

The Iron Star  
by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. THE OPEN SEA - DAY

A classic square-rigged, wooden-hulled SHIP tosses in the waves. The ship is under full sail. The canvas CRACKS and BOOMS as it runs with the wind, recklessly. They make straight for the SETTING SUN.

The LOOKOUT clings to the TOPMOST TRUCK of the main MAST. He's an English sailor, dressed in the latest style for 1758. He's peering into the distance, the ship lurching and churning under him.

LOOKOUT  
(to those below)  
Less than a mile, now!

On the POOP, the CAPTAIN looks through his GLASS. MEN and OFFICERS scurry to their duty stations. The captain is tall and narrow, a protestant with little love for the usual British Navy ostentation. He wears the uniform, but without all the starch and polish of some other officers on this ship.

CAPTAIN  
Damn! Damn them to hell.  
(Slams his glass shut.)  
Mr. Garfield!

GARFIELD turns to face the captain. He is a typical second officer with a fancy uniform and big hat. He's very young, and new to the navy. This is his first naval encounter, and he doesn't know whether to be thrilled or scared. The captain's fear is palpable and is rubbing off on Garfield.

GARFIELD  
Sir!

CAPTAIN  
Ready all ordinance. Break out the muskets and cutlasses. Someone will die today, and I pray to God it won't be us.

GARFIELD  
Aye, sir!  
(Bellowing orders to others.)  
Mr. Silver, assemble gun crews.  
Mr. Hawkins, open the weapons locker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. ABDALATI is an obsequious Egyptian, uncomfortable at sea. He knows they are being followed, and is plainly scared. He is dressed very formally with a TOPCOAT, NECKTIE; everything in the latest English style.

ABDALATI

Mr. Captain, sir, did you say guns?

CAPTAIN

I did, Mr. Abdalati.

ABDALATI

We can't be expected to fight, Mr. Captain, we might be killed.

CAPTAIN

Would they catch us, we shall be killed.

ABDALATI

But my cargo. What will happen to my cargo? You said you would convey me to the New World.

CAPTAIN

Mr. Abdalati! I am doing everything in my power to make it to the Netherlands Antilles.

Crew members run by with CUTLASSES. A CREW MEMBER replaces the HELMSMAN so he can go and get a sword.

ABDALATI

What shall I do?

CAPTAIN

Make peace with your heathen gods! And pray for our safety, sir.

Abdalati lurches away, bounced about by racing crew members.

INT. SHIP - DAY

ABDALATI stumble down a LADDER, swinging a LANTERN. He rounds a corner and makes his way down a companionway. Sailors shove past him going the opposite way with GUNS.

Abdalati drops through a HATCH into a hold. Hanging his LANTERN on a HOOK overhead, he grabs up a HAMMER and knocks the TOP off a large CASK. While he pulls out STRAW, men are SCREAMING and RUNNING on the decks above.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abdalati pulls out some rolled-up SCROLLS. He opens a SCROLL and reads. Cannon BOOM, the ship lurches, throwing Abdalati and his things around in the hold.

Adjusting the scroll to a new position, he finds what he needs.

From the cask he pulls out a small BOX, decorated with hieroglyphics. He slides the lid off the box, revealing the IRON STAR. He closes this and puts the box in one TOPCOAT POCKET.

He pulls out a long, narrow POUCH from the cask. He pulls out a small CRYSTALLINE ROD and drops the rod in another TOPCOAT POCKET.

With scroll in hand, he scrambles up out of the hold. Cannon BOOM; the ship's lurch makes Abdalati stumble and fall on the deck above.

EXT. SHIP'S POOP - DAY

ABDALATI, SCROLL flapping in the wind, is at the RAIL in the heat of battle. The two SHIPS close, the BOOM of CANNON rolls like thunder over the sea. SAILORS and MARINES SHOUT and die.

GUN-SHOT ricochets off the deck. Abdalati makes a complex series of GESTURES. He winds up, about to deliver the final mystic blow, when a unique, spurious WAVE crashes over him, knocking him to the deck. The scroll slips from his hand.

Abdalati crawls to his scroll. A CANNON-BALL blows away the rail at which he had been crouching just moments before. TIMBER flies over his head and the DECK heaves.

He grabs the Crystal Rod from his pocket. The BLUE glow renews him. Jamming the rod back in his pocket, he finds a new place in his scroll.

Cannons THUNDER, men SCREAM, Abdalati does more CHANTING and gesturing. The ships are close enough for small-arms fire.

GARFIELD

Sir, they're foundering!

CAPTAIN

Come about and finish them!

GARFIELD

We won't take them as a prize?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

To where, Mr. Garfield? They'd be tried and hanged as pirates. I'll save the admiralty the cost of a trial. Come about, I say.

GARFIELD

Port your helm! Haul those starboard sheets, God damn your eyes! Mr. Silver, a broadside to sink that ship!

SILVER (OC)

Starboard side! On my mark!

Canvas CREAKS, guns crackle. The dying SCREAM for mercy. The pirate SHIP takes a desultory shot; it is spinning, unable to make headway. The British navy vessel comes about smartly while the RIGGING is cut free, dropping into the sea.

The British navy ship fires a THUNDERING BROADSIDE into the pirate ship at the water line. The pirate ship is blasted apart, takes in water, and sinks rapidly. The CREW CHEER as they turn away from the foundering vessel.

