa picks up the book and flips through it.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Dada and Skeet sit quietly looking at Aoidoi who nibbles her grilled cheese.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dada stirs old style mac-n-cheese powder into a pot and drops a half stick of butter on top. Aoidoi watches with interest.

DADA
The secret is extra butter. And sometimes I buy three boxes at a time and use half a pack of powder for the other two.

AOIDOI
Is that better? More powder.

DADA
More salt is more like it. Yeah it's better, butter and salt. What could be better?

Dada pinches her waistline and laughs. Aoidoi shrugs and smiles.

DADA (CONT'D)
And here we go. Gotta have milk with this or the salt will pucker you up like a raisin.

They laugh and Aoidoi takes a taste. Her eyes pop and her lips crook.

AOIDOI
Good.

DADA
You like?

AOIDOI

Mmm-hmm.

DADA

Good. My mom used to make it that way. I always wanted to ...

She hesitates.

AOIDOI

To what?

FROM THE HALL THE FRONT DOOR CAN BE HEARD. FOOTSTEPS COME TOWARD THE KITCHEN.

ARYAN (O.S.)

You here? I'm starved. Talib told me about a new Thai place we could try. The pho is supposed to kick ass ...

He rounds the corner and his expression sours.

ARYAN (CONT'D)

Oh. Company. Again.

He nods Dada toward the next room.

Dada enters and Aryan aggressively moves toward her, backing her into a corner.

ARYAN (CONT'D)

(harsh whispering)

WHY--is she here? How many days now, three, ten! I know you could have gotten her into a shelter by now. You could have had her in one the next day!

Dada is intimidated into silence.

ARYAN (CONT'D)

What ever happened to us? We talked about having a child a year ago. Our own, not some system sucking chavo naco. What happened to that?

The slander gives Dada courage and she goes nose to nose.

DADA

(harsh whisper)

Watch your mouth, Aryan!
(MORE)

DADA (CONT'D)

She's been through enough without your racist bullshit pushing her lower than she already is. She'll stay here until I find a good foster home for her. Got it!

ARYAN

THAT-could take months. No way! This is my house! I say, no!

DADA

Your house? Your house? So the dresser in the bedroom, the one filled with my clothes. The frilly little underwear you buy to cover this little brown coochie you like soo much. Just borrowing space huh?

He stares at her knowing he said too much.

DADA (CONT'D)

My toothbrush in that little glass by the sink? I bought the blankets on the bed. Your bed. Do I owe back rent or does my two years of cooking and cleaning and listening to your constant wining and bitching count for something, Massa-Aryan? Can I get a quarters worth of credit for every time I had to hear you call one of my clients a, beaner, or tonk, tacohead. Like that's original. At least come up with your own material.

ARYAN

Your not being fair.

DADA

I'm not being fair? How, Aryan am I not being fair?

ARYAN

I was talking about us.

DADA

Us? I thought you were talking about you! Your home! That I'm a guest and I should just take the girl and kick her into some shitty shelter! Or on the street why not?

ARYAN

She's not our responsibility, Dada!
Ours, us! Not ours! Yes, I was
talking about us. And I notice how
you avoid the whole, **us**, having a
baby issue. What ever happened to
that!

Dada explodes.

DADA

I can't have a baby you fucking
imbecile! I found out Friday! No
babies for me, I don't work down
there!

ARYAN

You what?

DADA

I had tests. I went to my OB-GYN, I
tested.

She falls to the couch and drops her face in her hands
crying.

DADA (CONT'D)

I'm broken, Aryan. I'm fucked. I
can't have a family ...

(beat)

No mac-n-cheese.

She looks up at him, her eyes burning into him.

DADA (CONT'D)

So you're fucked. I can't have your
family. Not with me.

(beat)

Not with you.

He is silent, sucking in her anger and sadness like a
colorless sponge.

SNIFF. They look to see Aoidoi standing in the door, glassy
eyes and dejected.

DADA (CONT'D)

Oh dear. Come on sweetie.

She rushes from the room and Dada follows, Aryan listens.

DADA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's not what you think. We argue
like that all the time.

(MORE)

DADA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We don't mean ... it has nothing to do with you, you're safe here.

Aryan stands in the fury of his own thoughts.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING: A FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, STYLE HOME surrounded by lesser houses in a neighborhood under gentrification.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dada and Aidoi sit across from Mom and Dad.

GORDON (55) fancies himself an enlightened soul, a progressive minded white guy who married a strong black woman when it was borderline acceptable.

GORDON

What'd I tell you, huh? Those Indians, they look down on blacks. Look down on us too ... Americans, in general I mean. We're soo stupid, and lazy. Did I tell you, yeah, I did. It was just a matter of time before his true colors glistened through that brainiac computer coding exterior.

DADA

That's not it dad.

Aidoi looks baffled at Gordon's ranting.

GORDON

Call me Gordon.

DADA

I'm not calling you Gordon, Dad.

GORDON

Why not?

VALERIE (50) rolls her eyes and grins at Aidoi. Dark and glorious, she exudes confidence and tolerance of her husbands innocent prattling.

DADA

Because your not my friend, your my dad ... biology, genes, genetics. You know that stuff? It was you and mom made me ... together.

VALERIE

You do remember that don't you,
dear?

GORDON

But it's cool. It's the thing.

VALERIE

(sarcasm)

All the adoptive parents are doing
it.

Gordon doesn't quite get it.

GORDON

Yeah, and the steps, stepparents
too. It's so hip.

DADA

Hip? Anyway ...

GORDON

Yeah, that kid, Aryan. You see the
way his parents look at us? A white
man and a ...

(whispers)

Negro. Sure, gazing down from their
high Hindu schnozola's they are.
Like they're blood is so pure.
Really gets my goat.

DADA

Dad. He's mad about Aidoi.

(off Aidoi)

No offense, sweetie.

VALERIE

What's he mad at her for?

DADA

I told him she was going to live
with us until we found a suitable
situation for her.

GORDON

What? He's mad about that, her,
what for? She's swell, hardly makes
a peep.

(off Aidoi)

You know you can talk if you want
to. Call me Gordon.

DADA

Don't call him Gordon.

GORDON
 Whatever, Uncle Gordon,
 (off Dada)
 That okay with you, name nazi?

Aoidoi smiles and looks at Valerie with amusement.

VALERIE
 You have a suitable home don't you?

DADA
 Other than Aryan, sure.

GORDON
 (exaggerated)
 To hell with him! That's a great
 idea, why doesn't she just live
 with you?

Dada looks hard at her father, afraid to state the obvious.

Aoidoi looks jolted at Dada.

AOIDOI
 I could live with you? Like a
 family?

Dada's jaw drops open, she is unable to articulate a sentence.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aryan enters his home office where Aoidoi sits on a couch made up as her temporary bed.

He begins to hastily and impatiently unplug and remove his PC.

Aoidoi watches with no discernible emotion.

ARYAN
 I'll just set this up on the dinner
 table. That work for you?

Her look unnerves him.

ARYAN (CONT'D)
 You talk to everyone else. Just
 silence for me huh?

He stops and faces her.

ARYAN (CONT'D)

Nothing? I said I'm moving out of my office here. That's good for you? You okay with that?

AOIDOI

I didn't ask you to.

ARYAN

You didn't ask me to. That's great. Just great. Well where the hell else am I supposed to work?

AOIDOI

Do you work at night?

ARYAN

Have you seen me work at night? No. Because I don't work at night. I work during the day ... Like normal people. Is that okay with you?

AOIDOI

Yes. Why don't you work in here then?

ARYAN

Did they not feed you enough beans when you're a baby? Are you stupid. Because my girlfriend, your saviour, turned this into your bedroom.

AOIDOI

I'm not here during the day.

Aryan's eyes catch fire as her voraciousness slices through his anger.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

And I thought Dada was your fiance.

Leaning against the door frame, Dada surprises Aryan.

DADA

Yeah, me too.

She pivots with a cute pirouette and disappears down the hall.

If only this finger held venom, Aryan thinks, pointing at her, his face scorched with anger.

ARYAN

You need to keep your mouth shut!
If you're going to be in my house--
where I don't want you in the first
place--then you need to keep the
fuck quiet!

(he turns away and
whispers)

Just get the hell out.

SLAM! He's gone; Aoidoi shakes her head and pulls her daypack from beside the couch.

She unzips it like it holds crystal lattice before taking a few ancillary items from it: a brush, toothbrush and a few hotel bathroom items. The paper bag.

She finds the folded magazine cover. She opens it and runs her fingers over the image.

A perfection of family. A girl and her mom. The sun beaming off them, a beautiful shining light on their laughing white smiles.

Her finger stops on the girl; her dress of myriad vivid flowers.

She pulls out the flowered dress and presses her face to it, losing herself in the dream.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The rim of blue sky is torn from the burnt orange desert floor by an expanding CLOUD OF DUST approaching.

RRROARRR! An engine revs high as a custom off-road BRONCO races forward. It finds air hitting rises in the unpaved dirt road and slams down, nearly losing control and skillfully regaining it.

The Bronco is a BORDER CONTROL (ICE) vehicle.

SKEET (O.S.)

WOOHOOO! At's what I'm talkin'
bout!

His voice over the thundering motor, his smile ear to ear.

Fingers secured firmly to the dashboard, Skeet's partner, **KEVIN (KEV) (30)** supports an equally broad smile.

KEVIN

Holy shit dude, that was fuckin' awesome, I knew we're gunna roll it.

(slapping the dash)

Yeah baby! Right the fuck on! Hey!

SKEET SLAMS ON THE BREAKS AND THEY SLIDE SIDEWAYS TO A LINE OF MIGRANT DESERT HIKERS.

The hikers barely flinch at the vehicle skidding toward them and simply watch Skeet and Kevin with indifference as they continue north.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

They could at least act scared.

SKEET

Why? Two of us, thirty of them. We could grab two, three and we'd see them here a week from now.

(beat)

Besides, what are they really doing wrong anyway?

KEVIN

They're crossing the fucking boarder dude. That's what they're doing wrong.

Skeet looks at Kevin with the same indifference as the hikers.

SKEET

There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

KEVIN

What the fuck?

SKEET

Shakepeare ... dude. We're a melting pot. Don't worry about it.

KEVIN

It's our job.

SKEET

Is your girlfriend legal?

Kevin's eyes steel on the horizon.

KEVIN
Just drive.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Aryan is on his bed, Skyping with his parents; middle aged Eastern Indian's who look and act very conservative respective to their heritage.

His mother, **NISHA (55)** oozes with disdain and snobbery.

NISHA
I don't see it, I never did. And here it rears its ugly head. She can't even provide us with grandchildren.

KABIR (60) is cold and deadpan as a snake poised to strike; his words come softly through his forked tongue.

