

Celebration of the Dead

By Diana E. Sáenz

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Sammy Sanchez	40
Julie Sanchez	16
Chula Dominguez	21
Johnny Dominguez	51
Liz	30's
Larry Webber	44
Jock McGuire	45
Manolo Consuelos	31
David	any age

6M, 3F Minimum cast 5M, 3F

SETS: Sammy's Office, Restaurant Booth, Street, Visiting Room in County Jail, Coffee Shop table and two chairs.

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ACT I SCENE 1 - The answering machine

DOOR IS DOWNSTAGE LEFT SO THAT ANYONE ENTERING SAMMY'S OFFICE WILL BE FIRST SEEN BY AUDIENCE. IT HAS AN OPAQUE WINDOW WITH LETTERING "SAMUEL SANCHEZ, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR." OFFICE IS FURNISHED WITH A DILAPIDATED HIGH BACKED SWIVEL CHAIR, SOFA, DESK WITH AN OLD TYPEWRITER AND FILE DRAWERS. SAMMY'S CREDENTIALS HANG ON ONE WALL. WINDOW THAT GIVES THE FEELING OF A SECOND STORY OFFICE IN THE SEEDIER SIDE OF TOWN. INSIDE THE DESK SAMMY KEEPS A FIFTH OF JIM BEAM AND A FEW FOGGY GLASSES. IN THE DESK, IN A LOCKED DRAWER, A COMPACT 38. IN THE LOWER CABINET DRAWER HE KEEPS A PILLOW AND BLANKET WHICH HE USES OCCASIONALLY WHEN HE SLEEPS ON THE SOFA. IN THE UPPER DRAWER ARE HIS CASE FILES.

THE TIME IS MID-AFTERNOON. THE BACK OF THE CHAIR IS TURNED DOWNSTAGE. JULIE IS SITTING IN IT. ENTER SAMMY. DISHEVELED, EXHAUSTED.

HE DOESN'T SEE HER. HE CROSSES TO THE
ANSWERING MACHINE AND TURNS IT ON.

ANSWERING MACHINE: Hi. It's me, Liz. You owe me
fifty bucks, Sammy. Don't tell me you've
forgotten already and don't punk out on me.
I've got friends in high places—

SAM: Real high places.

AM: —who can break your arms five different ways.
The time is four-in-the fucking morning and
it's Sunday-go-meeting time. Caio, Baby.
Hello Sammy, call your mother, you
sonofabitch.

SAM: I love you too, Mom.

AM: Yeah—this is Joe's Foreign Car Repairs. Are
you sitting, Sammy? Then sit. Good. Have a
drink. Ready? \$872.68. It's the Ides of
March, High Noon.

SAM: I'll be goddammed if I'm gonna pay—

AM: Hello. My name is Michele Dominguez. The
time is 5:30. It is monday...afternoon. My
number is 783-4119. I would like to discuss

a possible, um a business meeting with you.
Could you please return my call at your
earliest convenience? Oh, ask for Chula.
Thank you.

SAM: Pleased to meet you, Chulita.

AM: Hi. It's me again, you know, Lovely Liz, to
whom, Sir, you owe fifty big ones. It's
Wednesday, where have you been hiding? This
is David, your landlord. Remember me? You
owe this month's rent—

SAM: What?

AM: I know you haven't been around—which gives me
some hope that you're busy, as in employed,
as in somebody has hired you, as in money, as
in rent. Everybody thinks I have money
hidden all around the house, that I have
secret properties in secret parts of the
city, but I don't! You think I never worked
for it? I know they, and you too, Sammy,
make gross exaggerations at my expense. Your
floor might be my ceiling but—

SAM: SWITCHING MACHINE TO FAST FORWARD. I
paid you the rent—Psycho—SWITCHES TO PLAY.

AM: DAVID IS ON A ROLL. I can hear you walking
up there like a cockroach, pacing back and
forth. Making your plans. SAMMY ONLY
LISTENS FOR A MOMENT PUSHES TO FAST FORWARD.

SAM: Christ—DAVID CONTINUES TO TALK AS SAMMY FAST
FORWARDS AND PLAYS AT INTERVALS. Trying to
outwit—who, Sammy? You can't fool an old
fool. Can I be blamed for not trusting the
SPCA. Look what they did to my little
Teresa. Not one day they gave her. Their
banking buddies were in on it. Up to their
crooked beady eyes. Like the people on the
bus. That's why I never take the bus. Those
hard beady eyes. They use them like marbles,
and use the marbles like ball bearings, which
they use like banana peelings. That was your
banana peel outside on the stoop, wasn't it,
Sammy? Thought you could trip me up with
your little beady banana slippery eyes. Pay
me the rent. I know my rights. I'm right

and you're wrong! I'm right and you're wrong
and you know it! Pay me my rent!

SAM: The whole damn tape—You're supposed to take
your medication—not skip days when you feel
better, you goddammed psycho—

JULIE: HAS SWIVELED TO FACE HER BROTHER. Where have
you been?

SAM: STARTLED. How many time have I asked you, not
to—

JULIE: You look bad, Sammy—

SAM: —sneak up on me?

JULIE: You look really bad.

SAM: You know where I've been. CROSSES TO DESK.
EMPTIES HIS POCKETS. LAYS A PACKET OF
SNAPSHOTS ON THE DESK.

JULIE: Didn't they have a shower up there? PICKING
UP PHOTOS. Are these it?

SAM: I like the one in rabbit ears.

JULIE: Pornographic.

SAM: Fifteen hundred dollars. That's what you're looking at. Look you seen one, you seen them all.

JULIE IGNORES SAMMY, TURNING ONE UP-SIDE-DOWN. HE ATTEMPTS TO TAKE THEM OUT OF HER HAND, BUT SHE LAYS THEM DEFTLY ON THE DESK, EXACTLY WHERE SAMMY HAD THEM. THIS ACTION CHARACTERIZES ALL THEIR ACTIONS, IN THAT SHE CAN ALWAYS GET ANNOYINGLY CLOSE TO HIM BUT HE CAN NEVER TOUCH HER.

JULIE: Something's been bugging me about the Big Guy.

SAM: What?

JULIE: There's always a Big Guy. You got a hard-boiled detective novel, there's going to be a Big Guy. Why don't you make him a midget?

SAM: You forget he's also the Fall Guy. It wouldn't have the same impact if he were a midget.

JULIE: A guy with no name then.

SAM: Maybe to go with the guy with no fingerprints.

JULIE: Forget No Fingerprints.

SAM: Maybe I should forget No Fingerprints, the Big Guy, Faceless, The midget—and while I'm cleaning house, the Damsel in Distress, the Piano Bar Singer, the Bartender—

JULIE: I like the Bartender

SAM: The Jockey and the Rich Invalid Lady.

JULIE: That's everybody!

SAM: A clean slate.

JULIE: Aww, poor Sammy.

SAM: I'll keep him.

JULIE: I like the Bartender

SAM: What's to like?

JULIE: For one thing, his club foot.

SAM: What club foot?

JULIE: A club foot with a soul...See, he's in love with the Piano Bar Singer. He used to read her Kierkegaard-

SAM: I don't know shit about Kierkegaard-

JULIE: Read a book. He used to read her Kierkegaard-the juicy parts-

SAM: What if there ain't no juicy parts?

JULIE: Who you kidding? You must've heard something somewhere, otherwise I wouldn't be saying this.

SAM: Dammit how many times I gotta tell you-Keep the illusion.

JULIE: That beautiful girl he married. The toasting at his wedding after he got all the guests drunk.

SAM: Melancholia is my Mistress. Yeah, yeah-

JULIE: Those hunchback fantasies and cruel jokes-

SAM: Maybe I can dig up something. The juicy parts. Stir up their prurient interests.

JULIE: And she liked listening to him read—You see, all anybody ever saw in her were tits and ass, and a voice that was okay, but nothing earth-shaking—I mean, these people are human—

SAM: RELUCTANTLY WARMING TO THE IDEA. I got nothing against Dada Machines.

JULIE: At first, she didn't know what the fuck he was talking about, but after a while, something happened. She started hearing things, gleaning a sense of Kierkegaard's life and hers and even the Club Foot Bartender's. He started growing on her, kind of natural, but then, Steel Toes gets back from Hobokan—

SAM: Steel Toes?

JULIE: This tap dancer she's mad about. And Steel Toes is back with all his Neon Stories and monkey wrenches and baby goose that's gonna lay a golden egg and, and direct line sex techniques, you know, the kind of things women go nuts for. So they're nothing but

tricks—but the Bartender, all he's got is
soul and Kierkegaard—

SAM: And the loyalty of a three-legged collie.

JULIE: With three legs you can drop the club foot.
Nice and neat.

SAM: So who's to bump off? Steel Toes? Who cares
if there's one less candy-ass hooper in the
world?

JULIE: I was coming to that. See, if somebody gets
it, it's more like a philosophical question—

SAM: That's original, me and Raskolnikov—

JULIE: Correction: you and Dostoievisky—the
Bartender and Raskolnikov—

SAM: If I don't litter the pages with a half dozen
stiffs, what kind of whodunit am I gonna
have? STARES AT JULIE BEGINNING TO
UNDERSTAND. Nobody's interested.