FADE TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - NIGHT

The CAPTAIN, OFFICERS and ABDALATI are at dinner. Some of the officers are wounded. There are empty CHAIRS. The table is set with CRYSTAL, CHINA and SILVER nonetheless. The china does not all match.

CAPTAIN

That was damn fine shooting to jam her helm like that. I think I should offer a reward to the sailor who did it. Who fired that, Mr. Silver?

SILVER

I dunno, sir. None of my guns was firing when it happened.

The captain scoffs at Mr. Silver's pretended humility.

ABDALATI

Perhaps, sir, my heathen powers intervened on your ship's behalf.

This is universally scoffed at by the officers at the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

Do you say your heathen gods think that highly of one man's cargo?

ABDALATI

I didn't say gods, sir, I said powers. My heathen powers are my cargo.

DOCTOR

I say, sir, that is a bold statement. You have some all-powerful heathen deity in a cask in our hold?

ABDALATI

I beg to differ. I have some very powerful artifacts which I am bringing to the new world. You have saved me, protecting them from people who would put them to evil purposes.

DOCTOR

Powerful artifacts and evil purposes, I say. That is quite the claim. How would you substantiate such a claim, Mr. Abdalati?

CAPTAIN

Quite so. Mr. Abdalati, would you be so kind as to show us these heathen powers? I think I'd like to know how your powers were able to jam their helm.

ABDALATI

I am at your mercy, sirs. Please bear in mind that I am your passenger, and you are the Royal Navy. I trust that I have the Captain's word that I and my goods will be conveyed to the Antilles free from harm.

CAPTAIN

(unsure)  
I think you do.

ABDALATI

Very good, sir, for I will reveal something of a world unknown to you or any others on this ship.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABDALATI (CONT'D)

I feel that you should know what manner of battle you have engaged in. Those were not simple pirates. They were mercenaries hired to stop me and recover what I transport.

Abdalati pulls the small hieroglyphic BOX from his TOPCOAT POCKET. He sets this on the table. The OFFICERS express mild interest.

He spreads a clean napkin flat and smooth on the table. He slides the lid from the box, and lifts out the small IRON STAR, and sets this on the napkin.

The officers goggle at the object's aura of power and mystery.

INT. CHICAGO OFFICE BUILDING - DAWN

BENNY is checking ID badges at a marble RECEPTION area. She's very tall and very muscular. She has the very military bearing of a non-commissioned officer in the USMC. A big SIGN reminds people that badges are required for entry. Some people don't show their badge, and Benny is forced to remind them.

A person strolls by, too important to bother.

BENNY

Badge Please?

They don't stop.

BENNY (CONT'D)

(Authoritative)

Sir! Can I see your badge.

This freezes the person. They turn slowly, fishing in their pockets while she looks over everyone else coming into the building.

She is forced to say the same, bored, "badge please" twelve times an hour. It's a job.

KEITH, a homeless bum slips into the lobby, sucking on a Styrofoam cup of coffee. He tries to hurry behind the plastic PLANTS to some CHAIRS. He's escaping the FREEZING RAIN slanting down outside.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Can I see your ID?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Keith is caught in the act. He can beg or bluff. The big clock ticks through to seven AM. He tries belligerence.

KEITH

I don't need no stinking badge.

BENNY

You're nuts. This ain't no public riding way. This is private property.

KEITH

Look lady, it's cold outside. Give me ten minutes.

TERRY, an officious, busy day-shift guard comes in with his THERMOS and bag LUNCH. He's waiting for his big break to get a job as a cop, until then he's doing rental security work. He sees Keith and focuses his glare on Benny. Benny couldn't care less.

TERRY

What the hell is this?

BENNY

(giving orders)  
He's my responsibility.

TERRY

What's he doing here?

BENNY

He has a seven fifteen appointment, but it might be cancelled.

Terry moves into the guard station, Benny moves out. She grabs her BACKPACK and moves over to the waiting area. She fishes a couple of BUCKS out of her pocket and pushes these into Keith's hand.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Beat it.

Keith starts to protest his gratitude. Benny points him to the door. He shuffles out into the rain.

TERRY

(riding her again)  
For an ex-marine you don't seem very tough.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

BENNY

(in his face)

I just want to do the job, get paid  
and go home.

INT. AIRPORT - DAWN

RAY enters carrying a folded fax PAPER and a taped cardboard TUBE. He is dressed exuberantly, as befits a powerful magician of his stature. He walks through the busy concourse. His PHONE WARBLES. Ray stops and looks around, on full alert. He scans the people coming and going, checking their auras carefully, while his phone WARBLES. People wonder at his disregard. Warily, he takes out the phone and opens it. He is suspicious of the thing.

RAY

Yeah?

(sudden relief)

Oh yes, I understand you are very  
eager for the ... Merchandise. I'm  
making arrangements right now. I'd  
said I'd call at five PM, and I  
will.

(listens)

Yes, I appreciate the depth of your  
financial commitment. I'm making  
an extremely profound commitment of  
my own.

(listens)

I don't want to keep you any  
longer. I'll be in touch.

Ray turns the phone off.

RAY (CONT'D)

(rolling his eyes)

Jerk.

Ray threads his way through a diminishing throng until he enters an area under construction. He goes up to the PAY PHONE bank and waits, checking his WATCH. He is a man of action, and waiting is unnatural. He paces and fidgets.