KABIR
Are you ready now, Aryan?

ARYAN
For what ... father?

KABIR
To stop your toying with the mongrel races. Are you ready to let us find you a nice Indian girl, someone who can bear children.

NISHA
Someone who is pure. You can come home and marry. Bring her back and have your family there if you wish.

THE FRONT DOOR IS HEARD OPENING BEHIND ARYAN:

DADA (O.S.)
Hello ... hey, I'm home.

Aryan looks panicked.

ARYAN
I'll talk to you later, she's home.

NISHA
Aryan! We need to ...

He closes the laptop as Dada enters the room.

DADA
 You didn't have to hang up. Was
 that your ...

ARYAN
 Yes. Pleasant as usual.

He shakes his head. Dada understands how tough they are on
 him.

DADA
 Where's Aoidoi?

He shrugs.

ARYAN
 Look in my office?

DADA
 Are you okay?
 (she comes to him)
 Did they say something?

He turns away from her and clicks onto a program.

ARYAN
 I'm fine. They were no worse than
 usual. When is dinner?

Dada backs away, a mix of loathing and concern coming over
 her.

DADA
 However long it takes to get a
 pizza delivered.

Dada opens the door to the office and looks inside to find
 the room empty. "Hmmm."

She walks to the kitchen and finds it empty; the patio deck
 is empty as well.

DADA (CONT'D)
 Aryan! She's not here! Aryan! Where
 is she?

Panicked, she rushes into the bedroom.

DADA (CONT'D)
 Where is she? Aryan ...
 (his eyes are cast down)
 Aryan ... what did you do? Aryan,
 look at me.

His gaze rises feebly like a wounded puppy.

LIVING ROOM: A FEW MINUTES LATER, HE'S EXPLAINED WHAT HE SAID TO AOIDOI.

Dada looks paralytic at what she's heard; her words creep out near silent as a multi-legged creature.

DADA

You told her to leave. She's what, thirteen? A child ... alone. She's a child, Aryan. And you kicked her out of *my* home.

ARYAN

Your home?

DADA

Yes, my home! My home, Aryan! You invited me in! To live with you! As a couple ... your fiance! Married remember! My home! You're god damned right! My home!

(she quiets)

And you kicked her out.

There is a long strained silence.

DADA (CONT'D)

Do you love me.

He stares blankly at anything but her.

DADA (CONT'D)

Aryan. Do you? Do you love me? Have you ever?

His eyes make their way around the room before finding hers. He sucks his lips.

ARYAN

I don't know.

She doesn't say anything, just opening her hands, inviting more.

ARYAN (CONT'D)

No. I guess I don't. No.

DADA

Why?

Aryan ponders overlong, searching for an answer she knows isn't true. He leans in with prayer hands moving up and down with his words.

ARYAN

I think maybe, when we first ...
you're smart and ... full of hope
and ... you want to do things ...

DADA

Cut the shit, Aryan, you already
told me you don't, I don't need the
fucking semantical circulatory
you're always throwing around. Just
say it.

Aryan can't help his arrogance, his smirk is too much.

ARYAN

Semantical what?

DADA

Your bullshit Aryan!

ARYAN

Trying to sound smart doesn't win
arguments.

DADA

Yeah, well, fuck you, does! So,
fuck you, Aryan! Tell me god
dammit! Why? Why did you pretend to
love me? Why? Why!

He is deliberate ... she knows this is the truth.

ARYAN

Because my parents hate you.

She goes pallid.

DADA

Ya-wha ... be--they.
(she gets it now)
Oh, yeah-okay. I get it. Get out of
jail free card. I'm the fucking
file you keep hidden in your bed
frame. But you keep me in plain
sight. I'm a mirror, and I just
reflect back all of the crap they
throw at you.

ARYAN

Something like that, yes.

DADA

You wanted to make babies with me?
A family?

ARYAN

We'd make handsome children.

DADA

And then what? You divorce me? You
take them?

ARYAN

It wouldn't have to come to that.
We could have come to some kind of
agreement.

DADA

Fuck you ya-know. I mean ... fuck
you ... and your Indian perfection.
And your parents. You know what?

ARYAN

No ... what.

DADA

At least I can respect them. They
hated me but they were open about
it. They didn't hide it, they
didn't lie. And you're just one big
ugly lie.

(she thinks)

I want you to leave. I want you out
of here.

ARYAN

What? You want me to leave? Here,
my ...

DADA

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! You shut
your mouth. I'm going to find her.
And I'm bringing her back here. And
when I get back here, with her, I
want you gone.

He stares at her, not sure how to process the moment.

DADA (CONT'D)

Gone, Aryan.

She grabs at her purse, missing and missing again, yanking it
from the table.

DADA (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Then her coat and keys. SLAM! The door closes and Aryan sits, his eyes roaming about the apartment; he begins to cry.

INT. OPEN TOP JEEP - DAY

The same desert road, different day, different company. Skeet is off work and out of uniform.

His personal ride is much more relaxing and time with, The Old Man, is the last thing he wants to hurry.

SKEET

Yesterday we watched 20 plus cross
just up there.

The old man is, **RUSS (80)**, Skeet's gran-dad. The military stiffness suggests a vet, but his Beverly Hill-Billy hair and scruff ride over his former stoicism.

Russ doesn't try to conceal the rhetoric in his question.

RUSS

Just watched em' huh?

SKEET

(knowing grin)
They weren't a thing.

Russ looks inquisitive.

RUSS

How you know?

SKEET

The way they look at you. The opportunists, workers, families ... they look at you like you're just another cactus. It's families, kids. They got nothing to hide and they know we'll let em' go anyway if we don't find anything, so ... They got a look.

RUSS

Thousand mile stare.

SKEET

So to speak.

RUSS

What about the others?

SKEET

Bangers-n-mules. First of all they try not to be seen, but ... mules get nervous, bangers get mean. Doesn't mean some get through with the good guys, they do. Not the worst of em'.

SKEET'S FACE FREEZES AND HE GRIPS HARD AT THE WHEEL!

SKEET (CONT'D)

Well son--of--a--bitch, will you look at that.

EXT. JEEP - DAY

A Hispanic girl (Aoidoi) runs across the road and into the brush as the men stare like a bigfoot crossed their path.

Skeet jumps from the car and runs after her.

SKEET

Hey! Hey! Come back here! What the hell are you doing ..?

He runs after the child, disappearing into the brush.

Russ stands next to the Jeep watching and waiting. After a few minutes Skeet returns shaking his head.

RUSS

Why all the fuss? You see a million of em running around out here don't you?

SKEET

Not like that one I don't.

RUSS

Yeah, what's so different about that one?

Skeet's eyes are pointed.

SKEET

That kid is a girl who's supposed to be living with a friend of mine. Aoidoi ... Aenigma est involuta mysterii illius.

Russ looks puzzled and not because he doesn't understand.

RUSS

Pretty deep. What makes her such a mystery?

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - NIGHT

Young Aoidoi reclines on a chaise lounge reading Illiad. Books surround her, opened, unopened, stacked on the floor.

SUBCAPTION: 3 YEARS AGO

SHE READS ALOUD IN ANIMATED TONES: ACTING, CHANGING PARTS, ANSWERING HERSELF.

AOIDOI

(as Agamemnon)

For I would have the people live,
not die; but you must find me a
prize instead, or I alone among the
Argives shall be without one. This
is not well; for you behold, all of
you, that my prize is to go
elsewhere.

Don Marcos slips quietly through the door and observes with great interest ... the pride of a hollow father.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

(as Achilles)

Most noble son of Atreus, covetous
beyond all mankind, how shall the
Achaeans find you another prize? We
have no common store from which to
take one. Those we took from the
cities have been awarded; we cannot
...

Sensing him, she stops and turns with deliberate disinterest.

DON MARCOS

Please, don't stop, you are ... you
are making the moment. I'm taken
in, enthralled.

AOIDOI

For now maybe.

(she thinks)

Am I common store? Will I be taken
and awarded?

He is light and serpentine with his conversation.

DON MARCOS

I know the story young lady. And I will not be outwitted by you.

(he slithers closer)

And no. you not be bartered to a lecherous associate who craves such things as untouched youth.

AOIDOI

No? So you are only steeped in insolence that is not of lust for love. You lust for gain? Am I here for your heart? If not, I am thankful. What then? And I know my parents are dead; do you lust to be my father?

DON MARCOS

You are clever. You know your book.

She takes in the book lined walls of the room.

AOIDOI

I know them all by now. Do you know how long I've been under your wing?

(beat)

Father.

He takes the book from her and flips through the section she has been portraying. His finger rests on a passage and he looks over the book to her.

DON MARCOS

Fly if you will, I shall make you no prayers to stay you.

(menacing)

Or to keep you alive.

He slams closed the book and hands it to her. His back to her.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)

There is, *no one*, here so hateful to me as you are.

(he grows hard)

There's 50 miles of dirt in every direction. The door's open, see how far you go.

Closing the door on his way out, he pauses and smiles before leaving it open.

HIS FEET PATTERN DOWN THE HALL.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Exhausted, Aidoi drops to her knees, her head hanging limp under her slick black hair. She takes a water bottle from the pack and drinks.

She rifles through the pack to check her ample supply of water bottles.

She begins gathering sticks --- a short time later she has a fire going and a can of food nestled close to it.

She crushes the liquid from a cactus into a plastic bowl and rubs it on her burnt face.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

She rests a stick on end in the fire and lets it drop, the flicker of sparks reflecting off the glossy void of her eyes.

Rifling through her pack she draws out a doll, she pets it and smiles. Then the flower dress, she smells and hugs it.

Last, she finds the magazine cover, staring at the girl, the mother. She brushes a melancholy finger over the image as sadness masks her face.

LATER:

Laying back with her focus on the stars, Aidoi recites an old poem in beautiful musical tones (like an Aidoi of old).

AIDOI

I shall succumb, destroyed by
myself. I who am two, what I could
be and what I am. And in the end
one will annihilate the other ...

(she becomes animated)

The *would-be* is like a prancing
steed ... I am fettered to his
tail, is like a wheel to which *I am*
bound, is like fury whose fingers
twine into a victim's hair ...

(dark and cold)

Is like a vampire that sits upon
his heart and sucks ... and sucks.

A SOUND STIRS IN THE BRUSH. She rolls her head and finds a pair of **DIRTY COWBOY BOOTS** next to her.

AN OLD VOICE, SLOW AND INTENTIONAL.

GILL (O.S.)
I know that one.

GILL (65) is a Native American man who looks like he's lived in the desert the whole of his life.

His gaze is calculated as Aoidoi's vision climbs the length of his dusty torso and finds him staring down on her.

AOIDOI
No, you don't. I don't think so.