JULIE: REFERRING TO PHOTOS. Not like sugar cones
and flannel paws—

SAM: It pays. It's a job.

JULIE: Life's a job—

SAM: Oh heavy—

JULIE: You're a lousy detective—

SAM: Bulshit—

JULIE: But you're better at it than writing pure junk. Write something, Sammy. I know it's in you. Scares you, doesn't it? You start seeing things.

SAM: Yeah...like you of all things. SAX MUSIC BEGINS. SAMMY, IN SEMI- SLOW MOTION MOVES TO BRUSH HER AWAY. SHE ELUDES HIM EFFORTLESSLY AS SHE SINGS. THEY BOTH STAND LOOKING AT ONE ANOTHER IN A MIRROR IMAGE EXPRESSION OF THE OTHER AS THE SONG ENDS.

JULIE: *Young drunk going sideways
Treading water flush a wall
Tiger drowning in a comedy
Like electronic arcade
Though they got his number down
They'll never know his name
That's why he keeps on moving
In the gutter where he lies*

SAM: I may be actually losing it. I must be
close...

CHULA RINGS. SAMMY LETS HER IN. SHE IS A
STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. ALTHOUGH
SHE IS SOMEWHAT SHY WITH THE ATTENTION SHE
CONSTANTLY RECEIVES, SHE HAS AN UNDERLYING
WILL AND SINGLE-MINDEDNESS THAT CANNOT BE
TAMPERED WITH. SHE HAS DRESSED ACCORDINGLY TO
MAKE AN IMPRESSION OF MATURITY. HOWEVER,
BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING PRETENTIOUS ABOUT
HER CHARACTER, SHE CANNOT BE ANYTHING OTHER
THAN WHO SHE IS. SHE IS THE DAMSEL IN
DISTRESS, AND A FEW BARS OF SAXOPHONE MUSIC
WOULD SET UP THE STEREOTYPE SHE MUST
IMMEDIATELY BEGIN TO DESTROY. JULIE
DISCRETELY FINDS HER WAY BACK TO THE SWIVEL
CHAIR AND TURNS SO THAT THE BACK IS
DOWNSTAGE.

SAM: Hello?

CHULA: Hello.

SAM: Can I help you?

CHULA: Are you Samuel Sanchez?

SAM: Yeah.

CHULA: My name is Michele Dominguez. I left a message on your answering machine.

SAM: Oh yeah–yeah. I just got in a few minutes ago. I was out of town. Have a seat. Can I offer you something?

CHULA: Some coffee would be nice.

SAM: Coffee? My machine broke. Sorry.

CHULA: It's okay.

SAM: So you're Miss Dominguez–Miss?

CHULA: LOOKING AROUND. What? Oh–yes. Miss.

SAM: So how can I help you?

CHULA: I want to find out who killed my mother. The police say they have nothing to go on, that it was a random robbery, that maybe got out of hand. I don't care if it was an Act of God, I just want to know what, and how, and who did it.

SAM: When did this happen?

CHULA: Six months ago. She—we own our own restaurant. Adela's. You've never heard of us?

SAM: Gang members were suspected, so I read.

CHULA: Well, I've brought everything I could think of that might help you. The police report, newspaper clippings. Some pictures. The scene of the murder. This is my mother. That was taken a few months before.

SAM LOOKS AT THE PHOTO OF A HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE WOMAN.

CHULA: We were always being mistaken for sisters.

SAM: Not much signs of a struggle.

CHULA: She always had a beer after closing time. That's when she counted up the receipts. Her and my dad usually closed up together but he was out with the flu that night. It happened on a Tuesday. I work the week-ends. I just want to know. Her whole life was that restaurant. And of course this is all very

confidential. In other words my dad isn't to know. Well?

SAM: Well what?

CHULA: I assume you have some kind of agreement for us to sign.

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 2 - Father & Daughter

Chula & Johnny .

ADELA'S RESTAURANT A BOOTH TO SUGGEST DINING AREA. JOHNNY IS SITTING IN IT. HE WEARING FOOD STAINED WHITES AND FIGURING THE SUPPLY LIST. CHULA ENTERS DRESSED TO GO OUT.

CHULA: Hi.

JOHNNY: Chulita, what are you doing here? *Donde vas* dressed to the nines, M'ija?

CHULA: I thought maybe you'd lend me \$20 until payday.

JOHNNY: *Hay que mi lagro*—I don't know how you spend it so fast. here, take it. I don't like to lend relatives money.

CHULA: KISSING HIM ON THE FOREHEAD. Thanks, Daddy.

JOHNNY: Where are you going? You look like a movie star.

CHULA: I'm going dancing with Delia.

JOHNNY: Delia? I thought you were mad at Delia.

CHULA: That was months ago. Don't you remember, she was at the funeral. She called me up when she heard about it.

JOHNNY: Oh yeah. Well I was pretty upset.

CHULA: I know. But you seem better lately. *Que no?*

JOHNNY: Oh yeah—you know me...

CHULA: You miss Mom, don't you?

JOHNNY: *Pues Sí, como no.* What a woman. If it wasn't for your mother, we wouldn't be sitting here in this beautiful room. She was the one with ambition.

CHULA: I'll never have her kind of ambition.

JOHNNY: *Pues* your mother, she was another thing. Some people are born ambitious, like some are

born with a hairlip. They even have to sew it up *un poco*—their ambition I mean. I would've been happy to stay a gardener and cook at home for my family. But your mother saw money in it. She said, all you have to do, Johnny, is write down the recipes and teach somebody else how to do it. What do I know about recipes? I just cook. But she was smart. She knew how to do it, instinctively. Chula?

CHULA: What, Daddy?

JOHNNY: Are you sure there isn't somebody special. You're not telling me about?

CHULA: Why do you say that?

JOHNNY: I don't know, but when a young girl...well, *quien sabe*, it just seems to me that you're different.

CHULA: I just like to go dancing. I don't need a boyfriend, if that's what you're talking about.

JOHNNY: It's just that nobody ever calls you. I remember when the telephone was ringing off the hook.

CHULA: You know how boys are. They have one thing on their mind. I got tired of wrestling matches.

JOHNNY: Of course...But its pretty hard to hide something from somebody who loves, who brought you up like his own daughter.

CHULA: Oh Daddy, look, if you don't believe me, I can give you Delia's number. Call her yourself.

JOHNNY: Okay, Chulita, have it your way. You're going out with Delia, but whatever, I know I can trust you.

CHULA: Of course you can trust me. I love you.

KISSES HIM AND EXITS. JOHNNY IS LEFT SITTING ALONE AS THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 3 - Webber's world

Chula, Manolo, Liz, Webber & Sammy

STREET. SAXOPHONE MUSIC. THE STREET SEEMS DESERTEED EXCEPT FOR WEBBER WHO IS CURLED UP IN A FETAL POSITION IN A DARKENED DOORWAY. HE COULD BE DEAD FOR ALL THE LIFE HE SHOWS. LIZ IS STANDING NOT FAR. SHE LOOKS BORED AND LONELY. ENTER CHULA AND MANOLO. OBVIOUSLY TWO PEOPLE IN LOVE. LIZ WATCHES THEM PASS AND FOLLOWS THEM WITH HER GAZE AS THEY EXIT TO OPPOSITE SIDE OF STAGE.

LIZ: I could've been a contender...Hey, Baby!
LOOKS THROUGH 4TH WALL AT PASSING CRUISER.
FOLLOWS CAR WITH HER EYES AS HE KEEPS ON GOING. You look like the intellectual type. Impotent. Here he comes, Sugar Daddy...Shit!
What crack did *she* crawl out of? That's okay, Judy, Judy, Judy, I snatched the cowboy from you. You owed me, or I owed you, but anyway it's smooth and pretty and fair and even, and very chocolate candy. So we can be the best of sisters. SEES ANOTHER CRUISER. Kissy-kiss Fuck-Face to you too. SIGHS. Sometimes I'm not sure what exactly reality is.

WEBBER: Gimme a buck. I'll show you reality.

LIZ: LOOKS FOR THE VOICE. REALIZES IT'S COMING FROM WHAT SHE MISTAKENLY TOOK FOR A BAG OF RUBBISH. Either it's talking trash or there's a ventriloquist in the house. But is there a doctor? That's what I'd like to know. SINGS THE FIRST LINE FROM A POPULAR SONG.

A dollar a fantasy. You're welcome.

WEBBER: Can I reluctantly offer you some dregs from my last bottle?

LIZ: I wouldn't dream.

WEBBER: Sir, you are a lady and a gentleman.

LIZ: Or a lady without a gentleman...or something. This is me standing here, who used to have a sweet ass in baby powder.

WEBBER: Nobody ever powdered my ass.

LIZ: You must've been hatched.

WEBBER: I was busted out of my old man's hangover. Like Pallas Athena. You know her?

LIZ: She had gray eyes and steel on her tits so nobody'd be copping a cheap feel and she was smart as shit.