The pay phone RINGS. Ray snatches it up part way through the first ring.

RAY (CONT'D)

Okay. We've done this part of your  
ritual. What's next?

Ray listens and then hangs up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A twenty-something KID comes up with a vinyl FLIGHT BAG and a playing CARD. He, too, is dressed loudly. Ray looks at the card. It is actually a drawing of the Iron Star. Ray folds his fax paper with the drawing of the star. The kid holds out his hand. He and Ray eye each other coldly.

RAY (CONT'D)

You don't look like much. You really an apprentice?

The kid is silent.

RAY (CONT'D)

Relax, I won't do anything dumb. I can't afford to mess this up. I really need this. Everything hinges on it.

The kid looks uncomfortable. He holds out the flight bag. Ray holds out the cardboard tube and they swap.

Ray unzips the bag and pries it open. Inside there are only plane TICKETS. Ray is livid. He had suspected duplicity, but hoped against it. Now he is in real trouble. He looks around wildly, but the kid is gone.

Ray tears off into the main part of the terminal, sprinting and knocking people left and right. He charges past staring security guards, sky-caps and parents. No kid.

Ray gets to the front entrance. No kid. Ray throws the bag on the ground in disgust. Still violently angry he looks at the tickets. A business CARD slips out. He stuffs this in his pocket. He looks at his watch. With a startled cry, he races back into the terminal.

INT. PLANE - DAY

RAY barges onto the plane, shoving past flight ATTENDANTS. They are pissed, but professional.

Ray drops into a seat. He examines his fax PAPER and playing CARD. He stuffs these angrily into his pocket. The business CARD is for the "Turtle Bar". Ray looks at this despondently.

He's in a world of hurt, and he knows it.

EXT. TURTLE BAR - EVENING

The TURTLE BAR is part of an idyllic Caribbean scene. RAY bounces out of a taxi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ray carefully counts out the exact change for the trip. Ray doesn't look twice but charges directly from taxi to bar without looking.

INT. TURTLE BAR - EVENING

RAY charges into the island bar. It is empty, the bartender is smoking, bored.

RAY

Hi.

The bartender nods sullenly. Ray goes over and lays his material (CARDS, FAX) on the bar. The bartender barely looks at it. Ray looks at him. What more must be do? The bartender arches an eyebrow. Drink?

Ray looks around. A few working-class types look at him, mystified. Ray's lost.

RAY (CONT'D)

(slamming the bar)

Dammit! What do you want me to do?  
What's the next hoop I got to jump  
through?

The bartender is a little sympathetic, but clueless.

RAY (CONT'D)

Listen, I need this. I put up a  
lot. I have to finish this deal.  
I'm sorry I yelled.

BARTENDER

I'm sorry. I really don't know you  
or your business. Would you like a  
drink?

RAY

(collapsing into a seat)  
Bottled water.

FADE TO:

INT. TURTLE BAR - A FEW HOURS LATER

RAY is laying back, trying to relax. He's sipping his bottled water. He's pretty morose. A car pulls up outside. Ray sits up to see what is happening. A man dressed just flashy enough to be another of the power elite in the magical circle looks in, glimpses Ray and ducks out.

Ray is up in an instant, striding across the barroom.

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CONTINUED:

DAINO comes back in. He dresses to impress. As he eases into the bar, he straightens his clothes to make a good first impression.

DAINO

I understand we have some business to discuss.

RAY

You can say that again! This has been the most god-awful way to do a deal that I've ever seen.

DAINO

Let me speak honestly. We've had some setbacks. I'm afraid that we are unable to uphold our part of the bargain.

Ray explodes.

RAY

You what? We had a deal! You said you would provide the Iron Star! I've made commitments! I've already paid in full. I'm depending on this! You can't jerk me around like this. I'll bury you. (beat) What the hell are you going to propose? What is this, amateur night?

DAINO

(interrupting)

Can I finish? Would you let me finish?

Daino goes and sits in Ray's booth. Ray prefers to stand and glower over Daino.

RAY

Try your damndest.

DAINO

We've encountered an... obstacle. Something we could not have foreseen. We need your assistance--

Daino stiffens and looks around. His eyes go wide. Ray follows his gaze.

DAINO (CONT'D)

Shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CINDY enters. She's dressed garishly, showing a great deal of flesh, including tan lines. She's 40-ish, and has a giant iron chain hanging in her cleavage. She's had too much sun.

CINDY  
Evening, boys.

Ray is puzzled, and takes in the scene, looking for clues. Daino is rattled and starts doing some calculations to see what his chances are.

CINDY (CONT'D)  
Lose something?

DAINO  
You have no right--

CINDY  
Stick it! You had no right to come down here. The Star is mine. I live on this island. I've spent years looking for it. You can't swoop down here and grab it. You and your controller can shove off. You won't get it from me.

RAY  
(to Daino)  
You don't have it? You made deals and you don't have the Star?

DAINO  
Everyone works that way. You've done it, too.

This is a sore spot. Ray gets ready to hit him.

CINDY  
(to Ray)  
You cut the deal with him? Is that your story?

Ray looks from Daino to Cindy. Who should he work with?

DAINO  
We have reliable information. We've seen the letters from the ship's doctor. We know where the ship was lost.