GILL
You say that easy-like.

Their connection holds quietly.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

AMBIANCE: SINGING CRICKETS AND A CRACKLING HEARTH SET THE MOOD.

ESTABLISHING: Gill's home is ramshackle, made up of desert finds and Native American craft covering the shell of what used to be a mining cabin.

Firelight glows through cracks in the walls and beams from the open windows.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUED

Aoidoi sits across a small table from Gill. The fire in an open wood stove is tended by his wife, **SUNDAY (50)**. **A BOY AND GIRL (5 and 6)** sit crossways at the table listening quietly.

AOIDOI
You have no books here. How could you know it? The poem ... it's German, a German man wrote it long ago.

Gill closes his eyes and nods with a soothing grin.

GILL
(eyes closed)
I didn't say I read the words ...
(points to his head)
(MORE)

GILL (CONT'D)

I know the message. It has been in me too.

AOIDOI

How?

She looks at the wife and kids who watch her with interest.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

Why?

GILL

Look at me ... where I live. Not easy out here. No. I've hated my life ... myself too. That was before I understood.

AOIDOI

But *you* have a family.

GILL

Wasn't always that way. Things turn themselves right sometimes. You have to let them, help them even.

AOIDOI

I don't have a family anymore.

Gill leans on his tabled elbows and swivels a wrist, pointing.

GILL

See that window ...
 (she nods)
 The sun shines through there in the morning. And that one ...
 (his wrist swivels
 opposite)
 Sun comes to us in the evening there. But we have to keep the shutters open.

She looks at him and drops her eyes with understanding.

AOIDOI

Before you understood; I understand metaphors.

GILL

That's good ...

He taps his finger lightly on her nose.

GILL (CONT'D)

That means it's not too late for
you ... find your own family, yeh.

A LIGHT KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

Gill turns.

GILL (CONT'D)

Come in, she's here.

Aidoi's face brightens though she tries to hide her
excitement.

Skeet enters and kneels at her side.

SKEET

Hey girl. Got some people worried
sick about you.

EXT. GILL'S HOME - NIGHT

Gill and Skeet sit near a campfire and talk about Aidoi
while she wanders loose under the stars, **HUMMING**, relieved
and happy.

GILL

She's looking for love you know;
sees it up there ...
(pointing to the stars)
But not here.
(his heart)
She's smart you know.

SKEET

Yeah. Crazy smart ... emotionally
...

GILL

Naw-she ain't dead that way, just
hiding.
(he pauses)
I mean smart like one of them
savant types. Remembers all the
words in the books. Remembers the
bad things too.

SKEET

Mmm-hmmm.

GILL

So what are you going to do with
her?

SKEET

I don't know. She's been living
with Dada, she's a case work ...

GILL

I know who she is; Dada, Papa,
Daddy ... got a thing for her don't
you?

SKEET

I really talk about her that much?

Gill smiles and rolls his eyes.

SKEET (CONT'D)

She's getting married, I thought
they might end up, I don't know,
maybe they'd take her in, adopt
her.

GILL

What about you?

Their eyes connect on a fugue of sad, retired notes.

GILL (CONT'D)

You're a good dad Skeet. You were
made for it, and that girl there,
she needs new things to remember,
good things.

Skeet finds his face in his hands, rubbing away the past. He
looks at Aidoi humming and drifting a light dance under the
night sky.

SKEET

I don't know, Gill. I don't. I
don't think I could ... not again.

FLASHBACK:

SOUND UNDER: THE FIRE CRACKLING AND AIDOI HUMMING.

Skeet and his six year old daughter carve funny Halloween
faces into pumpkins in an average looking kitchen.

His wife pulls tray of roasted seeds from the **OVEN** and flicks
a hot one into Skeet's hands with a spatula.

He juggles it back and forth before popping it into his mouth
and making a nutty expression.

His daughter turns to mom for one of her own while they all
laugh.

END FLASHBACK:

Skeet watches Aidoi through his fingers.

GILL

Hate to see a man beat himself up
this way ... for things, ya know
...

Skeet raises a heavy eye to him, distraught, silently
wishing for words of forgiveness.

GILL (CONT'D)

I know. I know, yea. I'm gunna say
it anyway. Like I always do.

Skeet breaks down. Gill welcomes his tears.

GILL (CONT'D)

Nothing you could have done, son.
Wasn't your fault.

Seeing his meltdown, Aidoi runs to Skeet and throws her arms
around him.

AIDOI

What happened? Why are you upset?
Is it me? Did I ...

He sucks her in tight, crying hard.

SKEET

No. No. No, not you. Not you.

He holds her shoulders and tries to assure her.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Aidoi, no. You couldn't upset me.
(subtle sarcasm)
Not unless you run away again-you
couldn't.

He looks at her and wipes the tears away, mimicking a laugh.

SKEET (CONT'D)

It's me, I ... I just thought of
something. When I was young.
Something that makes me sad.

AIDOI

What? Mr. Skeet, what happened to
make you sad?

His smile is genuine, her concern touches him.

SKEET

I lost my family too.

He struggles to contain himself and she holds him.

AOIDOI

I'm here.

Taking her by the shoulders, he really sees her; deeply moved he nods and pulls her back in.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

At her parents house, Dada reflects sadly on recent events.

DADA

Here?

VALERIE

Yes, Dear, you know our door is
always open for you.

GORDON

I told your Mom, didn't I tell you
... that guy's no good and she'll
be back. Didn't I?

Valerie nods and rolls her eyes.

GORDON (CONT'D)

That we needed to leave your room
just the way it was, so when he did
this, became the dick-head I always
knew he was ...

(nods to Valerie who
smiles)

Well, you'd have a place.

DADA

I kicked him out, Dad, I have the
apartment.

GORDON

You? What would you want to live
there for?

VALERIE

It was his place anyway wasn't it?

Dada explodes.

DADA

We were going to be married! He
invited me in!

(she cries)

He said it would be my home.

They comfort her.

VALERIE

Okay, okay. We'll just take a step
at a time. You have the apartment,
that's good.

GORDON

But you can't afford that place.
Not with what they pay you.

DADA

Thanks dad.

GORDON

I'm just being pragmatic, I mean,
you're not married, he doesn't have
to pay for anything. You don't have
kids.

Dada collapses into Valerie's arms crying and Valerie gives
Gordon a hard look. He shrugs obliviously.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Speaking of ... what-ever happened
to the girl?

VALERIE

Aoidoi.

Valerie takes Dada's face in her hands.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

You can bring her too, dear. We
have the room.

She looks past Dada, signaling Gordon to say something.

GORDON

Sure, yeah. That'd be great. It'd
be nice to have some youth around
here for a change.

Dada looks at him like, *what?*

GORDON (CONT'D)

I'm not saying you're old. That's
nuts.

(MORE)

GORDON (CONT'D)

I'm just saying a kid, that's all.
I'm a good guy here alright. I just
want my little girl to be happy. So
bring your friend, we're here.

Dada grabs onto him and lets herself go. Valerie and Gordon
look at one another like victorious parents.

INT. MANSION - DAY

MONTAGE:

From an ornate volume, Aoidoi reads aloud in soft French
tones as she walks the sun drenched halls of the luxurious
mansion.

AOIDOI

Toute la sagesse humaine est
contenue dans ces deux mots - Wait
and Hope.

SUBTITLE:

All human wisdom is contained in
these two words - Wait and Hope.

She perches on a sun chair and cocks her head in wonder at
what is most likely an original renaissance painting.

Approaching it, she runs her fingers over the relief brush
strokes in the paint.

LATER:

Alone; she watches the sun drop behind the western hills and
lights candles along the hall and into the kitchen.

She slices crusty bread and sets out butter and jam, cheese
and fruit.

Opening an old book and reading softly to herself as she
eats, the story makes her sad before she finds laughter and
sighs.

Contentment and solitude surround her.

Low burning candles watch over her asleep with her head on
the book on the kitchen table.

SUNRISE:

OUTSIDE: THE VOICES OF NUMEROUS MEN BEGIN AT ONCE.

Aidoi's eyes flicker to life and she raises her sleepy head, listening, unconcerned.

THE VOICES BECOME LOUD AND AGGRESSIVE.

Her attention peaked, she cautiously moves to a window, then another, tiptoeing into the hall toward the sound; playing more than anything.

A MAN IS HEARD PLEADING:

MAN (O.S.)
no, no, por favor ... no lo hice
... ino fui yo! Por favor, por
favor, Don Marcos, por favor ...

Aidoi slides an eye around a window casing and sees the man on his knees pleading with Don Marcos. Armed men surround them.

Don Marcos kneels in front the man and she can make out that he speaks calmly to him.

The man cries, drops his head and prays.

Aidoi's face moves full frame in the window, curious and nervous, but not yet afraid.

The Don stands and offers the man a hand up. He hugs him and the man cries on his shoulder, relieved. Don Marcos pats his back and reassures him.

Aidoi's eyes soften.

The Don turns around and speaks to one of his men who hands him a .45 Cal.

Aidoi squints.

Don Marcos turns, loose and quick, **BANG!** He shoots the man in the face. Blood sprays and he folds onto himself like a wet suit.

The color in Aidoi's face drops and she swoons, her jaw losing the strength to hold itself closed.

Her head drops forward **HITTING THE GLASS** with a **THUNK!**

SLOW MOTION: THE MEN ALL SWING THEIR WEAPONS TOWARD THE HOUSE AND SEE HER FACE FROZEN IN THE WINDOW.

DON MARCOS LOOKS DIRECTLY AT HER AND HANDS THE GUN OFF TO HIS MAN.

HE CHUCKLES AT HER OFFERING RECALCITRANT SHRUG.

Pointing to the man, he orders his soldiers to dispose of him. They drag him away by the feet.

In shock, Aidoi backs from the glass and runs to the library and locking the door, hides behind the couch.

Pallid and thin faced, she wraps her arms about her knees, shaking and crying.

No one comes for her, just the caring eyes of the books to quicken her away.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Her head resting on the pink pillow of a child, Aidoi's eyes flitter to life.

Unsure of where she is, she lay still, touching the softness of the bed while her gaze roams over the surroundings, finally resting on a framed picture.

THE PICTURE IS OF SKEET AND HIS WIFE AND SIX YEAR OLD DAUGHTER.

THE ROOM IS PERFECT, UNUSED ... UNCHANGED.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Skeet sits at the table with a book and cup of coffee. There is an extra place setting across from him with a box of kids cereal set out.

Aidoi peeks around the corner.

AIDOI

Hi.

Skeet closes his book and smiles.

SKEET

Hey, good morning. Have a seat. I bought some cereal.

She comes in and looks at the box.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Or I can make you something. Eggs,
toast ... I'm pretty great with
pancakes.