WEBBER: You're all right. Haven't I seen you before?

LIZ: Impossible.

WEBBER: No seriously. On 22nd and—I never forget a face.

LIZ: Outside Andy's.

WEBBER: Chicago!

LIZ: Everybody's been to Chicago.

WEBBER: I never been.

LIZ: Look, Mister, I haven't had such a fascinating conversation since I spoke with Helen Keller. Don't get me wrong, I love your company, but business is now. Bye-bye.

LIZ EXITS. SAMMY ENTERS.

WEBBER: Wait, Babe, You forgot to toss me that buck...Sammy! Where have you been keeping? Got a dollar?

SAM: Web—That you?

WEBBER: Sure it's me. I haven't seen you for a while, man.

SAM: Was that Lizzie I just missed?

WEBBER: You know her?

SAM: A little junkie I felt sorry for once and bought her a drink. That was a mistake.

WEBBER: Kindness is never a mistake. Kindness and Karma both start with a K.

SAM: So do Ku and Klux.

WEBBER: It's a sorrow and a pity, Sam. So how's it going? Any irons in the fire?

SAM: Something here, something there.

WEBBER: That's m'boy. Got a drink?

SAM: HANDS HIM A BILL.

WEBBER: Thanks Homeboy. PULLS OUT A FRESH PINT.
OPENS IT UP CEREMONIOUSLY. Go 'head, Bro.

SAM: DRINKS. I'm on the wagon.

WEBBER: We had some good ol' times, eh, Sammy?

SAM: SMILES. NODS.

WEBBER: 'Member when we stole my ol' man's Plymouth and went joy riding all the way to 'Frisco? I never seen so many godddam hippies in my life. More hippies than hills. You ever seen so many hippies or hills?

SAM: Nope.

WEBBER: We go back. Did I ever tell you that's how I lost this tooth?

SAM: You didn't have to.

WEBBER: Son-of-a-bitch. He was one. Died last spring. Poison.

SAM: You mean somebody poisoned your old man?

WEBBER: Peritonitis. Poisoned his own damn self. Organically. Appendix busted. LAUGHS HARD. Hey! Better cool it, before I bust a gut too. That sort of shit runs in families. That'd be a clincher. DRINKS. HANDS SAMMY THE BOTTLE. LOOKING THROUGH FOURTH WALL SEES A PROSTITUTE HE KNOWS. Hey—Hey—Impunity!

How you doing, Mama? Yeah. Looking fine.

Mighty fine. Got a quarter? No? That's all right, Mama. Have a nice day, ya hear?

SAM: Impunity? She's nice. She's really nice.

WEBBER: SHRUGS. Looks good, but I'll tell you one thing—anybody who thinks he can walk down the street with Impunity ain't properly assessed the situation. Yeah. It's too bad.

SAM: DRINKS. HANDS BOTTLE BACK. What is?

WEBBER: Life.

SAM: Yeah.

WEBBER: Played me dirty.

SAM: Think So?

WEBBER: What's to think, Man?

SAM: Everything's perfect.

WEBBER: Shit. I see what stands right in front of me and I see you on the edge.

SAM: You mean to say, the world *is* flat?

WEBBER: You ever write that book?

SAM: What Book?

WEBBER: Hell if I know—the one where everybody drags
clay feet and the world is about to blow up
and there ain't no heaven to catch the
pieces. But see, Sammy—it ain't the world
that's gonna blow—it's people.

SAM: What's the difference?

WEBBER: Selfish, Man—that is selfish thinking. You
ask the cockroaches, they'll tell you.
You're one of these guys who thinks the human
race is the end all. Narrow sites, Homeboy.
You gotta look at the whole pie.

SAM: Which is?

WEBBER: The Universe! LETS IT SINK IN. The fucking
Universe. That's what.

SAM: That's very profound.

WEBBER: Fuck you. F'instance—take that gal,
Dominguez, Adela?

SAM: The restaurant owner.

WEBBER: That's the one. The universe ain't never seen a more penny-pinching, perfidious, pernicious, pulchritudinous—if such a word exists and for all the good it did her—where was I? Oh yeah—predatory, parsimonious—

SAM: You said that—

WEBBER: When?

SAM: Penny-pinching.

WEBBER: Well, I don't like to say about the dear departed. But do you think she ever once laid one crummy devalued centavo on me. Shit. And where did it get her? She didn't even make it to retirement—And do you know why?

SAM: You tell me.

WEBBER: Because Karma caught up with her and now she's reincarnated into a worm—a whole shitload of them.

SAM: Gives one food for thought.

WEBBER: *"Your fat king and your fat beggar"—uh two—*

SAM: *"Is but variable service—"*

WEBBER: *"Two dishes but to one table. That is the end."* I should'a been the Prince, Sammy. Who'd they give it to? Jimmy Toto, also known as Tonto—all he had was a serious case of square jaw and girl legs—not even the insinuation of talent. Ah well—so goes the breaks. But between you and me, Sam—I got a pretty good look at the killer.

SAM: You bullshit.

WEBBER: —Passed by me not three feet!

SAM: Who did?

WEBBER: I don't know his name, man, but I seen him around. He laid a five-spot on me once. He's a dealer.

SAM: How do you know he's a dealer?

WEBBER: It's my life's work to judge a book by its cover, and I'm telling you, Five-Spot was a dealer

SAM: Dealer.

WEBBER: Yeah.

SAM: So from where do you know this dealer?

WEBBER: From where he laid the five-spot. LAUGHS.

Generosity has its drawbacks, wouldn't you say? but of course, I ain't no snitch. I was in Dogtown.

SAM: Dogtown?

WEBBER: I get around. I like to parcel out my territory. people get tired of you if you just hang around the same street corner. Good farming—like a smart tobacco farmer, know what I mean?

SAM: Where in Dogtown?

WEBBER: I was holding up some wall, man. He walked by—no, he stepped out of an apartment building. One of those security buildings—palm trees sticking up from the middle—like some kind of courtyard inside and an ugly yellow color— THINKS HARD. Damn, If I can remember exactly where.

SAM: You think if I drove you around—and
compensated you for your valuable time—

WEBBER: I'd sure as Hell give it a try!

SAM: Let's go.

WEBBER: Wait—there's been something bugging me in
this shoe— TAKES OFF HIS SHOE AND FIDDLES
WITH IT.

SAM: So when did you see him the second time and
where?

WEBBER: Early morning. It was one of those nights,
cold, cold Chicago like nights. I was trying
to catch a few winks in the doorway where
that shoe shop across from Adela's is, but it
was too damn cold to sleep. That's when I
saw him and how come he never saw me. It was
maybe one of two or three in the morning—hard
to tell, since my gold Japanese thin as a
dime computer, glow in the dark, musical
alarm wrist watch had bought me—just a few
blissful hours before—a bottle of rough rider
rot gut. PUTTING SHOE BACK ON. Yeah, that's

better. The paper needs changing. So, what are we waiting for?

SAM: Just tell me one thing, Webber.

WEBBER: What?

SAM: How is it Adela Dominguez just rolled off your tongue?

WEBBER: By the light of the silvery moon.

LIGHTS DOWN AS THEY EXIT.

SCENE 4 - Sleeping together

Liz, Junkie, Sammy, Julie, Chula

SAMMY'S OFFICE ENTER LIZ AND JUNKIE. HE TAKES OUT A SMALL BAG OF TOOLS AND EASILY UNLOCKS THE DOOR TO SAMMY'S OFFICE. SHE HANDS HIM A SMALL FOLDED ENVELOPE OF HEROINE. JUNKIE EXITS. LIZ ENTERS THE OFFICE AND LOOKS AROUND. LIZ OPENS THE DESK DRAWER AND TAKES OUT THE FIFTH, EXAMINES IT AND RETURNS IT WITHOUT DRINKING. SHE TRIES OPENING ONE DRAWER, HOWEVER, FINDS IT LOCKED. SHE SITS AT THE DESK AND TAKES OUT HER RIG AND PROCEEDS TO FIX. ENTER JULIE WATCHING LIZ

WITH CURIOSITY. SHE BEGINS TO SING, SAX
ACCOMPANYING HER.

JULIE: *Soft magic, brings him to your side
He walks in and you go tongue-tied
Don't know what you believe in
Or who you've been deceivin'
But once you are in arms like his
There's nothing you will miss, Ms. Liz.
Crazy for that man's craftsmanship.
Soft magic's got you in its grip.*

JULIE EXITS WITH THE CLOSE OF THE SONG. LIZ
HAS BY THIS TIME TURNED THE CHAIR TO FACE THE
WINDOW. ENTER SAMMY. HE IS EXHAUSTED FROM
SPENDING THE LAST THREE DAYS WITH WEBBER
KEEPING SURVEILLEANCE IN DOGTOWN. HE TURNS ON
A MINI RECORDER AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

SAM: Sally, when you type this up, I want four
copies instead of the usual three. The police
are going to want a copy. This is case 1297,
Dominguez comma Mary, also goes by the name
of Chula. And believe, me Sally the nickname

suits her to a T. I know what you're thinking so don't quote me. Okay, you ready?