CINDY  
I've seen the logs. Those are over two hundred years out of date.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RAY  
(to Daino)  
Get out. You tell your controller  
that the deal's off.

Daino tries to protest.

RAY (CONT'D)  
Off. Deal. Is. Off. I'll get my  
scroll back tomorrow. You're done.  
Clear?

Ray half drags Daino out of the booth and shoves him towards  
the door.

Daino struggles, but it's token resistance only.

Ray turns to Cindy. Cindy's leaving by the other door.

RAY (CONT'D)  
I want the Star. I've got power.  
I'm ready to deal.

CINDY  
I've got my own deals. You can go  
barter for someone else's  
artifacts.

RAY  
You can't go till you've heard my  
offer!

CINDY  
Your offer doesn't interest. You  
can shove off, also. You and all  
your little friends. I'm not  
dealing.

RAY  
You can't. I've made commitments.  
I need to produce that Star. I'm  
working with very powerful people.

CINDY  
I'm very powerful people. You're  
working against me.

RAY  
Against?

Cindy goes outside to get into a beat up old TRUCK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CINDY

You have no power down here. Go  
back where you came from.

Ray pounds on the door-post.

FADE TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

RAY tosses a LARGE FOLDER onto his DESK. The desk is cheap metal with wood-veneer contact paper. The folder is open to a legal-sized photocopy of a 5x8 personal diary which shows a sketch of the IRON STAR. The iron star looks very solar.

RAY looks out his WINDOW at the ENDLESS KANSAS PLAINS. The WIND whips through the wheat fields. The SUN pounds down.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

The wind races over the PRAIRIE GRASS, searching for the SUN.

The prairie has fat animals, neat ranches; no trace of human excess. The sun looks down on endless creation.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

RAY turns back to his desk. He moves the FOLDER and clears a space. He takes out a very small, dusty, old BOOK. He opens to a BOOK-MARK. He checks what is written there. He flips back a few pages on his DESK CALENDAR. He counts them forward to be sure. Three days.

Ray sits, picks up a TABLOID paper. The headline is "MAMMOTH FELLED BY HUNTERS IN N. DAKOTA." The subhead is "HAD TO BE DRAGGED OUT WITH A TOW-TRUCK." Ray kicks back to read.

A DOOR opens, and a loudly dressed, very young RECEPTIONIST comes in. She has a high-school style hair-cut and clothes. Before she can speak, BENNY pushes past her. Benny is dressed in a severe short skirt, flat shoes, short-waisted jacket and her leather BACKPACK. The receptionist fumbles out the door rolling her eyes and snapping her gum disapprovingly.

Benny surveys the low-rent office with some amusement and some sympathy. She drops her backpack into a chair, but doesn't sit.

She has to hold her hands or fold her arms to keep from saluting or adopting a formal at ease stance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY

Benny, thanks for coming.

BENNY

(poking at the old book)  
Is this more of your weird shit?  
Why can't you just relax and live  
like everybody else, Raymond? Why  
all the mambo jumble?

RAY

(put out)  
It's a system. The land gives you  
power which you use. With practice  
you can channel more--

Benny doesn't care, she grabs the paper.

BENNY

And you read this like it was  
Encyclopedia Botanical. Do you do  
anything real?

RAY

(defensive)  
Plenty. More real than your  
drunken weeks in P-town, cruising  
from bar to bar looking for  
trouble. I thought I'd like to  
bring you in on something,  
something that could set you up for  
a comfortable retirement.

BENNY

Retirement? Don't I wish. Your  
low-budget deals never seem to pay  
out real well. I always wind up as  
hungry as when I started.

RAY

Come on. This is real money. No  
more nickels and dimes. No more  
squeezing dirt farmers for their  
last acre of dustbowl.

Benny moves behind the desk to look at the papers there.

RAY (CONT'D)

This is the big one. How does a  
share of the profits sound?

BENNY

You offering?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

RAY

Not equal partnerships, but a share of the proceeds. Plus cash payment up front to cover your expenses until we become profitable.

BENNY

Sucks.

RAY

Sucks? How can you say that to me? Without me, you'd still be collecting extortion money from Chinese restaurants in St. Louis.

BENNY

Momma told me that no one offers unless the job sucks. What's the hitch, Ray? It's bad if you're offering shares up front.

RAY

Benny, I can get someone else for this, you know.

Benny gives his chair a vicious kick, spinning Ray around to face her square on. She plants a foot on the seat, between Ray's legs, to stop the chair from spinning past her. Ray gapes, helpless.

BENNY

Good. Name names. I want to know who's replacing me so momma and I can throw a welcoming party.

RAY

I have connections. I don't have to tell you anything.

BENNY

You don't have to tell me nothing 'cause you don't know nothing.

RAY

Benny, trust me, it's big.

BENNY

So's my mother's behind. Tell me what you're into.

Ray glares at her. He stiffens and sits up straighter. Ray makes a MYSTIC PASS and points at the book on his desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Benny is forced to turn her attention from Ray to the book. They stare at the book. The prairie wind flips open a page.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

They are outside, roaming freely across the open lands. They see the SUN the WIND the OPEN SPACES. They travel over the lands that Ray draws his power from. The far off mountains hint at further powers, yet untapped. It is a vertiginous trip.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

RAY and BENNY recover from looking deep into Ray's BOOK.