AOIDOI

What does your daughter like?

Caught off guard, Skeet takes a deep breath and holds it in.

SKEET

Ahm. Skyler, that was her name. And
Lindsay.

(deep sigh)

She. Skyler. She liked waffles.

AOIDOI

I'm sorry.

He struggles to keep it together.

SKEET

No, it's okay. It's been, a long
time now. I just a, try not to
think about it much.

She approaches him and places a soft hand on his shoulder.
They come together and she holds him.

She whispers in his ear.

AOIDOI

Your wife too?

He nods and snuffles against her shoulder.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Will you make *me* waffles?

He laughs through his tears, relieved.

SKEET

Yes, sure. I'd, love to make you
waffles. I think I want one too.

Her smile is vibrant. Skeet looks at her like he's found a
treasure chest.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Dada-Aryan: She comes home alone and he looks at her
expectantly sarcastic.

ARYAN

You're alone ... I thought you'd have a dog or cat or something.

DADA

Fuck you, Aryan.

She leaves the room.

He looks bemused and shrugs it off.

ARYAN

Jeez, soo sensitive.

She comes back in with a packed bag.

DADA

Yeah I'm sensitive. And you. You're a cold son-of-a-bitch.

ARYAN

Are you leaving? Where are you going?

DADA

Like you give-a-shit.

ARYAN

Well, ca-I-uh ... I ... do.

DADA

No, you ca-I-uh ... do shit, and yeah. I'm going to find her, and when I do, I'll be back. To pack.

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - DAY

THE LOCK ON THE DOOR AGITATES:

THE DON IS HEARD MUTTERING WHILE KEYS JINGLE AND ENGAGE THE LOCK:

DON MARCOS (O.S.)

que en nombre de dios.

He enters and looks to see the room empty. Looking about he notices a bundle behind the chaise.

Aidoi hides under a blanket.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)

Come, please. Come out ... I will not hurt you.

She remains still.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)
I know you're under there, I can
see your foot.

She doesn't move and his words come neatly ordered,
practiced.

DON MARCOS (CONT'D)
You think I'm a bad man, this is
not true. What you saw. It is not
what you think it was.

HER WORDS COME FROM UNDER THE BLANKET:

AOIDOI
I think you murdered a man and
laughed.

His head tilts, surprised by her candor.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)
That's what I think it was.

DON MARCOS
But you don't know the reason.

She lowers the blanket revealing her eyes.

AOIDOI
Would you tell me it was justice?

DON MARCOS
If I did?

She drops the blanket and speaks in sticky tones.

AOIDOI
I know what resides in your heart.
Lust, vengeance ... your soul is
not pure enough to perform justice.

He stares at her with awe.

DON MARCOS
How do you speak such words? You
speak like a ghost.

Her eyes float upward along the wall of books. He looks
around the room and sees open and piled books everywhere.

AOIDOI
Ghosts of the past.

DON MARCOS

You've read these? All of this time, this is what you have done.

AOIDOI

Will you kill me now?

He stands, looking down on her like a giant oak.

DON MARCOS

I can't promise you that. Such intelligence, a gift. Things like this come from our father ... who am I to erase this.

AOIDOI

Who are you to erase anything?

His eyes angle and his lips disappear. He spins and slams the door on his way out.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - DAY

Dada sits on a street-corner bench in a downtrodden Dallas suburb where immigrants seek work.

Her knees to her chest, she stares at passing cars as day laborers peacock for jobs to men in small box trucks, pickups and flatbeds.

She spies the long hair of a young girl amongst the workers and is momentarily excited then disappointed to see it is not Aoidoi. She sulks and lets her eyes wander the busy marketplace of human trafficking.

An old pickup with a pair red-necks pulls to the curb and a sleazy looking farm guy hangs from the window.

FARM GUY

You lookin' for work sweetheart? We gotta a couple hogs need milkin.

She stares cold at the guy; a mantis ready to strike; she unhinges a finger and flips him off.

He laughs and looks back to his buddy before turning cold, his voice menacing.

FARM GUY (CONT'D)

Ever heard of forced labor, bitch?

She looks disgustingly humored.

DADA

Yeah, I've also heard of the,
**Trafficking Victim's Protection
 Act.** A federal law passed to
 protect people like these from
 mother-fuckers like you. Wanna
 trade twenty years for a couple of
 bruises.

He climbs from the truck.

FARM GUY

Ain't nobody payin attention down
 here.

A crowd of migrant farm workers begin to form behind Dada and
 a proverbial 'Mexican stand-off' ensues.

Dada looks over her shoulder and recognizes a few of the
 workers.

DADA

Hola, Julio ... Mary-Ann, ves a
 estos imbéciles, se follan a las
 cabras. no quieres trabajar para
 ellos.

She pokes a finger through an okay hole, mimicking fucking
 and they all laugh. She laughs. The farmer doesn't.

His buddy gets out and they stare down the workers. The
 workers begin to back away and cower like they have
 experience with these guys.

FARM GUY

Fuckin comedian huh?

Dada tries to hide her nervousness with gritty humor.

DADA

Decided a piece of black pussy's
 worth a black bunk mate have you?

His grin is wry and unconcerned.

HONK! HONK! An I.C.E. Blazer pulls up behind the farm truck
 and Skeet steps out.

The farmers share glances and step back.

SKEET

Been looking everywhere for you.
 Shoulda guessed you'd be here.

DADA
Apparently you did.

Skeet addresses the farmers; men known to him.

SKEET
How you doin' Jesse? Troy?

Their eyes skip off Dada, wondering what she'll say or do.

FARM GUY
Good, Skeet. You?

SKEET
Great. Now that I found her.
(off Dada)
My boy's here helping you look for
her?

She grins at the men, knowing she holds the power. They feel it too.

DADA
Yeah ... they were going to help.
(hard at them)
Whether I wanted it or not.

Skeet looks puzzled as the men get in their truck.

FARM GUY
See ya, Skeet ... Ma'am.

She gives them the double fisted fingers as they drive off. Skeet approaches.

SKEET
What was that all about?

DADA
Nothing. I guess they think black
laborers are lazy.

SKEET
Whattt?

He waves to the truck.

SKEET (CONT'D)
Looky what I found.

Aoidoi's face comes up from a nap and her smile is sweet surprise.

There is no hesitation as Dada rushes to the truck, giving Aidoi the hug of her life.

DADA

Oh girl, where did you run off to?
I was soo worried.

Aidoi is overwhelmed by Dada's reaction. She begins to cry.

AIDOI

I'm sorry ... I'm okay.

Dada watches skeet brim with pleasure at the sight. She mouths:

DADA

(silent)
Thank you.

He smiles and lightly strokes Dada's cheek with a finger.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

ARYAN SKYPE'S WITH HIS PARENTS who are glad things are falling apart between he and Dada. He's not liking how pushy they are.

KABIR

Move out! You? This is crazy! Crazy
I say! You don't move out! She
moves out! You make the money.
You're an engineer. You get a hold
of yourself! Act like a man!

Nisha caresses Kabir and '**SHUSHES**' him.

NISHA

Kabir, enough. Enough. Let him
speak.

Aryan is works to restrain himself.

ARYAN

I am acting like a man, father. I'm
being respectful ... for the time
being.

KABIR

What, a man moves out of his house?

NISHA

Kabir!

ARYAN

I haven't moved anywhere, I'm just telling you what was said, if you'd listen. You never listen! When she left again, this last time, she said she'd be back to pack and leave, herself, she'd leave.

(they all quiet down)

But I don't think that's right. Her, leaving.

NISHA

Aryan!

KABIR

I listen. I've listened too much. To both of you. Now look, you're in America and losing your home to a ...

ARYAN

To what! What father! A mongrel, a half breed ... a nig ...

NISHA

Stop! Aryan! Don't you say it! This is enough. Both of you!

The men are silent, eyes assaulting one another through the computer screens.

Aryan composes himself and leans forward.

ARYAN

Maybe I was wrong about her. I think maybe. Maybe I do love her. Goodbye mother.

The screen goes blank as Kabir begins a tirade.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dada admires the old fashion humility of Skeet's kitchen; country touches that contrast everything she's used to.

DADA

It's comfortable ... nice.

Skeet looks up from a bowl he's mixing something in.

SKEET

What's that?

DADA

This place, your kitchen, it's like
a Norman Rockwell painting.
Remember those.

He laughs and opens a wood chest near the wall. Dropping a pile of old *Saturday Evening Posts* on the table he laughs.

SKEET

Are you kidding me. My Mom had them
all, she framed some. Poke around
the house and you'll see a few here
and there.

Aidoi looks through them and pauses with gaping eyes. **THE COVER--HER COVER.**

She looks up to Skeet like she's seen a ghost. **CASPER THE FRIENDLY GHOST--HER SMILE GLOWS.**

SKEET (CONT'D)

What's got you all riled up, girl.

Dada looks at her with surprise.

DADA

Wow! What is it, sweetheart.

Aidoi shakes her head, beaming, her hand caressing the cover.

AIDOI

Nothing. I'm just hungry, that
smells good, I like peppers.

Dada takes the magazine and looks at it approvingly.

DADA

Looks like your kitchen, Skeet.
Just missing the family.

Skeet's head drops and he goes back to the making the sandwich's.

AIDOI

This feels like a family.

Skeet sets a plate of corner cut sandwiches on the table and sits.

SKEET

Here we go. Just like mama used to
make.

Aidoi takes a slice and shovels it with glee; her expression speaks wonders which makes Skeet happy.

DADA

What is it?

SKEET

Cheddar and green pepper, mixed with a little mayo. Mom made em, I love em.

AOIDOI

Me too.

DADA

Hm. Ancient family recipe. I'm honored.

Skeet mumbles cautiously.

SKEET

You're kinda like family.

He smiles and Aidoi grabs his hand.

AOIDOI

Family.

Dada and Skeet share glances and grins before Dada asks.

DADA

So, Aidoi, I've been meaning to ask, I mean, with you and Skeeter-bug there doing all this Latin speak ...

SKEET

Skeeter-bug?

Aidoi laughs. Dada grins.

DADA

I looked it up, your name ...
Aidoi. How did your parents come up with that?

Aidoi becomes shy.

AOIDOI

They didn't, I did.

Skeet smiles knowingly.

DADA

Do tell.

AOIDOI

The Don, The things that happened there. I guess ... I lost touch of what had been done to me, so, I made a choice, and ... I chose to see what I had left to become.

SKEET

I'm not sure I ...

AOIDOI

Sorry. I read, a lot. And I learned, about the past mostly, old books, most of them.

She takes the hands of the adults and becomes serious.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

I fell in love.

DADA

Fell in love? With ...