October second. Webber and I watched Manny Consuelo's apartment for three days. He looks quite capable of doing the old lady. To thicken the soup, it turns out that he's Chula's boyfriend. That could mean a lot of things. But before I turn anything into the police, I want to discuss this with the girl. Whether she suspects something, why she didn't tell me about Manny. What gives in general. From what Webber tell me, Adele was a piece of work and apparently ran her old man and the business with an iron hand, so I'm going to talk to him and—

SUDDENLY HE BECOMES AWARE OF ANOTHER PRESENCE.

Julie?

LIZ: SWIVELS TO FACE HIM. Who's Julie?

SAM: How'd you get in here?

LIZ: Friends in high places.

SAM: What do you want?

LIZ: I want to know who this Julie is.

SAM: What do you want, Liz?

LIZ: Fifty bucks.

SAM: I'm never that drunk-

LIZ: Don't flatter yourself.

SAM: Look, I been up all night. REACHES INTO
DESK FOR FIFTH AND SINKS INTO SOFA DRINKING
FROM BOTTLE.

LIZ: Lucky you.

SAM: Look at you. Shit-faced.

LIZ: I am not shit-faced. I'm...soft. You were
wonderful.

SAM: You haven't been doing that shit in here,
have you? All I need is you overdosing in my
office.

LIZ: You really don't remember.

SAM: Remember what?

LIZ: Guys used to look at me. You know why?
Because I was fun to look at. You know what
I mean by fun?

SAM: Liked a haunted house. Do me a favor. I'm
dog-tired. Get the hell out of here so I can
get some sleep.

LIZ: Then...something happened. I got mixed up
with this little nightmare. Remember that
horse, the one that ghost-Casper the Friendly
Ghost, used to ride his cute little horse.
Nightmare. So perfect...I must be looking for
perfection. That's it.

SAM: You do that shit up all the time?

LIZ: Not all the time.

SAM: How often?

LIZ: Less often than you swill that swill you
swill.

SAM: TAKES OUT PILLOW AND BLANKET FROM THE BOTTOM
FILE DRAWER. It's not saying much. I'm
tired, Lizzie. I'm dog-assed beat. EYES
CLOSING. You can watch me sleep.

LIZ: They never look at me now, not to see me.
Not to see sweet Lizzie. I do it too much. I know. You ever know someone you liked a lot. A friend, a really good friend who you could say anything to and who told you his heart? And you know by the theme of what you say to each other that this friend is dying. Dying in the void.

SAM: What void?

LIZ: The void, Sammy. All by himself—oh what a sad dream. And you know if you could just come around and love him one step further you'd change his life. He'd go for it and you'd just fucking change his life. But you can't get it up for him. So you just let him slip into—I mean further and further into that terrible void. No matter how you dig him it ain't the right kind of dig. All by his lonely, lonely self.

SAM: EYES CLOSED. Yeah.

LIZ: Yeah?

SAM: Yeah once I thought that. We might've been able to work something out.

LIZ: Really?

SAM: Hmmm. The way things play out. Probably not.

LIZ: Probably not. You read?

SAM: Never read.

LIZ: But you read—? That guy...I can't fucking remember but it was a guy. It's always a guy. You just wait—POINTING AT NOTHING. See it? Fooled you.

SAM: You're on private property.

LIZ: You said you don't believe in private property.

SAM: Sacred sleeping grounds.

LIZ: You Indian?

SAM: Yeah...private sleeping grounds.

LIZ: You said—HEAD DROPS. Sammy—

SAM: FROM OVERPOWERING SLEEP. What?

LIZ: I want to feel the pain of me kicking and
kicking and kicking...like a new born baby...

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 5 - Manolo

MANOLO AND JOCK. JAIL VISITING ROOM

JOCK: What's going on, dude?

MANOLO: It's a joke, Man. They think it was me who
killed and robbed Adela Dominguez—

JOCK: What? You mean that broad who owned the
restaurant?

MANOLO: Yeah.

JOCK: How can that be?

MANOLO: Circumstantial evidence. Listen, Adela's
daughter, her name is Chula—Chula and me have
been seeing each other—

JOCK: You were screwing her daughter?

MANOLO: LOOKING COLDLY AT JOCK. Find out who's the
private Dick she hired—

JOCK: A detective?

MANOLO: Chula couldn't let it rest—and she talked about getting somebody. I mean, you can't blame her for wanting to know who offed her own mother. Maybe the guy she hired found out something and put the finger on me. I was there soon after it happened—

JOCK: With Chula?

MANOLO: No man, Adela was our South side line—

JOCK: STUNNED BY THIS REVELATION. Adela?

MANOLO: I showed up that night to make my usual pick-up. Fifty grand. But I think the killer got it. Either somehow he knew about it, or who knows, maybe she gave it to him trying to save her own neck. But normally she put it in a special place in the men's room—it was her idea, she'd seen it on TV—and I'd order dinner, eat and make the pick up, no sweat. The PI she hired, find out what you can about him.

JOCK: I'll get on it right away.

MANOLO: Great. I know I can trust you but under no circumstances do you mess with Chula—you got me? She's gone through enough as it is. If I know my lady, she's thrown the business to some local guy in the neighborhood.

JOCK: What about bail?

MANOLO: I got Silva taking care of that end—But they ain't going to make it easy. They want me here—which comes to the other thing I need you to do for me.

JOCK: You name it, Manny.

MANOLO: I think Janowsky might be getting nervous up there in his ivory powdered nostrils

JOCK: I never liked doing business with him. When the heat's on. the Janowskys plead mid-life crises and get a slap on the wrist while the rest of us take it in the ass. Mid-life crises, or too many "M & M's" and get a slap on the wrist while you and me eat shit.

MANOLO: That's why I don't want to take any chances. I got a safe deposit box where I keep my insurance papers on him.

JOCK: Yeah?

MANOLO: They're my ticket out of here. So what you gotta do, Jock is first of all, the key to my apartment is taped on the back side of the drainpipe...

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 6 - The Bartender

Sam, Liz, Julie, Chula.

OFFICE IT IS NOON THE NEXT DAY. LIZ HAS LEFT. SAMMY IS ASLEEP ON THE SOFA. JULIE IS PACING THE ROOM.

JULIE: It's the layers of sadness in her eyes when she splits back to Steel Toes that leaves a wound in the Bartender. One that doesn't close—Which like any opening, be it mind flesh or body flesh, makes you sensitive...Changes in the weather...sun, rain, tears. The atmosphere generated by others.

SAM: IN HIS SLEEP. He sees...

JULIE: He begins to perceive life in an encyclopedia of symbols, so mundane people and ordinary

events take on a timelessness. The woman trying to make a dimple in her boyfriend's cheek, *la India* singing Peruvian songs on the bus, the incidence of puke on the street after Christmas Day. And even though he carries the burden of her eyes with him, the Bartender begins to enjoy this new wealth of his.

Then one day, the Saxophonist—

PLAYS A RIFF ON AN IMAGINARY SAX.

an old guy, doesn't show up. In all the time the Bartender's worked that gig, the Saxophonist never missed his Sunday. The Bartender finds himself climbing these bleak stairs, making up cynical excuses. The door's unlocked and the Saxophonist is lying in bed. He opens his eyes, sees the Bartender, makes this feeble gesture at the sax, with a voice dry as Central Valley dust, says, Play, and lets out a death rattle that seems to go on forever. The Bartender notices a collection of old 78's with a Victorola you wind up and has one of those cornucopia

speakers. He plays a Robert Johnson, then a Buddy Powell—

SAM: IN HIS SLEEP. Powell.

JULIE: Yeah, until the sun comes up. Then he gives the concierge—

SAM: Manager.

JULIE: Manager enough bread to see the old guy's buried proper and splits, taking the sax with him. When he gets home he opens the case—Woah—Velvet—decades old, wax, the human smells of a lifetime of smoky jazz joints and stage door crap games. Brass. As he lifts out the little god—it's a tenor sax—an entirely new feeling rises up in him. There's something in the way the keys or the buttons—look that up—click-click when he presses them, the design etched on the bell of the horn. The silence pushes against his four remaining senses, invisible, air pushing through the convolutions of the sax and coming out music. He brings the mouthpiece to his lips when—

SAM: IN HIS SLEEP. The phone rings.

TELEPHONE RINGS. ONCE STARTLING SAMMY AWAKE.
TWICE TO MAKE HIM REALIZE THE TELEPHONE IS
RINGING AND THIRD TIME TO GIVE HIM PAUSE.
THE ANSWERING MACHINE TAKES THE CALL.

ANSWERING MACHINE:

Sammy. This is David. The time is 11:58. I
know you're there because you never rise
before noon. You're not going to make me use
crude language. Just pay the rent. You owe
me. I won't keep you long. I know my
limitations. Do you? Maybe you don't know
the one about you can't get away with not
paying your rent. I'm hanging up—I could say
more— but I don't want to tie up the line—
Somebody might be trying to hire you right
now. Remember, I've got your number. HANGS
UP.