BENNY

That's totally out of control.  
What was that?

RAY

That was just the first light of the new dawn. A lot has been lost. After the Crusades, the Inquisition, Salem witch trials it went underground. Benny, I need this.

(Grabs the folder)

Two hundred and thirty six years ago, some pirates took a ship. Someone named Abdalati had some artifacts on that ship. He said they were Egyptian, but I know he lied. They were from Dominia. I'm not the only one who knows, and I'm not the only one who's trying to get this.

BENNY

(pointing at his book)  
More of this Mambo-Limbo?

RAY

More and bigger. Why don't you get what I'm saying? When I have this, you'll get the payoff of your life. You'll be free from this kind of work forever.

BENNY

Free forever? Don't I wish. This had better be a big payoff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY

Have I ever crossed you?

BENNY

Crossed? Never. Disappointed?  
Always. So how do you know this is  
for real? How do you know this  
isn't some National Informer crock  
of dog pook?

RAY

I checked with Lloyd's of London,  
the Coast Guard, everybody. Every  
bit of the story has checked out.

BENNY

(dismissing him)

You're a sucker for a hard-luck  
story. I'm hungry. I'm going to  
start by expensing a lunch, a big  
lunch.

Benny picks up her BACKPACK and walks out the door. Ray  
doesn't like this, but there's not much he can do, he  
promised expenses.

EXT. THE OPEN SEA - DAY

A plane approaches an ISLAND, very low, almost dusk.

In the water, a small MAIL BOAT tails toward shore, loaded  
with STUFF, and a lone passenger, TIM sitting in the stern.  
He is a skinny man with dreadlocks blowing the breeze. His  
clothes are worn, dirty and the wrong size. He has reached  
bottom again, and is hoping for a fresh start.

Tim is sitting on a bunch of BEER CASES, SMOKING, the ocean  
breeze tearing the smoke away from him. The boat toils,  
chugging and bouncing on the waves.

The small PLANE passes overhead.

EXT. PIER - DAY

The MAIL BOAT ties up at the PIER.

TIM jumps down and starts hefting ROPES to tie up the boat.  
A PLANK comes over and Tim helps someone unload a stack of  
BEER CASES in the broiling SUN. A few other PEOPLE come and  
go while they are unloading.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

TIM relaxes on the stack of BEER CASES and lights another CIGARETTE. A HORN honks and an open PICKUP with a bed made of scrap wood pulls up. The DRIVER gets out, his head jerks up when he sees Tim sitting on the beer.

TIM  
You from Cindy?

The driver grunts. Tim starts loading beer into the truck. The driver makes several trips with other SUPPLIES from the mail boat.

TIM (CONT'D)  
(stopping the driver)  
Got a cigarette?

The driver shakes his head. He continues going to the boat for something. Tim shrugs and gets out a CIGARETTE of his own.

A VAN pulls up. BENNY gets out. The driver kills the engine, but doesn't get out. She is still severe, wearing too much black leather for this heat. She hasn't dropped her backpack, either.

Benny sees Tim and Tim sees her.

Tim's driver totters under a SMALL BOX which is very heavy.

After putting the in the bed, the driver climbs in and guns the engine. Tim scrambles on as the truck pulls away.

Benny watches them go. She watches the pier area for a while.

She strolls away to find some shade.

EXT. ROCKY COAST - NIGHT

Cindy's SHACK is perched on the edge of a steep HILL. Below it is a tiny BEACH. She's got a bed room, living room and kitchen. She also has a shed with the generator and a large refrigerator.

The TRUCK creeps down the steep hill and skids to a stop. CINDY saunters out of the house. TIM hops out of the truck.

CINDY  
Tim! It's about damn time. What  
took you so long?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

Cindy. I'm real glad to see you, too. I had to help your man with the freight. Where do I put this?

CINDY

In the shed out back. There's a fridge in there. We need power so start the generator, okay?

Cindy goes back in the house. Tim watches her go, then starts carrying beer to the SHED.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - DAWN

A view of the SEA is bracketed by the door, it frames another ISLAND in the distance. TIM and CINDY are sitting at a TABLE with a dozen BOTTLES and CIGARETTES everywhere. There is a BOOKSHELF with some beat up old BOOKS.

TIM

He say, 'You can't hurt me.'

Cindy laughs. This is positively hilarious. How could someone possibly think Tim couldn't hurt them?

TIM (CONT'D)

So I palm the runes into his airplane ticket folder. I say, 'Allow me to give these to you.' The bastard grab 'em. He dying to get the runes, you see! I can't keep from laughing. He dying to get the runes.

This slays both of them. They thump the table and double over.

CINDY

So what did you get?

TIM

Nothing.

CINDY

Nothing? You cast the runes for some guy and you got nothing?

TIM

Almost nothing. I did keep the obituary!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY  
(it's clear to her, now)  
I see, you did it to get outta  
trouble. What kinda trouble?  
Drugs? Gambling debts?

No reaction from Tim.

CINDY (CONT'D)  
Some trouble so deep you're not out  
yet, are you?

Tim arches an eyebrow, but says nothing. His denial is less  
then eloquent. She's pretty close to the mark.

TIM  
Got any cigarettes?

CINDY  
That won't work on me: you've got  
your own, you greedy bastard!

Tim gets out another cigarette.

CINDY (CONT'D)  
Looking for a place to hide? The  
rent's pretty steep around here.