AOIDOI

With the idea that I could become a song. Whatever that means. The Aoidoi gave song to verse and, to my life. Good or bad ... bad usually, it's a verse, I am a song ... and I want to make myself into music.

Skeet and Dada both have tears in their eyes.

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - DAY

A LIGHT WRAPPING ON THE DOOR: Aoidoi leaves the old magazine on the couch--**HER PICTURE** torn off and lying atop it--and scampers off to hide.

Rosa gently opens the door and peeks inside.

ROSA

Hello? Where are you hiding now?

She enters the room with a tray that carries lunch.

ROSA (CONT'D)

I brought you something to eat. You need to eat, it's been days and you've hardly had a morsel.

She can see Aidoi's feet poking out from behind a chair.

ROSA (CONT'D)

He's gone. Left this morning for Brazil. Then Europe I think.

She looks behind the chair to see Aidoi looking up at her, hopefully. She stammers.

AIDOI

How-l-long ... will, he be away?

She sets down the tray and offers a hand up.

ROSA

Come out, I made something for us both. We will be alone here for some time now. We should get to know one another.

LATER:

Bellies full, Rosa now holds **THE PICTURE**, taking in the meaning.

ROSA

You miss them, your family?

Aidoi nods solemnly.

AIDOI

He killed them.
(their eyes lock)
Did you know?

Rosa purses her lips and closes her eyes hard.

ROSA

Did I know? No. Did I know? I knew as much.

él es el diablo en un viento de fuego. quema todo lo que toca.

SUBCAPTION:

He is the devil on a wind of fire.
Burning all he touches.

She takes Aidoi's hands.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Did I know. Yes, he is inevitable.

AIDOI
Why do you stay here?

ROSA
Why do you?

AIDOI
I have no choi ...

Rosa smiles at her.

ROSA
You see, inevitable.
(she looks at the picture)
Is this what you would like? Your
mother, a nice home, nice clothes.
Open doors and sunlight.

Aidoi can see the dream, Rosa sees it in her.

AIDOI
Like a family.

Rosa focuses on the mother and daughter's dresses. She smiles and kisses Aidoi on the forehead.

ROSA
Aidoi.

Aidoi connects to her serious tone.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Don't let him run your wishes away.

INT. BISTRO - DAY

Dada sits across from Aryan with an incredulous look on her face. He has some fancy looking croissant and coffee, she has nothing.

ARYAN
I know, I said some awful things.
It was a very poor choice of words.

DADA
Poor choice of words? You impaled
me with that forked fucking tongue
of yours, Aryan.

ARYAN

I know, I know, I'm sorry. I'm trying to tell you how sorry I am.

DADA

What you did, Aryan, it wasn't some **awful thing**, or some, **poor choice of words**. And it wasn't just me ... Aoidoi; you hurt her, you scared her. She's just a little girl, Aryan.

He pushes his plate away in a faux display of remorse.

ARYAN

I know. It makes me sick to my stomach. I can't even eat.

He drops a napkin over his pastry and sips his coffee. She rolls her eyes.

DADA

Give me a break. Sincerity and remorse aren't in your DNA. If you've got something to say to me, I'm right here ... speak.

He looks dumbstruck, unsure how to move this forward.

DADA (CONT'D)

Or forever hold your peace, I don't give a crap, just cut the shit.

(he hesitates)

Look, I'm not going after your money, your home. I wouldn't do that to you, you should know that. I'm not that kind of person.

ARYAN

No, no, no, no. That's not what I think. That's not why I wanted to talk. Ahhh, it's ah. I needed to tell you ...

DADA

What!

ARYAN

I love you.

Her grinding eyes soften and she drops back in her seat.

DADA

You say, What?

ARYAN

I fucked up, I know it and I'm
sorry. My parents, you know how
they are ...

DADA

Yeah, if you're talking about the
part about marrying me because they
hate me ... that made a real
impression.

ARYAN

That was bad, horrible, I know. But
it's not true. I was just lashing
out, you know me, Dada. It's
stress, I get stressed, I'm a shit.

DADA

You are.

ARYAN

Dada ... I love you. I love you.
(he takes her hands)
I love you. Give me another chance.

She breaths in his words, unsure.

DADA

What about Aidoi.

His stupid expression is one of surrender. Is that a shrug?
She isn't sure.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

DING-DONG! Skeet looks up from the TV where he and Aidoi
watch a show.

SKEET

You expecting company, cause I'm
not?

She chuckles at him.

His face lights when he sees his visitor. The golden morning
light gleams ochre off Dada's clean shaven scalp, her eyes
and smile are all he sees.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Papa, wow. You surprised me, I
wasn't expectin ...

DADA

I should have called, I'm sorry. I just, um ... she's here, right?

SKEET

Yeah, I set up the spare room ...
(he hesitates)
Didn't really set it up, it was, you know ... my ...

DADA

Your daughter's. I'm sorry.

SKEET

No, don't be, that was a long time ago. I gotta, you know. Move past things, get on with my life. That's what they say, right.

DADA

That's what they say. It's okay Skeet, it's hard, I get it. Kind of.

He thinks and stares. She waits.

SKEET

I'm sorry, jeez, come in. Aoidoi, guess who's here. Come on.

She doesn't move.

SKEET (CONT'D)

What, I don't have cooties.

She laughs.

DADA

I know, it's not that.

SKEET

What is it then? What's wrong.

DADA

It's Aryan. We're working through some things and ... he say's he's sorry, he loves me ...

She looks insincere while Skeet is clearly disappointed and trying to put on a good face.

SKEET

That's great, ummm, I mean, good. You came here to tell me that?

(MORE)

SKEET (CONT'D)

It's really not my business if you
... whatever, it's ... not my
business.

DADA

It sounds wrong doesn't it? I know
... But ...

(beat)

Aoidoi ...

He shrugs ???

DADA (CONT'D)

I came to get her. To bring her
home.

SKEET

Home? You mean with you, and Aryan.
Home?

DADA

Yes, with me, home. And Aryan. It's
our home and ... it's what she
needs.

SKEET

You gotta be kidding me, that's
what she ran away from.

Aoidoi has been listening and peers around Skeet's back.

AOIDOI

I didn't run away from her. I ran
away from him. He's nasty.

Quick glances hide their smiles.

SKEET

Well apparently he comes with her
so you might rethink your magazine
cover.

DADA

That's a terrible thing to say.

(off Aoidoi)

Come on, get your stuff.

Aoidoi looks to Skeet for approval? He looks at her like a
confused puppy.

DADA (CONT'D)

Don't look to him, he has no say in
this.

AOIDOI

But he's been taking care of me too. Why? He brought me to you. He found me, he rescued me. I want to know why?

DADA

Because he's a thrity-something man who spends his days corralling people like you and dragging them back over the border, that's why ... and he's not married and doesn't have kids, so I dont' think he represents the ideal father for a girl in your shoes. And because I say so, that's why.

Skeet is hurt and angered.

SKEET

Now that, is a terrible thing to say.

Dada is instantly remorseful but too proud or ashamed to say it. She grabs Aidoi by the wrist and tugs her out, unwilling to look him in the eye.

DADA

I know. I'm sorry ...
(talking over her
shoulder)
Can you drop her bag by the office please.

Quickly as she can, she places Aidoi in the car and zips away.

Skeet stands in the door watching as they go. **HE LEAVES IT OPEN.**

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis Diller hair and a wrinkled nightgown, Rosa rushes into the room where Aidoi sleeps on the couch.

ROSA

Up! Hurry! Dress dress dress now, hurry! Up! Dress yourself, we have to go! Now! Come girl!

Aidoi falls from the couch, dazed and frenzied and without direction.

AOIDOI

What! Wait! Rosa, what's happening!
I don't ...

ROSA

Policia ... your bag! Hurry! Grab
it, come.

AOIDOI

Why? We haven't done anything.

ROSA

Get your bag! We have to go.
There's a way, a tunnel, come,
hurry, it will get us past them.
Your shoes, hurry!

AOIDOI

But they can save us, free us ...

ROSA

They don't save anyone! Not here!
Especially not here.

AOIDOI

But ... we ... I haven't done ...

ROSA

They shoot everyone, that's what
they do! Come! Your bag, now!

AOIDOI

The policia? They'll shoot me?

Rosa calms and takes a knee in front of Aoidoi.

ROSA

Listen to me, child. They wear the
uniforms of the government but
don't ever be fooled by them. They
work for the cartel's. They don't
come to arrest, they come to kill.

She pulls Aoidoi up by the arm and shoves her bag against her
chest.

ROSA (CONT'D)

Plata o plomo ...
(she spins a finger in the
air)
Plata o plomo.

SUBCAPTION:

Silver or lead ... silver or lead

ROSA (CONT'D)
Don Marcos, he chose the lead.

POP! POP! POP! The sound of gunfire breaks out around the compound as Rosa drags Aidoi down a hall and into a door under a stairwell where a secret door is opened and she shoves the girl in.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Run! ... run until you come to the end and make sure you look before you climb out. You hear me? Look, they're everywhere.

AIDOI
Aren't you coming? You can't stay. You said they shoot. I need you.

Rosa is stoic pushing Aidoi inside and closing the door. Aidoi cries and knocks. Rosa hits the door and yells against it.

ROSA
Go! Go now. You don't worry about me ...

BANG! BANG! GUNSHOTS, CLOSE TO THE HOUSE. THE POLICE OUTSIDE YELL FOR THE OCCUPANTS TO COME OUT. CRASH! A DOOR IS SMASHED IN. BANG! BANG!

ROSA (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Run child. I'll be fine.

She shuts the stairwell door and latches it.

INT. TRAP DOOR - NIGHT

Aidoi stands with her face against the door, to stunned to move.

OUTSIDE THE DOOR: ROSA'S MUFFLED VOICE PLEADS FOR LENIENCY, COMPASSION. MEN YELL AT HER IN SPANISH.

POP! POP! BULLETS BLAST THROUGH AND PIERCE THE WOOD ABOVE AIDOI.

THUNK, ROSA'S BODY HITS THE DOOR, THUD! THE FLOOR.

BOOTS THUNDER TO THE BODY. HANDS MOLEST THE WALL, LOOKING FOR A LATCH OR SOME SECRET PASSAGE.

AIDOI SEES BLOOD RUNNING UNDER THE NARROW SEAM. SHE SLIPS QUIETLY INTO THE DARK.

VOICES AND THE SOUND OF MEN SEARCHING.

Aidoi shuffles along in a dimly lit tunnel, feeling her way around corners, **BUMPING HER PACK** into things.

SHE STRUGGLES TO MUTE HER CRYING AND SNIFFLING UNDER HER HAND.

THE SOUNDS FADE and she begins to calm as the tunnel straightens and becomes level.