SAM: I'll never get back to sleep now. That crazy
idiot. I can't even sleep in my own bed.
REACHES FOR THE BOTTLE.

JULIE: Good. Let's write. His wound makes him aware of a wounded society—Let's not be afraid to get political. Write this down, The Bartender—his thinking is so loud by now he can see it right before his very eyes.

SAM: It wasn't so bad, hanging around that building for three days. Living in a rented van with Webber—once I got him to take a shower. I didn't have to say much, Webber can hold up his end if it's tied to a half gallon of cheap California.

JULIE: The Bartender can't forget the last breath. He wonders if it can be done on the sax...A guy like the old man had to have a set of lungs—Where are you going?

SAM: To buy a bottle of aspirin.

JULIE: Top drawer.

SAMMY TAKES ASPIRIN OUT AND FUMBLES WITH PILLS.

JULIE: I'm what's keeping you alive—

SAM: He finally shows. Fresh as a daisy. Bound in leather. A smut book. Gotta hand it to Webber.

CROSSES TO DOOR.

JULIE: Where you going now?

SAM: OPENING DOOR. To piss—!

CHULA IS OUTSIDE THE DOOR WITH AN AUTOMATIC LEVELED ON SAMMY. SHE IS SMART ENOUGH TO NOT STAND SO CLOSE THAT HE CAN KNOCK IT FROM HER GRASP. HE BACKS INTO THE OFFICE AS SHE ADVANCES. SHE CLOSES THE DOOR WITH HER FOOT. JULIE HAS DISAPPEARED IN HER USUAL WAY. SHE BEGINS SQUIRTING SAM WITH IT.

SAM: Hey—

CHULA: I hired you to catch the drug addict who killed my mother, not the man I was with the night she died.

SAM: Give me that—

CHULA: You'd be dangerous if you weren't such an dummy.

SAM: TAKING GUN FROM HER.

CHULA: Ow! You could use a bath, you know.

SAM: You call me a dummy, but I call you a liar.
You were not with him that night, and that
makes you look very bad.

CHULA: They've put him in jail.

SAM: Who?

CHULA: What do you mean who?—Manolo!

SAM: You mean the same pimp-fuck dealer who lives
in Dogtown?

CHULA: Silver Heights and he's no pimp.

SAM: If your Manny is in the slammer, it could be
for any number of things not excluding
suspicion of murder, but it wasn't me to put
him in there.

CHULA: It wasn't?

SAM: When did they get him?

CHULA: Last night. They won't let me see him. They
say, he refuses to see me. They're lying.

Something terrible is going to happen. What have you found out?

SAM: TAKES HIS TIME LIGHTING A CIGARETTE. KEEPS A STEADY GAZE ON HER. SITS ON THE DESK.

CHULA: What're you staring at me like that for?

SAM: A girl like you should be used to it.

CHULA: Drop dead. STARTS TO GET UP.

SAMMY SQUIRTS HER WITH THE GUN.

CHULA: Hey—

SAM: Sit down. I've been thinking about how you and me's never had a heart to heart. F'instance, I'd just love to hear how you and Manny got to be such bosom buddies.

CHULA: What's Manny got to do with it?

HE SQUIRTS HER AGAIN.

Give me that gun. SHE TAKES IT FROM HIM. He used to come into the restaurant once or twice a month. Another regular. Sometimes I'd be there...then more often, he'd come in

on the days I worked. We just joked around.
Nothing special. Just happened.

SAM: What did your parents have to say about your
joking?

CHULA: You don't know my parents. They like to
pretend I'm twelve. Except for my dad
lately, but I think he just wants to be nosy.

SAM: So without any guidance from your parents you
figured out he was a great guy.

CHULA: What're you—a moral minority investigator?...
He didn't fall all over himself and I
appreciate that.

SAM: Yeah it must be tough on a woman like you.

CHULA: I'm starting my own crises center.

SAM: So he shakes your hand and leaves you at the
front door and you fall head over heels.

CHULA: Get to the point, Mr. Sanchez.

SAM: You ever meet any of his pals?

CHULA: No.

SAM: Didn't he have friends?

CHULA: One time at his place—he'd usually turn the phone off when I was there—but this time I guess he forgot. He thought I was in the kitchen. I heard him say, Hey Partner. Then he closed the door. That's the only time. I don't see what this has got to with—

SAM: What—how much do you really know about this fellow of yours?

CHULA: Enough to tell you Manny had no reason to—

SAM: Another thing eating at me is why you should want to keep everything from your old man. Isn't he interested in finding out what happened to his own wife?

CHULA: Does *your* Daddy know where you are?

SHE WAITS FOR AN ANSWER BUT GETS NONE.

He believes what the police say, the delivery men—

SAM: And what you tell him.

CHULA: At least I'm on his side.

SAM: I think you're a very nice young lady, and you truly have your father's interest at heart. I want you to go home, or to your Business Management class, or wherever it is you're already late for. If you should suddenly remember anything—the slightest little thing, you think, you might ring me up and tell me about it?

CHULA RISES AND EXITS.

CHULA: I'm counting on you, Mr. Sanchez. OBLIGINGLY SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HER.

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 7 - The gun walks away

Jock and Liz

OFFICE. ENTER LIZ. THIS TIME SHE PICKS THE LOCK HERSELF. AFTER A MOMENT THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN. SHE ENTERS THE OFFICE, LOOKS AROUND, GOES TO DESK, FINDS THE BOTTLE, TAKES A SIP. DOESN'T CARE FOR IT. PULLS AT THE LOCKED DRAWER. MANAGES TO PICK IT OPEN. PULLS OUT A SMALL BUT DEADLY LOOKING HAND GUN.

EXAMINES IT. BEGINS STRUTTING AROUND THE ROOM WITH IT IN A MOCK COPS AND ROBBERS GAME. SHE HEARS A NOISE. JOCK HAS STOPPED OUTSIDE THE DOOR. LIZ HIDES UNDER THE DESK. JOCK FINDS THE DOOR UNLOCKED. ENTERS CAUTIOUSLY. BEGINS GOING THROUGH FILE DRAWERS. FINDS A FILE. TAKES IT TO DESK TO EXAMINE IT. FILE CONTAINS CONTRACT AND PAPERS CHULA GAVE TO SAMMY. JOCK DISCOVERS LIZ AND PULLS HER OUT.

JOCK: What the Hell—?

LIZ: Ow!

JOCK: What're you doing here?

LIZ: Please—I was just looking for food—don't call the cops—

JOCK: Food? SCRUTINIZING HER. There's nothing worth stealing here. I'll tell you that right now. Now get out before I get mad.

LIZ: Thanks Mister, I—

JOCK: Beat it!

LIZ EXITS.

JOCK DIALS THE TELEPHONE.

County Jail, please. Yeah, dial it for me.
Hello? Yeah, I need to talk to one of your
prisoners. PAUSE. Very Important. He's
being held for murder and I know he didn't do
it. I don't know what everybody says, I only
know he didn't do it, and I need to talk to
the guy as soon as possible. Please? Thank
you. Have a good day. COVERS MOUTH OF
RECIEVER. You little shit. PRESSES SPEAKER
AND SETS THE RECEIVER DOWN ON THE DESK AS HE
READS THROUGH THE FILE. HE LOOKS IN THE DRINK
DRAWER AND FINDS SAM'S JACK DANIELS AND POURS
HIMSELF A SHOT AS HE CONTINUES TO READ THE
FILE.

Sanchez. Can this the same Sammy--? Not with
a name like Sanchez. Can't be. Okay, okay,
okay, this is what I'm looking for! MOVES
HIS LIPS AS HE READS.

PHONE: Hello?

JOCK: PICKS UP THE RECEIVER. Manny? What you got,
your own phone? I can't believe they got the

phone to you so quick! LAUGHS. Making friends wherever you go. Okay, I found this detective guy. He was spying on you for three days with some guy named Webber. But I don't think he's the one who reported you to the police. It looks like he's still nosing around. Maybe he likes to be thorough. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. When? Okay, he'll be there.

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 8 - Sammy meets Manny

Sammy and Manolo

JAIL VISITING ROOM. MANOLO IS STANDING HOLDING OUT HIS HAND TO SHAKE WITH SAMMY.

MANOLO: But you can call me Manny—

SAM: IGNORES PROFFERED HAND. Lay it on. I'm in a hurry.

MANOLO: APPRAISING It's about Chula. I know you're working for her—

SAM: TURNING TO LEAVE.

MANOLO: She told me—But you got the wrong man—I
 didn't kill the old lady.

SAM: STOPS.

MANOLO: We wanted to get married—

SAM: And the old lady wasn't overjoyed at making
 you one of the family.

MANOLO: She knew nothing about us—

SAM: You just know that.

MANOLO: I know—

SAM: You got a perfect alibi, the daughter of the
 murdered woman have come down and testify—

MANOLO: She's had enough trouble.

SAM: You may be the last of a dying breed.

MANOLO: Chula doesn't know anything about what I do.

SAM: She says exactly the same thing. Tell me,
 how do women fall for scum like you?