TIM  
I got no money.

Cindy smirks. Tim suddenly comes in to focus. She's not  
merely baiting him. She's talking business. Tim sits up and  
pays attention.

CINDY  
I've found something hot. Really  
hot. I've got a lead on a relic.

TIM  
This the real thing?

CINDY  
Absolutely.

TIM  
Give it to me.

CINDY  
The Iron Star.

TIM  
What do you say? The Iron Star?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CINDY

Check it out.

Cindy reaches around on a SHELF behind her. She produces a beat up old BOOK. She tosses it at Tim. She finds a legal-sized FILE FOLDER. Tim sets the book aside, but opens the folder. He takes out a copy of the IRON STAR picture.

Cindy takes up the book and searches through the worn pages.

TIM

(reading)

Large iron cog or gear with possible Sumerian inscriptions.

(Turns the paper sideways and scoffs.)

Sumerian! Who wrote this? If the drawing right, we sell this for some big damn money.

CINDY

Is that all you think of? Money, money, money? Here's money!

She throws down her BOOK. She pulls a WAD OF BILLS out of her pocket and throws them on the table.

CINDY (CONT'D)

There's money. Money comes and money goes. There's no security in money. I don't want money. The real ticket is power. With the power of the Iron Star, I can get money or anything else. (beat)  
You can help me or move on.

Cindy storms out of the cabin. Tim eyes the bills. Tim picks up the wad of bills. He peels off one, then two. He puts these in his pocket and drops the bills back on the table. Tim leans back and sucks on his beer.

EXT. ISLAND BAR - DAY

BENNY is talking at an outdoor PAY PHONE. A few locals saunter by.

BENNY

Yeah, I saw Cindy's skinny little rasta-man down at the pier. I think his name is Tim.

(listens)

Yeah, beer. A ton. Stocked for a siege.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY (CONT'D)

(listens)

No, of course not. You don't just drag your piece on an international flight. You need someone in-country to transship--Uh-huh. I'd like more stopping power than a snotty attitude and strong language.

(listens)

Okay, but that don't make no--

(listens)

Ray! There's no cruising ship crowd until--

(listens)

Okay, already. Don't whine! I'll do your little thing. Whatever you say. Okay.

Benny slams down the phone and rolls her eyes. She adjusts her BACKPACK and looks up and down the STREET. She picks a direction and marches down the street.

Benny looks in a BAR. There is a COUPLE SNUGGLING. She goes in and finds a seat in the SHADOWS. Looking around at the interior, she tries not to stare.

INT. ISLAND BAR - DAY

BENNY covertly watches the COUPLE snuggling and giggling. She's amused by their antics.

A WAITER tosses a NAPKIN and glass of WATER at her. This interrupts her reverie. The waiter clearly disapproves of the public displays of affection.

ANDERSON, comes flying in, waving a big GUN. He's pretty worked up. It took a lot of courage to pass the threshold and confront them directly. The waiter shrieks and backs into the kitchen.

ANDERSON

Why you lying little... Whore!

The snuggling couple leap up, shrieking and move apart. Anderson is distraught and shaking.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

I ought to kill the both of you, right now! How many times are you going to do this to me?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

The snuggling man takes a few steps toward the door. She reaches for him, but he pulls himself away. Anderson points the gun at him.

WOMAN  
(shrieking)

No!

Anderson turns on her. Once the gun is off him, the snuggling man makes a break for the BACK DOOR. Anderson swings back, but doesn't take the shot.

Benny reaches into her backpack and produces her TRUNCHEON in one smooth motion. Then she slides from her SEAT and moves in behind Anderson.

Anderson turns to the woman. She shrinks back, pleading and crying.

ANDERSON  
Why shouldn't I kill you? Tell me  
that. How much can I suffer?

Benny slides up behind ANDERSON. The woman shakes her head 'no'. Anderson raises the gun.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
You'll never cheat on me again, you  
whore.

Benny STAMPS on the back of his KNEE, RIPPING the joint apart and tipping him backwards. As he falls, she uses her left hand to twist his face away from her. With her right hand, she POUNDS him into unconsciousness. The WHUMP-WHUMP-WHUMP of wood on BONE horrifies the woman.

The GUN drops to the floor. Benny steps over Anderson and scoops up the gun. With a smooth motion, she swings the backpack around and stuffs the gun in a hidden side pocket, followed by the truncheon.

WOMAN  
What have you done? He's my  
husband! What did you do to my  
husband?

The woman runs over to Anderson. Benny drops a napkin over a water-glass. She dumps the water out through the napkin, catching the ice. She gives the napkin a twist and hands it to the woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WOMAN (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing here? Why have you hurt my husband?

BENNY

You're stupid to be so greedy. Keep him or kiss him good-bye. You can't walk on two sides of a street.

Benny slips out the back door.

WOMAN

Who are you to talk like that?  
(to Anderson)  
Oh, Anderson, what did she do to you?

The woman stoops to apply the ice-bag to her fallen man.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

TIM and CINDY are sitting around the bare table. BEER BOTTLES and CIGARETTES are everywhere. A colored-pencil SKETCH of the Iron Star is nailed to the WALL

CINDY

Did you really see him?

TIM

Her.

CINDY

(irritated at his terseness)

And?