HER EYES CONNECT TO A BEAM OF LIGHT THAT STABS THE FLOOR AHEAD.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The sun sits atop the distant mountains like an orange on a fruit basket.

The flat desert heat seeps into an iguana thawing in the cool morning air. It jumps and runs as the ground beneath it lifts. Just behind, a pair of broad brown eyes peer out from under the hidden door.

She climbs out, standing alone in a sea of sand and brush, a solitary figure in the middle of a khaki ocean.

EXT. DESSERT BORDER CROSSING - DAY

Skeet watches his team work ... Latino children, adults; border guards scream at them and the men yell back, the women scream. The children cry.

Skeet is out of phase, present in body only, his mind has shut off sense and reason.

MIKE (35) A NATIVE AMERICAN agent is struggling to set cuffs on an out of control man.

MIKE

Hey, Skeet, some help here?

Skeet stares at them writhing without so much as a blink.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Skeet. Skeet, hey, come on god dammit! This ... fuck! Hey honcho, wait! ...

The guy wriggles free and punches the agent before two other border guards tackle him and rough him up, snapping the bracelets on his wrists.

The agent approaches Skeet and he's pissed off.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So what the fuck man! You see what we're doing here?

(wiping blood from his mouth)

That was serious, Skeet, what if he had a fucking weapon!

Skeet is unresponsive.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Hey! Skeeter! Wake up! I could have been shived.

Skeet's eyes flutter and his eyes circle around to the Agent.

SKEET

I don't care.

The agent pushes him and he doesn't react.

MIKE

What! What did you say, man?

SKEET

I quit.

He unbuckles his gun belt and lets it drop in the dirt. He turns and walks down the dusty road and as he does he discards other paraphernalia: badge, cuffs, pepper spray.

By the time he walks over the horizon he wears pants, boots and a t-shirt. He's leaving it all behind.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - PAST

Aoidoi walks through the mid-day heat with her pack hanging heavy, her face, hair and clothes bathed in dirt.

Streaks run through the dust on her face, tears that have dried long ago, she has no more water to shed. Her lips are cracked.

In the distance a solitary figure of a man walks over the horizon. As he grows in size and clarity it becomes apparent he wears a uniform with a gun belt.

The first time Skeet and Aidoi meet, she is desperate, he is fresh and eager to help.

His smile electrifies hope in her and the pain of smiling through her fractured lips doesn't stop her brimming.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Watching the conversation from the backseat, Aidoi could be watching a tennis match.

Dada is agitated with Aryan who is annoyed to have to visit her parents.

DADA

You talk about them like their stupid, they're laid back, so what?

ARYAN

Eccentric, hippies is more like it. It just makes me nuts, talking about ... nuts. And CBD, charcoal toothpaste, Jesus Christ! Can't a person just talk about the weather anymore and get the fuck out with their sanity in tact?

DADA

My mom's a scholar, she has a degree from Stanford in ...

ARYAN

I know, she's a literature doctor and speaks German and French and Latin, blah, blah, blah. And your dad's an aero fucking-space-engineer, that doesn't change shit. They are who they are, what they're like and what they're like drives me ...

DADA

Nuts! Got it!

AOIDOI

I like them. I think they're nice.

DADA

Thank you. And what about you Aryan the great, you ever wonder what people think about you? What you're like?

ARYAN

I don't give a shit what people think about me.

AOIDOI

That's sad.

DADA

It is. Yeah, you don't care what people think, bull-shit! Sorry, Aidoi. Tell me you don't give a shit what people think and I'll show you a big fat fucking picture of your mommy and daddy. I'm only with you because they hate you, remember that one, asshole?

She gets out of the car and slams the door. Aryan looks at Aidoi in the rearview mirror.

AOIDOI

Illa scitis iustum.

ARYAN

What?

AOIDOI

I said. She's right you know. I speak Latin too. And Spanish, and German, and French ...

ARYAN

Yeah, well I speak, C, know what that is smart ass?

AOIDOI

Computer language. Sounds lonely.

ARYAN

Fuck you. It pays the bills.

AOIDOI

Money can't buy you love.

ARYAN

That's original.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Aryan reclines away from the dinner table where Aidoi and Dada visit with her parents.

GORDON

(whispers)

You're staying with him ... why?
 What about all that racist stuff?
 (pointing behind a hand,
 whispering)
 He's a bigot!

ARYAN

I can hear you Gordon, you don't
 need to whisper.

GORDON

Whisper, I'm not whispering. Just a
 little hoarse.
 (takes a drink of wine)
 Ahhh, better. I was saying ...
 (looks over his shoulder
 at Aryan)
 Why on earth would you want to stay
 with him, dear?
 (off Dada)
 After the racist things he's said
 to you ... about all of us?

DADA

Dad!

VALERIE

Gordon, don't be rude.
 (off Dada)
 He's right you know. But since he
 asked, yes, why?

DADA

Mom jeez.

Aryan stands looking incensed.

ARYAN

Maybe because I make a good living
 which allows her to have her little
 play things like, her. I'm 33 years
 old and pull down over a quarter
 million a year. That's just the
 beginning, by the time I'm 40 ...
 well let's just say it'll be a lot
 more than that. And she knows it.

VALERIE

I thought maybe it was because you
 were in love. Silly me.

She and Gordon share a glance and laugh.

Dada jumps up from her seat.

DADA

You're all awful! Terrible! Get out!

She points at the door.

GORDON

Um, this is our house, dear.

DADA

I know! You think I don't know that? I do!

(she sits down and jumps back up)

I don't know why I hang around with any of you. So you can just piss off, Aryan.

(mom and dad)

And you two can too.

She begins to cry and heads down the hall and into her old room **SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HER.**

ARYAN

Great! Just great! Thank you, thank you, soo much. Now I gotta deal with this on top of everything else.

GORDON

Isn't that what couples do, Aryan? Deal with things, take care of one another?

AOIDOI

It's how he deals with himself, pretending he doesn't care.

ARYAN

What? I do care, that's why I have to deal with it, did you not hear what I just said.

VALERIE

Yes. And we heard how you said it.

AOIDOI

You act self righteous, but I think you're ashamed.

ARYAN

Oh, so we have Sigmund fucking Freud over here.

AOIDOI

I read. I think you're ashamed of having to be with her, when in truth you know she's better than you.

ARYAN

Who are you? Better than me? Let me tell you what I think smarty-pants. I think you know she can't have children and that you're trying to latch on to her vulnerability, to make her think you can fill the void. The void only a child of her own can. Well you can't!

AOIDOI

Neither can you.

ARYAN

Fuck you, kid. Fuck you. You too Gordon ...

He turns to Valerie and Gordon quickly gets in his face, trembling with anger.

GORDON

One word to her, asshole ...

He mirrors the darting of Aryan's eyes, waiting for a slip-up, his face contorted and dangerous; pressing his nose to Aryan's.

GORDON (CONT'D)

I think you'd better go you racist ninny.

He bumps his forehead against him.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Go--now.

Aryan is flummoxed, knowing any wrong move could end in a broken nose. He raises his hands and backs away.

As he goes through the door he looks hard at Aidoi, then to Valerie.

ARYAN

Have her text me when you want to
come for her stuff.

He shuts the door quietly.

Aoidoi slips down the hall toward Dada's room.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom looks just like Dada left it when she left for college. Activist posters, music posters and the light and heavy things that young and upcoming women enjoy.

Dada and Aoidoi are on the bed.

DADA

You said that?

Aoidoi nods sincerely.

DADA (CONT'D)

He did that, really?

She nods again.

DADA (CONT'D)

(she chokes up)

Oh daddy ...

(the emotion drops)

He's gone?

Aoidoi nods.

DADA (CONT'D)

What do I do now.

AOIDOI

Carpe diem.

DADA

What?

(she chuckles)

Yeah, seize the day. How about
seize my life.

Aoidoi's smile grows to Cheshire proportions.

AOIDOI

Yeah. Let's do something fun.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dada drags Aidoi by the hand past her parents who are expecting a sombre daughter.

The girls are laughing and having a great moment, Dada talks her way out the door.

DADA

Gotta go, see ya later. I'll be,
we'll be staying here if that's
okay ... off to do girl stuff, bye.

The door slams happily behind them.

Mom and dad's expressions are unexpected; they shake their heads.

GORDON

(quietly)
That's my girl.

Valerie agrees.

VALERIE

That is your girl.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DALLAS - DAY

Dada leads Aidoi through **HIGHLAND PARK VILLAGE**, window shopping with Starbucks drinks. Store after store, Aidoi is bored as hell, interested in nothing they have to offer.

Then the **PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE** where Aidoi feigns a little more interest than shopping but is still marginally affected.

Finally, the **HIGHLAND PARK LIBRARY**; pulling up outside, Aidoi sees the sign focusing on the final word, '**LIBRARY**' and her face lights up like a Christmas tree.

INSIDE:

Aidoi is alive in the presence of the books, gleefully dragging her [surrogate] mother through the isles showing off the volumes she's read, regaling of ones she intends to.

She jumps on a table and acts out a scene from Shakespeare's *KING LEAR*.

AOIDOI

As you are old and reverend, you
should be wise.

(MORE)

AIDOI (CONT'D)

Here do you keep a hundred knights
and squires; Men so disorder'd, so
deboshe'd adn bold, that this our
court, infected with their manners,
shows like a riotous inn:
epicurislm ... epicusilis, epicur
... oh heck you get it.

(laughs)

Indeed I do shame myself, madame,
please, speak.

Dada laughs and claps enthusiastically, (Aidoi's good)
appreciating the performance.

She laughs and jumps into Dada's open arms, swirling her
lightly to the floor.

DADA

That was amazing, you're so good! I
mean, how do you know the
inflection? You sound English. I
couldn't hear your, Latino vibe, at
all.

AIDOI

Rosa helped me with that. The
spelling confused me at first but
once she told me why it was that
way ... I read a lot of things, I
had a radio too. It just made
sense. I practiced ... it was fun.

Dada looks amazed and proud, resting an arm around her.

DADA

You're a special girl.
(aidoi smiles)
You hungry?

Aidoi hungrily nods.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Blue-orange lights the desert morning and Skeet wakes, his
back formed to a solitary pecan tree where he found shade the
previous day.

Splintered lips and a badly burnt face masks the worry in his
shifting eyes; worry that he may have acted rashly.

HE SMACKS HIS TONGUE AND WORKS TO FOCUS HIS VISION.

There's nothing but a beautiful emptiness to keep him away from doubt.

THUNK! His eyes wander after the **QUIET THUD** and there sits a cracked pecan nut; it confuses him having fallen away from the tree.

He struggles to his feet and picks it up, examining it and looking to the open sky above.

A tiny pall covers the brilliance of the sun momentarily and moves away to reveal the silhouette of a black bird, two.