MANOLO: Look, I didn't get you here to talk about my Karma, Man. If you want to do your job right then keep looking, 'cause I'm not the killer.

SAM: Chula says you were together, What were you doing at Adela's the night she was killed?

MANOLO: COVERING HIS SURPRISE WITH A WRY SMILE.

Delivering. The old lady was making a fortune that had nothing to do with rice and beans. She was dead when I got there. They got a lot more than the day's receipts, Man. Hey—I swear it on my sweet whore-mother's grave, Asshole. Adela was in the business.

SAM: Adela was no junkie connection.

MANOLO: You're right about that. She never bothered with damn junkies, except to shoot one—so I've heard tell. I'm talking fifty grand. Now only you and me, and whoever offed her knows that.

SAM: What about your partner?

MANOLO: What're you talking—I do business no hangers on—

SAM: See you later—

MANOLO: Wait. Okay. I got a partner. But he wouldn't do me. We're partners before business—way before.

SAM: Seems like you're the kind of feller whose cup runs over with meaningful relationships.

MANOLO: The son of a picker got sour grapes?

SAM: What's his name?

MANOLO: If it'll make your more cooperative, Jock McGuire.

SAM: Jock McGuire?

MANOLO: You know him?

SAM: How long had she been dead?

MANOLO: What do I look like, a forensic expert? I just split—after checking for the bread—it wasn't in it's usual place, and I got the hell out of there.

SAM: What makes you think the killer got it?

MANOLO: She'd leave it in a special hiding place only she and I knew about it.. Maybe she tried to make a deal—who knows what happened. That's all I know.

SAM: What about her old man?

MANOLO: Johnny? He stayed in the kitchen. Adela was the business head. Kind of a pathetic clown, but very devoted to his daughter. Afraid of the old lady.

SAM: Maybe you underestimate the whole family.

MANOLO: SHRUGS. That's for you to find out. Just keep her out of it.

SAM: *Que milagro*, a sensitive soul strung out on a heartbreaker. *Hasta luego, Compañero*.

EXITS.

ACT II SCENE 9 - Jejune, California

Liz and Webber.

ALL NIGHT DOUGH-NUT SHOP LIZ AND WEBBER
SITTING WITH A CUP OF COFFEE AND A COUPLE OF
DO-NUTS.

LIZ: ...You've known him a long time haven't you?

WEBBER: Way back...Time and place.

LIZ: What place?

WEBBER: Jejune, California.

LIZ: Jejune? I never heard of any town called
 Jejune. What kind of place is it?

WEBBER: Tragedies and maladies and families. Stuff
 like anywhere. Lot a dust.

LIZ: Dust.

WEBBER: Dry dirt and grapes. Sometimes rain. Not
 often, but when it did, it was something to
 see. Mud. Goddam mud. Suck the soul right
 out you. One time when I was kid, I found a
 shoe half baked into the ground. Cracked me
 up. Still does. Like that was all left of

some poor schnook who'd tried to get
somewhere but...nothing but a shoe. You'd
have to see it.

LIZ: Yeah. SMILES TO HERSELF. Yeah. And who is
Julie?

WEBBER: Julie? You know 'bout Julie?

LIZ: Well...I heard.

WEBBER: That was a sad, terrible thing.

LIZ: What was?

WEBBER: Such a beautiful kid. Only sixteen years old
when they found her. The family was
devastated. And Sammy—he was maybe 10, 11.
Didn't talk for a long time. Just kept to
himself. Never played baseball again. I
guess he thought he was responsible.

LIZ: Why did he think it was his fault?

WEBBER: You know how people do. I think he was
supposed to walk her home from work. One of
the rancher's houses where she had a little
cleaning gig. He fooled around, playing with
the ball, you know kids. Somewhere he missed

her and she never made it home. It was one of those coincidences of events that make a tragedy, I reckon. Like a line of dominos, like a leap into nothingness, Darlin'—that's what it was...

LIZ: You know how many people I've seen die? Seven. It's happened, it seems so many times. It's funny, everything goes crazy—trying to make 'em wake up or stop bleeding. Of course, I do my part. But inside me I'm feeling bored, ...numb. As in, here we go again. One of these days, I'm going to walk out the door.

WEBBER: One of these days it might be you.

LIZ: Then I won't have to walk. LAUGHS. Besides, I'm cleaning up. Soon.

WEBBER: Of course, darlin'.

LIZ: I'm sure he said, Julie.

WEBBER: Who?

LIZ: You want my donut?

SCENE 10 - Johnny and Jock

ADELA'S RESTAURANT JOHNNY IS AT HIS BOOTH COUNTING UP THE DAY'S RECEIPTS. JOCK HAS ENTERED AND STANDS BEHIND JOHNNY OBSERVING HIM UNTIL JOHNNY DETECTS HIS PRESENCE AND LOOKS UP. JOCK IS WEARING LEATHER GLOVES.

JOHNNY: Jock. How are you? I didn't even hear you come in. Did that Efrinio leave the back door unlocked again?

JOCK: LAYING KEY ON TABLE. Thought you might want this back.

JOHNNY: You should've got rid of it right away.

JOCK: It was in a safe place. An extra key always comes in handy.

JOHNNY: Can I get you a beer? A shot of something? That's right, I forget you're a O.J. man.

JOCK: I'm fine. DRUMMING HIS FINGERS ON THE TABLE FOR SEVERAL UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS. Funny thing, I did just about everything back in 'Nam. It was a good place to be crazy. I fit

right in. Had a grudge against everyone. Pretty late in the game, they sent in this one guy, called himself Tex. He's hot shit—you know the type—used to getting his own way. A wise guy. I was on him. I made sure he never put one over on me. I took pride in it. I'd send him out, sure he'd never make it back. But he did. I began to think maybe he wasn't such a flake after all. The sonofabitch saved my ass one day. Risked his when he could've let me eat it. That shit about guys doing their CO's happened all the time. We were partners from then on. Like a Chinese credo. REFERRING TO KEY. Thought you might want that as a souvenir.

JOHNNY: Souvenir? What kind of talk is that?

JOCK: We can save the belly-laughs for later.

JOHNNY: SENSING ANGER IN JOCK. You ain't upset 'cause I sent you that money, are you? It was nothing. Just a token. I know you didn't ask for it—

JOCK: No complaints, Johnny. In fact, I came here to even up the score. I owe you. PULLS OUT FIFTY THOUSAND AND LAYS IT ON THE TABLE.

JOHNNY: What the Hell is this? *Madre de Guadalupe*—how much is it? Where did you get it?

JOCK: She tried to change my mind with it. I wasn't sure what to do with it at first...Sometimes, I just let things lie while I think it over. Call me slow, but after a while it comes to me. I killed a lot of people over there, people I had nothing against. Adela, she was like the squeal of a chalk board at the back of my skull. Then there was you, the whipped dog. The best Mexican food in town prepared by a whipped dog. What do you think?

JOHNNY: You—you're who put the idea in my head in the first place.

JOCK: You knew Adela was moonlighting, she and Manny, wheeling and dealing. I don't think you cared about that part, I know you. All you wanted was to get her off your back. But

did you know about Chula and Manny? I think you figured that out later. I can't believe you had it planned from the start. Or who knows? It doesn't matter, because once you found out, you couldn't see your slut of a daughter hooked up with someone like Manny. That's probably when you cooked up the latest plan and tipped off the cops on Manny. And you wind up killing two birds with one stone. Except for that I'm still here.

JOHNNY: What're you getting at?

JOCK: This morning they find Manny in his cell.
Dead. Hanging.

JOHNNY: This guy, you say Adela knew, killed himself?

JOCK: What you didn't know was Manny and me were partners since when we were in the same platoon.

JOHNNY: Look, I'm sorry for this friend of yours but I had nothing to do with it. I don't even know a Manny.

JOCK: He came in often enough. He was a regular.

JOHNNY: I don't see nothing back there in the kitchen. Why are you looking at me like that for?

JOCK: I knew Manny long enough to know it wasn't suicide.

JOHNNY: I don't know what you're thinking—

JOCK: You know exactly what I'm thinking—

JOHNNY: You're on the wrong track—Maybe one of the other prisoners or the cops—Think man! I don't know nobody to kill this guy!

JOCK: I'm not saying you arranged to have him killed. The cops said, it probably was a drug thing or maybe gang related. But the point is you're the one who put him in jail to begin with, whether you tied the noose or not—it's your fault.

JOHNNY: *Esa India* kept me in the dark about everything—How was I to know she had any other kind of business? I had nothing to do with snitching on Manny. You're grabbing at straws, *Hombre*, Relax, have a beer—an orange juice—you're just upset—

JOCK: You upset me...a little shit like you.

STANDING UP.

JOHNNY: How much do you want—Just tell me—

JOCK: She said those exact same words... GRABS

JOHNNY BY THE HAIR TO EXPOSE THE THROAT,

REACHING INTO HIS BREAST POCKET.

LIGHTS BLACK.