TIM

(irritated at the probing)  
What? She had Ray's aura. Even her New York fashions and pasty Yankee skin give her up. She didn't come with the cruise ship, either.

CINDY

She's real trouble. He's put something on her.

TIM

She ain't nothing, I'll get rid of her right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY

No, you can't. Something happened today. You're my eyes and ears! What happened? Do I have to send you back into town to try again?

TIM

Don't treat me like a child.  
(thinks)  
Anderson got poked waving a gun at his old lady and her latest boyfriend.

CINDY

So where's the gun?

TIM

(gets it, his face falls)  
You mean she...

Cindy leaps up from the table. She starts rummaging around, looking for something. Tim calmly accepts things she hands them and puts them in piles on the table.

After a frantic search, she finds a specific beat-up old BOOK.

CINDY

This is about power! We'll teach him to threaten us with his armed boy toy.

Tim shrugs. He slugs down the last of his beer. Cindy tears out of the shack. Tim saunters after her.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

The generator is GRINDING, CINDY runs across her YARD carrying her BOOKS. She rummages around in the SHED. She finds the kill switch and silences the generator. The shack goes dark.

TIM strolls out of the shack. He turns to go down to the beach. Cindy comes out of the shed and goes down to the beach, also.

EXT. ROCKY BEACH - NIGHT

CINDY and TIM pick their way down the ROCKS. They get to a short stretch of flat BEACH. Tim sets the LANTERN down. They consult the BOOK for a while.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY

You saw her?

TIM

No mistake. She's a hired muscle;  
she got his aura.

Cindy starts a CHANTING. She rocks and murmurs her chant.  
Tim chimes in. Cindy grabs his hand.

They see a vague outline of BENNY rising up in the dark  
OCEAN. She starts walking toward the land. The Benny spirit  
comes up the beach, deliberately and inexorably. The WAVES  
come up as does the WIND. Cindy's hair is whipped around by  
the wind. Foam fills the air. Benny's image is unaltered.

With an almost casual gesture, Cindy dismisses Benny. The  
image vanishes, the waves and wind subside. Cindy smiles her  
benign, self-satisfied, I've-got-more-tricks-than-you smile  
to Tim.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

It is utterly black. BENNY GASPS. After some FUMBLING, a  
LIGHT clicks on.

This is one cheap motel room, by American standards. Benny  
is illuminated by a beside LAMP with a TORN SHADE. She  
fumbles and finds her HUGE TECHNICAL WATCH. Her CLOTHES are  
in a heap near the bed, her BACKPACK close at hand.

BENNY

Oh, man.

She gets up, pulls on the SKIRT piled near the bed. Still  
asleep, she grabs the GUN out of a hidden pocket in her  
backpack and stuffs this in the back of her skirt.

Groggy with sleep she shuffles for the door. Hand on KNOB  
she stops. She goes back and puts on a JACKET to cover the  
gun. She's starting to wake up.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

BENNY stumbles to the PAY PHONE at the CORNER of the  
building. A LIZARD skitters away. She types about 14 numbers  
into the phone. She pauses and types another 14 numbers.

She waits many RINGS, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes and  
hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY

Momma?

(pause)

No, it's me, Bonita.

(pause)

Si, momma, como estas? I had a--I don't know. It sounds stupid for me to say it now. I had a dream that you were hurt. It was more than a dream, it was a preem-- a pre--. Like a vision. You're okay?

(pause)

Is Carlo there? Why not? Someone should be there.

Benny hangs up. She leans against the wall, torn; what should she do? What can she tell Ray?

She realizes what she needs to do. She doesn't like it, but she has to do it. She slumps back to her room.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

TIM stands, staring out to SEA. CINDY sits at his feet, but he doesn't see her. He is preparing his own magic.

He sways and CHANTS his chant while performing complex, mystic MOTIONS. Cindy watches Tim, knowing what he is doing.

Suddenly Tim drops into a crouch and makes a JAB with his finger. Cindy CHEERS him on.

Tim nods at her, and extends his hand. She rises, lady-like and elegant, at this moment of victory.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

RAY sits up in BED, sweating.

RAY

Ow! Shit! Son of a bitch.

He groans and tries to roll out of the bed. He wobbles as he hits the floor. He's soaking WET, and he's BLEEDING from his abdomen.

Ray stumbles to the BATHROOM and flips on the LIGHT. He has a nasty abdominal puncture WOUND, about the diameter of a FINGER. It BLEEDS copiously.

Ray grabs a TOWEL and holds it over the wound. He opens the MIRROR and paws through the contents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAPE, BAND-AIDS, GAUZE are all passed over. He comes to ASPIRIN, pours these out on the counter and takes two.

Ray leans heavily on the COUNTER and sighs. With one hand he splashes WATER on his face. It STINGS and burns him; he winces and flinches away from the water. It revulses him.

RAY (CONT'D)  
Water. Shit.

INT. RAY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

RAY pads in, wearing SHORTS and holding a bloody TOWEL to his side.

One-handed, he rummages in his FILE CABINET. He finds an OLD BOOK. He tosses the book on his DESK.

He rummages some more. He pulls out some TAPERS. These are placed on the desk more carefully.

Ray moves behind the desk and sits down heavily. Clutching the towel to his side, he opens his book.

INT. RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

RAY is holding a PHONE. He dressed, but his hair is a mess and he hasn't shaved.