CRACK! A second nut falls on a rock, splitting it and letting a nut free in the soil.

SKEET

Son-of-a-bitch. Clever
motherfuckers aren't ya.

The circling birds land not far from where he holds the prize nut.

The second nut is just five feet in front of him.

He readies to drop the pecan on his tongue but can't take his eyes off the birds, staring, wanting.

CAW! CAW! The birds jump closer and their heads turret side to side, demanding he give it up.

SKEET (CONT'D)

You want this?
(a stare down)
You shouldn't go dropping your
prize next to a hungry man if you
expect to keep it.

He goes to put it in his mouth.

CAW! CAW! He stops.

SKEET (CONT'D)

You want it, come and get it.

They stare at each-other and Skeet cracks, the desert heat and dehydration making him irrational.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Come on god-dammit! You want this
thing? Come and get it! A man takes
what he wants! He doesn't let
another man take his shit! Come on,
you fuck! Take it!

(MORE)

SKEET (CONT'D)

It's right in front of you! Take it
why don ... you ... take it, like a
man should ...

(he pauses, thinks)

Go after what he wants.

A bird takes a fluttering leap, grabbing the nut from the ground and flies a few yards off.

Skeet smirks at the other blackbird, takes the nut and sets it at his feet.

SKEET (CONT'D)

(softly)

You got the balls to come take
what's yours? Show me you got it.
Come on.

The stand-off continues for what seems like a lifetime as the bird slowly works its way in; finally sucking it up and walking straight up to Skeet and picking up the nut.

Tilting its head to the side, it looks him dead in the eye as it takes the prize.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Right. Right on ... good for you
... good for you.

He looks out over the horizon.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Got a nut of my own to crack,
brother.

The bird flies to its partner and they feast unconcerned.

SKEET (CONT'D)

If I don't die trying to walk out
of here.

He traces the sun's trajectory, finds a mark on the horizon and sets off.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Looking at the ceiling, Dada fumbles with her old guitar. She hums and the notes fall pleasantly, making Aoidoi join in after a few bars.

They continue to improvise eventually finding a soft out to the tune. They smile and lean against one another both melancholy and sedate.

AOIDOI

I'm not using you--you know.

Dada looks inquisitively shocked at the comment.

DADA

What on earth is that supposed to mean.

Water crosses the whites of her eyes as she confesses.

AOIDOI

Aryan ... he said I was using you to make a home. That I was trying to make you my mother.

DADA

He's jealous. He can't understand what it means to really care for someone. I was a prize at first. In school I was beautiful...

AOIDOI

You still are.

DADA

Thank you sweetie ... and popular. I was popular. He wanted that ... I think he thought it would lead to a beautiful life or some crazy thing like that.

AOIDOI

Why? He's not bad looking, and he has money. Other girls must have thought he was something.

Dada laughs with open mouth laughter.

DADA

He was such a geek. Six one and a hundred fifty pounds, tops. He was in every nerd club there was, shit, he was the president of nerd-land.

AOIDOI

Well-why did you like him then? If he was so ... nerdy?

She reminisces and becomes warm under the memory.

DADA

He was vulnerable then, so frail.

(beat)

(MORE)

DADA (CONT'D)

He was sweet. He would hold my door. He used to make these code things and send them to me. I think they were, what do you call it? Encryption, encrypted, something like that, but I'd click on them and they'd come apart, like a kaleidoscope or something and there would be a heart, or a short note. He'd say 'you're cute' or 'be mine.' Things like that.

AOIDOI

What happened to him? Why's he so mean now.

DADA

Why wouldn't he be mean is the better question. I feel sorry for him really ... I mean I hate him, but I feel sorry for him too.

AOIDOI

I don't understand.

DADA

Well he grew up and I don't think anyone was ready for that. Me, his parents, him mostly. Suddenly he had job offers, and money. He had me and I think he thought he could do better, probably could. His parents hated me, shit, they hate me, but you know that. He said it himself, keeping me around to spite them, to feel cool. The enlightened liberal dude with the half black girlfriend at the parties.

AOIDOI

Why did you stay with him if that's how he was? You're smart, and beautiful ... you could find someone who cared, who **really** cared.

DADA

Yeah, that was then, this is now. Guys my age, the kind I'm interested in at least, want to make a family, make kids. Like me. But I can't do that, this one ain't gunna do the baby thing.

AOIDOI

That doesn't mean you can't have a family.

DADA

Yeah?

(sincere)

You want to be my family?

AOIDOI

I want you to be happy ... if me being with you is a sort of *causa sui* that leads you there, yes, but only if that's what you truly want.

DADA

(humorously impressed)

You're so ... intelligent, I mean, the things you say, it's way, way beyond a kid. Shit, you're beyond most adults I know.

(she thinks)

And you think I deserve someone like you? I mean ... a family.

AOIDOI

I know what you mean ... and yes. You think you don't deserve it, but you do. It's not luck to get what you want when you've worked so hard for it. You're good, you deserve the world, so let yourself have it.

DADA

But my job. I'm a social worker for Christ sakes. I barely make enough money for a one room apartment let alone a family.

AOIDOI

You minimize yourself and call it selfishness to want. You know how many families live in one room homes where I'm from? Two is a mansion.

Dada chuckles and Aoidoi takes her hand, she's not through.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

Say yes to the things you feel optimistic about. Let yourself say yes to what you want.

(MORE)

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

No affirms nothing for you unless
it's no to what you don't want. To
be happy you need to learn to say
yes.

DADA

I think I've said yes to often. I
said yes to Aryan, look where that
got me.

AOIDOI

You said no to him too ... Look
where that got you. Welcome the
unexpected, invite it to you.

Dada looks puzzled and amazed at the girls wisdom.

AOIDOI (CONT'D)

You are the most detached-involved
person I could ever know.

DADA

You're going to have to explain
that one, Sigmund.

Aoidoi laughs inviting a smile from Dada.

AOIDOI

I mean you connect to everyone
else's needs and don't take care of
your own. I remeber ...

FLASHBACK:

Aoidoi reclines on the chaise, again reading an old book,
again many other books stacked and scattered about.

Sunlight draws the glimmer of golds and silvers that ornament
the furniture, drapes and book bindings.

AOIDOI (V.O.)

It was a meditation from Marcus
Aurelius, 'Nature' he said 'all
that your seasons bring is fruit to
me.' Maybe it's your season to have
a family, maybe I'm your fruit.

END FLASHBACK:

DADA

Maybe you could be my smoothie ...
(she laughs)
(MORE)

DADA (CONT'D)

I could use a little smoothing out
right about now.

Aidoi becomes serious.

AIDOI

But I only want you to want me
because it is *what you want*. I do
not want you to accept me because
of the way I feel about you.

DADA

Say yes if I mean yes?

Aidoi nods.

DADA (CONT'D)

I say yes. But what about you,
Aidoi?

AIDOI

I say yes to you too.
(beat)
I said yes to Skeet also.

Dada is painfully reflective.

DADA

Skeet ... I hurt him. I could see
it.

AIDOI

He cares for you. More than a lot I
think.

DADA

I care for him too.
(smile)
More than a lot I think.

AIDOI

Invite him to dinner.

Dada's smile wanes, her teeth dimmed fearing she's ruined
their chance together. She decides.

DADA

Yes.

Aidoi hugs her.

AIDOI

Yes.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

On his knees under the frozen Texas stars and shaking, Skeet mumbles a **BARELY AUDIBLE PRAYER?**

Ashen in the low light, lip fissures and peeling skin, he could be weathered painting.

He cracks pecans nut in his teeth, nuts he's carried from his conversation with the ravens.

Climbing the few feet of a dead shaft of barren tree he scans the horizon; every direction, BLACK. He sighs.

SKEET

Shit.

He rubs and blows on his hands and curls up in a tight ball for a night of fractured sleep.

MORNING:

The eastern glow lifts as Skeet's eyes dance the dance of REM sleep.

CRACKLING TWIGS AND SHUFFLING SOUNDS STIR HIM TO LIFE. His eyes strain and open, his lids sticky with filth.

MUFFLED VOICES SPEAKING SPANISH over his blurred vision, a silhouette and more appears, the shapes of people moving in the desert.

Trying to speak, the rasp of dust scratching his throat squelches him. He reaches to cover the early sun and sobs falling back on his face in the dirt.

A desert oasis ... Seen but unreachable.

INT. IMMIGRATION NATURALIZATION OFFICE - DAY

Aoidoi watches the bustle while Dada types her morning reports. They share coffee and small talk through the scuttle.

DADA

And we're going to have to get you into school ... that'll be an interesting one.

AOIDOI

I thought it was easy for migrant children to go to school here.

DADA

That's not what I mean. You're smarter than half the teachers, or more. I'm wondering how they'll determine your grade. I somehow don't see you reading *Harry Potter*.

AIDOI

What's *Harry Potter*?

Officer **MIKE** approaches her desk. He is covered in desert dust.

DADA

Mike. Looks like you're having an interesting morning.

MIKE

Yeah, shit. Rounded up a den of em' down in Rattlesnake canyon just after midnight. That bein' said, I want to get em up here and my ass outta here.

(off Aidoi)

How ya doin' kiddo?

She smiles and runs a hand up Dada's arm.

DADA

Long hours and bad press, that's the taxpayers way of saying thank you.

MIKE

Whatever. All I know is I'm hitting my couch, having three beers and sleeping for 12 hours.

Aidoi bumps Dada's arm, mouthing 'Skeet?' Dada acknowledges with a wink.

DADA

Skeet in on this one? I gotta a message for him.

Mike looks at her bemused.

MIKE

Skeet? Huh, guess you haven't heard.

The girls share concerned glances.

AOIDOI/DADA

Heard what?

MIKE

He quit, ummm, two days ago I think.

DADA

Quit. You mean like gave his notice quit? The job?

MIKE

Well he sure as shit didn't leave notice, but yeah, damdest thing.

(points to bruise on his forehead)

I'm wrestling with a dude and asking Skeeter for help and he just stands there, staring into space or some shit.

(the women are baffled)

So we get the guy cuffed and I ask him what the hell is going on and he says, 'I don't give a shit.' And he says, 'I quit.' And walks off into the desert. Just dropped his gun belt, hat, uni, vest and boom. Like he's going on a vision quest or some shit like that.

DADA

Have you talked to him? Since?

MIKE

I haven't, I kind of thought you might have. I thought you two, three, were kind of a thing.

Aoidoi smiles but Dada is concerned and dials his number.

BEEPBEEPBEEEP ... BEEPBEEPBEEP ... BEEPBEEP ... Mike grabs his pocket.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I got his phone. It was in his shirt pocket, I forgot.

DADA

And you guys didn't look for him?