SCENE 11 - Webber's last song

Jock, Webber and Julie OUTSIDE ADELA'S
RESTAURANT

ENTER WEBBER, BOTTLE IN HAND AND INEBRIATED.

WEBBER: SINGING THE WORDS FROM *Oklahoma*. There's a
bright golden haze on the Sunshine... No-
no...wait a sec...There's a bright golden haze
on the...? STOPPING AT BACK-ENTRANCE OF
RESTAURANT. Damn! I used to have a mind
like a rabbit trap—loop d'loop. SINGING
Here we go loop d' loop Here we go loop d'
li... Remember when we did it in the school
play...The best. I used to be on the edge,

The world was flat and I was on the horizon... There's a bright golden haze on the hori— No, no, no, no! But I remember everybody who was in it. Nancy Leones was the lead. What a lovely... MAKES CURVING MOTION. She had. And when little Julie sang, "I can't say no..." And who was that kid who played Jud—He was perfect. Big, dumb...Wait a minute—it's coming—SQUEEZING EYES SHUT TO REMEMBER. JOCK STEPS OUT FROM THE RESTAURANT TAKING HIS HAND OUT OF HIS BREAST POCKET IN A REASSURING MOTION. WEBBER OPENS HIS EYES AND FINDS HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH JOCK.

WEBBER: TAKES A DRINK. You were Judd! Jock McGuire, is that you or did I make you appear?

JOCK: Who are you?

WEBBER: How...? I—I'm Webber. Larry Webber. You remember me? Oklahoma. The football team, First Line. You were the Captain...MAKES OUT TO TOUCH JOCK BUT THINKS BETTER. That really you?

JOCK: Webber. Yeah. Webber, how you been?

WEBBER: Fine. Great. Well, as you can see, this is me. But you look like you've been doing all right.

JOCK: Yeah.

WEBBER: Drink? OFFERS BOTTLE.

JOCK: No thanks.

WEBBER: I was just thinking about you—no really—I was trying to remember the lyrics to one of—
Remember when we did the school play?

JOCK: Sure. Yeah, I remember.

WEBBER: Hell of a long time ago. You had a think for little Julie Sanchez. Remember her?

JOCK: Yeah...

WEBBER: But you two never could get it together.

JOCK: I'll always remember her.

WEBBER: I left as soon as I could.

JOCK: So did I. Looks like you've hit on some hard times.

WEBBER: Well, some folks don't exactly see me as I am. A free man, with nothing to lose and nowhere to go but straight up from here, Jocko. Hey—How's it go? There's a bright golden haze on the...?

JOCK: Meadow.

WEBBER: Damn! Meadow—it was coming. I almost had it—on the tip of my tongue. BEGINS TO SING. There's—

JOCK: Maybe you could use a twenty.

WEBBER: A twenty?

ENTER JULIE. WALKS BEHIND JOCK LOOKING AT WEBBER. JOCK REACHES INTO BREAST POCKET PULLS OUT KNIFE AND IN ONE MOTION GRABS WEBBER, STABBING HIM THROUGH THE HEART. WEBBER STARES AT JULIE OVER JOCK'S SHOULDER.

WEBBER: Julie?

SLUMPS TO THE GROUND. JOCK IS SPOOKED BY WEBBER'S LAST WORD. HE TURNS NERVOUSLY AND QUICKLY EXITS. SAX LETS OUT A LONG WAIL AND JULIE BEGINS TO SING. SHE PULLS AT THE

CRUMPLED HEAP OF WEBBER AND THEY BEGIN A
LOOSE MODERN JAZZ DANCE TOGETHER AS JULIE
SINGS:

JULIE: *This ain't the way I heard it told—it's
turning white!*
*My feet ain't sinking to the ground—they're
treading clouds!*
Am I knocking on the door of aftermath?
Or is this another way of closing down?
Down, down, down, down
Is this another way of closing down?

*Find me a sheet of tree and the feather of
bird*
Dip it in the juice of something ripe.
Until you've stared into the apathy of Death
You're only sucking images off life, yeah

You're only sucking images off life

*St. Peter—! Don't expect me to recount what
I have seen*

*I've paid for this moment with the heartbreak
of my life.*

*Just open wide those rusty gates of yours,
Man,*

*A foreign body come this way, a foreign body
come this way...*

*A foreign body come this way, a foreign body
come this way...*

JULIE AND WEBBER EXIT.

SCENE 12 - Dénouement

Sammy, Julie, Chula, Liz, Jock, David OFFICE

ENTER SAMMY. HE HAS BEEN IN THE POLICE
STATION BEING QUESTIONED ON THE MURDER OF
JOHNNY AND WEBBER. IT IS 12 P.M. JULIE IS
AT THE TYPEWRITER. SHE DOESN'T LOOK UP WHEN
SAMMY ENTERS BUT REMAINS ENGROSSED IN
WRITING. SAMMY IGNORES HER ALSO, HEADING
STRAIGHT FOR THE JACK DANIELS. HE IS
EXHAUSTED AND DISHEVELED.

SAM: Bastards. CROSSES TO SOFA NURSING BOTTLE.

JULIE: They know as much as you do. But they have an excuse. They're police. They don't know what's going on unless they're in on it, and then they still know nothing.

SAM: I ain't god.

JULIE: You ain't much of a detective either.

SAM: I ain't god. LOOKS OVER AT JULIE, CANNOT BEAR THE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE. TURNS AWAY. I need a vacation. Away from everyone. JULIE RESUMES TYPING WITH A VENGEANCE. Can't you see I got a headache?

JULIE: The Bartender is playing the sax by now. Found himself a little gig in some dive near the docks—

SAM: So he ain't a bartender no more—

JULIE: Two nights a week. The other days he's still mixing scotch and water. The sax is his love. You have any idea what that means?

SAM: Why'd you make him a bartender in the first place?

JULIE: He's your baby.

SAM: Bartenders. They're the high priests of a lost art.

JULIE: They know how to listen.

SAM: They know when to keep quiet. Not the college boys or scuba divers. The real McCoys. They see you when you're jacking off with self-pity. They know when you got nothing to mouth but a tepid draft and they don't give a shit 'cause they're always on your side—unless you start messing with the property or closing time. TAKES A LONG SLOW DRINK. It's a slow night. The Bartender doesn't see or hear nothing. The sax he holds like a baby. Everything the old man knew seems to've passed through the sax to the Bartender and he's blowing like there's—

JULIE: I know that song.

SAM: The dozen or so die-hards are squirming in their seats—

JULIE: Except they can't move a muscle.

SAM: It's good. Fucking sweet.

JULIE: Of course it's gotta be years later.

SAM: This is now and he's seen a million miles.
He's remembering.

JULIE: Remembering what?

SAM: Remembering the cool chill of the morning,
the silhouettes of the pickers as they make
their way across the fields of lettuce. The
attitude of each one in their separate state
of dream or undream. The rise, the apex, the
decline of the day's heat. And finally, the
sun at the western horizon, going down on the
kind of day that doesn't turn the burners
down—

JULIE: But something else—Dig, Sammy, dig—

SAM: A girl with long, thick, black eyelashes and
a walk unto herself. Something special.
Singing. Sweet, sweet, she's singing. The
kid walking next to her listening to her
song. It doesn't have lyrics. She just
knows how to sing. When the kid tries to
sing, dissonant noises come out. MAKES LIKE
A SAX. Blap, blap, blap. But he hears the

words as she sings the music, and he makes up the lyrics inside him.

The Bartender is lifted by his own music—two inches from the plywood platform of a funky stage. Lifted by the sound that says everything in some reversal of language of a nameless riff that rushes up to—then suddenly shy, skirts the blue-black fringe of her eyelashes and the innocence of a young girl's life—

JULIE: I've had those dreams.

SAM: The last breath—the way it seems to go BREATHING OUT. Forever...When he sees her. The light across her face highlighting those eyes, big and somber as the moon—

JULIE: I don't like it.

SAM: Why not?

JULIE: Webber too.

SAM: The killer must've run right into him, so he didn't take any chances being identified.

JULIE: Yeah...

SAM: But what?

JULIE: He was always the class clown.

SAM: Pure chance.

JULIE: There's always pure chance...That morning, I put this on. It was my favorite shirt. You were such a brat.

SAM: Remember Jock McGuire?

JULIE: Raises his ugly head once again—

SAM: Turns up, all right. Manny's partner. Right here, in River City.

JULIE: Like a bad penny.

SAM: I don't like it.

JULIE: It's too fucking romantic. You're born, you live, you die. So what? So the bartender learns to play the sax. Who gives a shit? She stays with Steel Toes—he gobbles her up once piece at a time. You're letting them off the hook—*again*.

SAM: I'm just a romantic fool dreaming up sentimental crap.

JULIE: With the audacity, the gall, the temerity...to mutter, to grunt, to expose his dream. Forget it. You can insult your audience, outrage and certainly bore them—

SAM: But you don't want to embarrass them, because it leaves them, uh, jeez—

JULIE: Naked. You know, it always seems I'm looking at twenty minutes to midnight when I get these, these rhythms—the periphery of a conversation I heard before, maybe a thousand times—but then never revealed—I know, I'm not making sense—

SAM: Shut up and keep talking—

JULIE: If we could come back as anything we at some point in our lives wanted to be—

SAM: We'd still be digging up graves in our private family plots.