Mike looks apologetic, guilty.

MIKE

We're busy, Dada. I lost track of time.

Dada reaches for the phone.

DADA

Gimme that.
(off Aoidoi)
Let's go.

They jump up and Dada grabs Mike by the hand, she is low key and worried.

DADA (CONT'D)

He'd better be aright, Mike.

MIKE

Yeah, let me know. And tell him to come back all right. Tell him I haven't filed a report, no one in the squad has said anything to anyone ... yet.

A group of migrants push through the doors as Aoidoi leads Dada through them by the hand.

EXT. HOME - DAY

Dada bangs on Skeet's door to no avail. Aoidoi peeks through the windows seeing nothing but days old plates in front of a **LOUD TV SPORTS PROGRAM.**

DADA

Let's go around back.

AOIDOI

He's not here.

DADA

Shouldn't we at least check?

AOIDOI

He keeps his TV on, even when he's not home. It's always on.

DADA

Always?

AOIDOI

He told me it keeps him company since he lost ... you know ... his ...

DADA

His wife ...

AOIDOI

... And daughter. He hates the quiet, turns it to mute when he goes to bed and back on in the morning.

They are solemn and Dada lightly grabs the door knob, maybe trying it, seeing if it's locked, maybe just feeling the energy. Her fingers slip free without trying it.

DADA

We should look for him. Where did Mike say they left him?

AOIDOI

Rattlesnake Canyon.

DADA

Where the hell's that?

AOIDOI

It's where he found me.

DADA

Show me.

They skip down the porch steps and into the car.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Flat on his back with a weathered piece of canvas covering his face and as much of his body as he can, Skeet has given up.

His breath files across his throat and he **WHEEZES UNDER THE FILTHY COVER AND THE WORDS:**

SKEET (COVERED)

Please God ... God dammit ...

His fists stab in airy jabs at nothing but death who taunts him under the filthy cover.

It's ripped away and Skeet sees blurred images standing over him just before fading into unconsciousness.

Blinking orange flares flit about his darkness as distant voices skim along his cognizance.

MAN 1
tiene pulso?

SUBCAPTION:

MAN 1 (CONT'D)
Does he have a pulse?

MAN 2
débil ... ¿deberíamos dejarlo?

MAN 2 (CONT'D)
Weak ... should we leave him?

MAN 1
(heavy accent)
No. I know him, he's a good one; a border cop. Helped many. Yeah, good ... we help him.

MAN 2
(similar accent)
What the fuck is he doing out here?

MAN 1
Only God knows.

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

INT. IMMIGRATION NATURALIZATION OFFICE - DAY

Another **BUSY DAY IN THE I.N.S. OFFICE, LATINO VOICES
COMPETING AGAINST NATIVE CHINESE AND OTHER DIALECTS.**

People coming, going, no point in frustration over the crowds, most are resigned to the process. They've been through worse.

Dada's coat draped over her and her pack under her head, Aidoi sleeps across two chairs shoved together.

Drained and struggling to keep her eyes open, Dada types a document with an asylum seeker sitting at her desk.

A curious hush comes over the room followed up by the obvious voices of authority; clear and in control.

MIKE (O.C.)
Move aside please. Come-on, get, get. Make room.

AGENT 1 (O.C.)
 Out of the way people! Move aside.
 Come on now.

Dada looks up from her desk to four agents pressing their way through the crowd. Mike is at the front.

MIKE SPEAKS CLEAN, UNACCENTED SPANISH:

MIKE
Por favor gente, danos espacio, vamos ...Give us some air folks, we gotta get through here. **Vamos vamos vamos, por favor. Fuera del camino, por favor.**

Aoidoi sits up rubbing her eyes.

AOIDOI
 What's happening, Dada?

Dada cares very little at this point.

DADA
 Who knows. Boys bein' boys.

They stop just shy of her desk.

MIKE
 Got one for ya, Dada.

She looks up as the people part and see two agents holding Skeet upright by the arms.

Dada and Aoidoi have laughing, tearful outbursts.

DADA
 Oh my God, Skeet.

She rushes to the barely conscious man.

Looking like he should have gone straight to the emergency room instead of the I.N.S. office, Skeet raises his eyes and struggles with a grin.

DADA (CONT'D)
 Jesus, we need to get you to a hospital. Skeet, can you talk? Skeet, baby, you with me, hon?

His eyes close and his head hangs.

SKEET
 Papa ...

Dada and Aidoi paw at him, concerned.

Skeet lifts his head (his face cooked like a burnt flank steak) looking at Mike with a weakened and wry grin.

SKEET (CONT'D)

I told you, Papa, Mike.

(hoarse)

I got one for you, Papa.

MIKE

Oh shit man, sorry brother. I's close ...

(off Dada)

He said to call you, Papa. A joke or something ...

The women smile and go back to concerned.

DADA

You got your van, Mike? We need to get this boy to the ER.

SKEET

(weak)

I told him ... call you, Papa. Like I do. Case I didn't make it.

DADA

I know honey. You made it. You just relax now, we're going to get you some help, okay.

MIKE

I was close man ... don't be a ball-buster.

Skeet sneers at Mike with closed eyes and squints at Aidoi; he holds a hand out, she takes it.

SKEET

Hey kid. Quid agis?

DADA

I'm fine. Better now that you're here.

His eyes drift in and out as he gazes up to Dada.

SKEET

I quit you know.

DADA

I heard, we can talk about that later.

She grabs Skeet and helps the men lift him to his feet.

DADA (CONT'D)

We have other things to worry about right now.

MIKE

We can talk about the job later buddy.

AOIDOI

I'm going too, please?

DADA

Of course you are, grab your bag, and my purse.

They shuffle Skeet out of the building.

The migrant woman who sits at Dada's desk moves to Dada's chair and begins to peck at the keyboard, finishing her application.

Another woman drops into the vacated chair.

WOMAN

(thick Latin accent)
Do mine next?

The lady smiles back at her and continues to type.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Skeet wakes to see Aoidoi holding his hand and smiling at him. His voice is rough.

SKEET

Hey kid, how are ya?

She nods for him to look to his other side; he **GROANS** as he turns.

Dada sleeps in a chair next to him, her limp hand over his. His smile is immediate and hurts pulling at his cracked lips.

SHE SNORTS IN HER SLEEP AND THEY BOTH LAUGH.

Startled, she wakes with a jilt and pulls back. Skeet won't let her hand go.

DADA
Hey, you're awake.

SKEET
Yeah. It's good to see you.
(off Aoidoi)
Both of you.

DADA
We're happy to see you too. You
crazy? Walking off like that. You
could have died.

AOIDOI
You did almost die. He is crazy.

SKEET
I guess I didn't think things
through did I?

Dada grabs his hand in both of hers, shy, wanting to say something and holding back.

SKEET (CONT'D)
What is it? What's wrong?

She doesn't make eye contact and he looks at Aoidoi sitting with a concerned grin.

SKEET (CONT'D)
Did you think ... that I was ...
did you think I was trying to off
myself.

DADA
No, no, not that.

She sighs.

SKEET
What then?

AOIDOI
She was worried about you ... a
lot. We both were.

Skeet's eyes water as Dada's look meets his.

SKEET
I'm sorry.

DADA
You're important Skeet. That little
girl needs you.
(MORE)

DADA (CONT'D)

(beat)

I was wrong ... to take her the way
I did.

SKEET

Hey, it's okay. You're in a tough
spot with, your guy and. I don't
have a ...

Dada presses a finger to his lips.

DADA

Sh,sh,sh ... no. You're a dad. I
mean I know ... I know. But you are
a dad, and I shouldn't have said
what I said.

SKEET

Look. I understand ...

DADA

Skeet. Shut up, I'm not done.
(she swallows her pride)
You're important to me too. I know
that now. I had to ahhh ...
(off Aoidoi)
Get a little advice from a very
wise young lady, told me to ... say
what I think.

SKEET

I'm a little confused, Papa. What
about ...

AOIDOI

She left him. Or he left her.
Depends on how you look at it. But
she definitely meant to leave him.

Skeet looks flabbergasted at her rambling.

SKEET

What?

AOIDOI

Well she would have left him but we
were at her parent's house so
technically he had to do the
leaving.

SKEET

Ahhh, yes. Gotcha.

Dada looks embarrassed, but still clutches his hand.

DADA

The two of us are sharing my old
bedroom ... at my folks.

They laugh and after a few seconds Skeet notices Aidoi
staring at him with purpose. He blinks before getting the
silent message.

He turns to Dada with intent.

SKEET

I have room. My house, I converted
a room to an office, I never use
it. And ... well I never touched
Skyler's room.

(almost pleading)

You can stay ... if you want.

Dada looks and Aidoi gives her a stern nod. She turns boldly
to Skeet.

DADA

Yes. Yes ... we would like to stay
with you. Yes.

She sits up straight and proud, looking at Aidoi with a
jutting jaw.

SKEET

Wow, that's great. Awesome, yeah,
wow. When I get out of here we can
...

He notices the strange body language between the girls.

SKEET (CONT'D)

Am I missing something here? I mean
you two. Are you plotting, gunna
kill me in my sleep and take the
house or something?

They laugh.

DADA

No. God no. I'm just learning, from
her ...

SKEET

Yeah?

DADA

To take care of myself.

AOIDOI

To say yes.

Dada rubs his hand lovingly.

DADA

To say yes ... to what I want. Yes.
Skeet, I want to live with you. I
want that.

Skeet looks excited and curious at the same time.

SKEET

Okay. That's good. Yes is good. I
want that too.

Aoidoi jumps up and gives him a hug. Dada joins in.

DADA

I'm glad you're okay. I was so
afraid. Afraid I missed ...

She rises and looks lovingly at him.

DADA (CONT'D)

That I missed this chance.

SKEET

Not with me you didn't.
(sitting up)
Let's get me outta here. Let's go
home.

They look content as a trio, like a family that just might be
happening.

Dada and Skeet become serious, locked on one another, their
kiss is unhurried and light. Aoidoi glows.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SKEET'S HOUSE - DAY

Skeet opens the car door for Dada and takes her hand as she
climbs out.

They look a little uncertain and Skeet tepidly leans in and
gives her a quick but meaningful kiss.

As he pulls away, she pulls him back in and the kiss is longer, more passionate and yet kid friendly. They look genuine, like love is there.

Sitting behind the glass, Aidoi happily watches as Skeet gets the door for her.

She climbs out **WEARING THE DRESS, THE FLOWER DRESS SHE'S BEEN CARRYING THE WHOLE TIME.**

SHE IS ELECTRIC AND PIRQUETTES AS SKEET OPENS THE TRUNK AND BEGINS TO UNLOAD THEIR STUFF.

THE END

FADE TO BLACK.