JULIE: Burn the whole thing down. Torch it.
"Terremoto en las Americas".

SAM: You know damn well he doesn't get the girl—

JULIE: She's got a whole other set of problems.
She's got more baggage than the Queen of
England. She's drowning—you're drowning in
it—

SAM: It's the story of this asshole—

JULIE: An asshole like any other asshole—

SAM: Does an asshole dream?

JULIE: Does an asshole fall silently in the forest?

SAM: Does an asshole pick itself up by it's
bootstraps?

JULIE: Does an asshole dance to the music 'neath the
light of the silvery moon?

SAM: How much wood would an asshole chuck if an
asshole could chuck wood?

JULIE: The asshole was there. There at that very
moment. The asshole was with his sister
before she died.

SAM: What? What was that again?

JULIE: So here I am—In that moment, Sammy, in the vertigo of change, when everything is darkest, falling—

CHULA ENTERS, APPROACHING THE DOOR AND KNOCKS.

and you don't know if you're going to crash—splat! Or land on all fours—a poetry of resolution—

CHULA KNOCKS AGAIN.

SAM: Who is it?

JULIE: You know who it is.

CHULA: It's me, Chula—Can I come in?

SAM: TO JULIE. Get lost will you? JULIE BACKS INTO THE SHADOWS ONE HAND EXTENDED, AS IF FOR THE LAST TIME. SHE GENTLY BRUSHES AGAINST HIS CHEEK. SAMMY LOOKS AT HER PUZZLED. HE CROSSES TO OPEN THE DOOR. FOR A MOMENT HE STARTS TO REEL.

CHULA: Help me... SHE DOESN'T ENTER. I don't understand why.

SAM: GENTLY TAKING HER INTO THE OFFICE. It's okay, sweetheart. I know all about it.

CHULA: You do? How'd you find out—when?

SAM: I just got back from the station. They had me down there since 2 a.m. I knew Webber.

CHULA: Webber?

SAM: The guy they found outside the restaurant.

CHULA: You knew him? He must have seen who did it.

SAM: Only makes sense.

CHULA: But why? I don't think I can...I don't think I can—

SAM: It's okay. It's all right.

CHULA: Everybody. Everybody. There's nobody left.

SAM: What are you talking, everybody?

CHULA: Manolo too—Didn't you know?

SAM: What? What happened?

CHULA: You didn't know. I just found out this morning. I tried to see him again. They

told me. But I knew—I just knew something like this was going to happen. Do you mind if I have a drink? HANDS HER THE BOTTLE. GOES INTO FILE DRAWER AND TAKES OUT A GLASS. CHULA, HOWEVER, TAKES A DRINK FROM THE BOTTLE AND COUGHS.

CHULA: People really like this stuff? TAKES ANOTHER SIP.

SAM: They don't even bother with a cup.

CHULA: My mother had a friend. I was little. She said to my mother, she's too pretty—trouble will come. My mother laughed. But I remembered it. She was right—

SAM: Sweetheart—you could've looked like an ass walking backward, it had nothing to do with you—

CHULA: Then why do I feel this way?

SAM: I think you'd better sit down first. Look, I don't know how much you know about your mother...About her...

CHULA: About her what?

SAM: About her and Manny.

CHULA: What are you talking about?

SAM: Your mother was financing Manny's drug operation.

CHULA REACTS AS IF STRUCK.

SAM: Are you okay?

CHULA: It only makes sense. I found a Swiss account among her papers...I'm filthy rich. What else can you call it? But what about my father?

SAM: I don't think so. I can't be sure, it's just a hunch. Maybe the people she knew thought he was—anyway there's a whole lot of money missing and—

CHULA: You mean this? PULLS OUT 50 THOU. ENTER LIZ FROM OUTSIDE. SHE HEARS VOICES IN THE OFFICE, AND LISTENS AT THE DOOR.

SAM: Where did that come from?

CHULA: It was with my father when I found him.

SAM: Manny told me whoever killed your mother had the money.

CHULA: No—that can't be. My own father? But then who killed him? And all this money—it wouldn't make sense to leave—

SAM: I don't think it was him either.

CHULA: His blood was on some of the bills—I had to wash it—

SAM: Your father's blood, your mother's, Manny's,...and Webber's. I think the money was returned. But why? Especially Webber—could the killer have been that afraid of being recognized—the level of alcohol in Webber's blood—Or did Webber know the guy?

JOCK WALKS UP BEHIND LIZ. HE PUSHES HER INTO SAM'S OFFICE.

JOCK: Hello, Sammy.

SAM: You!

JOCK: Your old man asked me—for free, to knock off your old lady. Then he tips off the cops on Manny. He set it up to make it seem like

Manny had a motive. He was surprised to find out that me and Manny were partners. Manny was gonna beat the rap with these papers on Janowsky.

SAM: The Police Commissioner?

JOCK: Very good, for a dumb detective.

CHULA: You bastard!—

LUNGES AT JOCK. SAMMY JUMPS IN, HOWEVER JOCK MANAGES TO PUSH HER OFF AND SLAMS SAMMY TO SEMI-CONSCIOUSNESS. JOCK PULLS OUT A REVOLVER.

JOCK: I'll kill you for this—

A CONFUSION OF COLORS AND EERIE REVERBERATION. OFFSTAGE, A MOTHER'S VOICE.

VOICE: Sammy go walk your sister home. It's getting late. Sammy!

SAM: I'm hurrying.

ENTER JULIE AND JOCK. HE IS WEARING A HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY SWEATER.

JULIE: I'm sorry, Jock, I can't go out with you.
I've told you already, I'm going with
Richard.

JOCK: The guy's a jerk—a nothing—

JULIE: Well, I'll tell you one thing, he doesn't act
like you, always trying to force his way on
me or anybody for that matter.

 TURNS TO LEAVE. JOCK CATCHES HER ARM.

JOCK: Julie, I'm sorry. Wait a minute, will you?

JULIE: Let go of my arm. I said let go! Stop it!

JOCK: Please, Julie, I love you—

JULIE: Don't say that...I'm sorry, Jock. I'm sorry.
Will you please let go now? I said—Look, my
little brother's up there—Stop it—Sammy!

 SAMMY ENTERS SEES THEM STRUGGLING.

SAM: Hey leave my sister alone—!

 JOCK PUSHES HIM BACK. SAMMY BANGS HIS HEAD
AND IS LIES HALF CONSCIOUS. JULIE TRIES TO
GET AT SAMMY BUT JOCK GRABS HER. SHE PICKS UP

A ROCK AND HITS HIM WHICH BRINGS OUT JOCK'S
PENT UP VIOLENCE AND ANGER.

JULIE: You pig!

JOCK: You little bitch—I'll kill you for that!

THE WAIL OF A SAXOPHONE DROWNS OUT
EVERYTHING. SAMMY COMES TO. SEES JULIE
DEAD. OFFSTAGE, HIS CHILD'S VOICE ECHOS,
OVERLAPS, AND MIXES WITH THE SAX.

SAM: "Julie—I'm sorry—Julie—I was hurrying, for
reals...I tried. I was playing. I was
playing on the way...Julie...Julie..."

SCENE RETURNS TO SAMMY'S OFFICE SAMMY IS
STILL OUT. DAVID ENTERS, DETERMINED TO
COLLECT HIS RENT. HE WALKS INTO THE OFFICE,
STARTLING JOCK. HE SHOOTS DAVID, GIVING LIZ
TIME TO PULL OUT SAMMY'S GUN AND SHOOT JOCK.
HE FALLS, REACHING INTO HIS BREAST POCKET.
CHULA JUMPS IN PREVENTING HIM FROM DOING SO.

JOCK: Pulling out the envelop. For Manny. DIES.

CHULA: TAKES THE PAPERS AND STARTS READING THEM.

LIZ: TO SAMMY. Are you all right?

SAM: What happened? SEES DAVID AND MAKES HIS WAY
TO HIM.

David! What are you doing here?

DAVID: You owe me the rent, you sonofabitch.

SAM: I paid you the rent!

DAVID: When?

SAM: Early, on the 20th of last month.

DAVID: Nobody ever pays me early.

SAM: I told you I was going to be out of town—

DAVID: No wonder. DIES.

LIZ: I see why you don't believe in private
property.

SAM: Poor guy. It's hard to admit to how crazy you
are. He was fine as long as he took those
meds every day.

LOOKS AT LIZ STILL HOLDING HIS GUN.

LIZ: I brought back your gun.

CHULA: SITS DOWN. Manny tried so hard to keep all this away from me. TO SAMMY. Some detective.

LIZ: You ever considered tending bar or something?

SAM: I was there all along. All this time I thought...I tried. But I couldn't help her. And I knew all along who killed her. It must've scared the shit out of me. She's gone. I can tell.

LIZ: Who's gone?

SAM: CALLING OUT. Julie?

LIGHTS DOWN.