RAY  
(getting more upset)  
Come on, how can she just check out?  
(listens impatiently)  
Okay, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to shout. What am I supposed to do? Where did she tell you she was going?  
(listens)  
Okay, fine. This is costing me a lot of money. I'll try to find her back here in the states.  
(bitter)  
Thanks.

Ray throws down the phone. Ray slams his hand on the desk.

RAY (CONT'D)  
Son of a--Ow!  
(wincing )  
Why did they have to do that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ray eases himself up, unlocks a FILE CABINET. He rips open a DRAWER. He pulls out a beat up OLD BOOK. He flips open a few pages. He sits down at his desk, and ponders a bit.

Ray looks out the window at the Kansas prairie. He stands up and takes a long, critical look at the prairie.

An idea clarifies. He decides to try it.

INT. CAR - DAY

RAY is driving his CAR into the MOUNTAINS. His car is cheap, beat-up. He breezes along, enjoying the steep, bare scenery.

This is an antithesis of the fat, rich Kansas prairie.

This is bare, craggy rock, dizzying heights.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - DAY

This is the real Rockies: wild and raw. The view is fabulous, steep MOUNTAINS fall away in every direction.

In the far distance there are TRAILS and LIFTS for a ski resort.

RAY'S CAR is parked in front of a scrupulous rental cabin.

RAY, with an old BOOK comes out to the PORCH. He winces as he plops down in an ADIRONDACK CHAIR. He opens his BOOK.

A dusty, rumpled old CAR struggles up the driveway and stops.

A dusty, rumpled old SAMMY struggles, wheezing and groaning, out of the car. Sammy is overweight, wearing a sweat-stained white suit and Panama HAT. His expensive Italian SHOES pinch him terribly, causing him to hobble as he walks.

SAMMY

Ach, what trouble have you stirred  
up now that you need old Sammy?

Ray closes his BOOK and sets it down carefully. He eases down the PORCH to pump Sammy's hand.

RAY

Glad you could make it on such  
short notice. I've got real  
problems.

SAMMY

You don't look so good. Your  
clothes are a mess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY

It's something big.  
(Ray looks around)  
I've found the Iron Star.

SAMMY

Sorry, Ray. You know, I'm out of that market. I can barely afford the clothes on my back. I'm not a player anymore; you need to find someone of means.

RAY

Don't sell yourself short. This is the Iron Star. It's within my reach. I can make deals that will put both of us back in the black!

SAMMY

Share and share alike?

RAY

We'll work out something. First, take a look at this.

Ray starts to lift up his SHIRT. He has TAPED wrapped around the towel, wrapped around his middle. The towel is bloody.

SAMMY

(revulsed)  
Can we go in and sit down? My feet are killing me.

They go inside the cabin.

Another CAR CRUNCHES to a stop on the dirt road. BENNY gets out the rented 4x4. She grabs her BACKPACK and marches up the driveway and into the CABIN.

INT. CABIN - DAY

RAY is laying on the COUCH, SHIRT off. SAMMY is looking at the HOLE, and checking a SCROLL. Ray is trying to look at a BOOK, but it's awkward laying on his back.

BENNY slips in the doorway and looks at the two.

RAY

(tapping his book)  
This is it.

SAMMY

No, I've got it.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BENNY

If you've got it, you should see a  
real doctor and have it removed.

Benny closes the DOOR with a self-satisfied, impertinent  
slam.

RAY

Benny!

SAMMY

Not her.

Benny takes the book out of Ray's hand.

BENNY

You guys are so arrogant.  
(takes a look at the  
wound)  
What did that? Elves or fairies?

SAMMY

(snorting)  
Fairies? I didn't think you were  
into men, especially fems.

BENNY

(renewing the old grudge)  
I keep outta your life, you keep  
your sweaty, hairy nose out of  
mine.

SAMMY

You're so pretty, why waste  
yourself?

BENNY

As in save myself for you? I think  
I'd rather get an exciting career  
in data processing.  
(turns to Ray)  
You got any food? I'm starved.  
(actually concerned)  
Seriously, what made that nasty  
hole? That looks like an entrance  
wound for a forty-four cal.  
'Course if it was, you'd have a  
hole in your back I could park a  
car in.

Benny goes into the KITCHEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAMMY

A finger.

BENNY

You're nasty. (beat) A finger?  
That's the weirdest yet. Ray, who  
poked you?

RAY

(repeating the obvious)  
Cindy's sorcerer, Tim.

BENNY

(alarmed)  
Her muscle is in Kansas? Or here?  
How you gonna keep them away from  
you?

RAY

She's detestable and she'll do far  
worse. There's no limit to what  
she'll try. This is only the tip  
of the iceberg.

This is too much. Benny comes out of the kitchen.

SAMMY

Ya. You're in trouble, too. They  
will do anything to get you out of  
the way.

BENNY

They don't know me from Adam. Or  
Eve. I can cut or run anytime and  
they'll never find me again.

SAMMY

They know you well enough. Cindy's  
got us all made.

BENNY

(to Ray)  
What's he here for? He's a  
complete creep.

RAY

We need his protection, otherwise  
someone would die. I need you two  
to go back and work together.

Benny is incredulous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BENNY

You saying I'm not good enough?  
You don't trust me? You think I'm  
going to run off again, so you want  
someone to keep a watch on me  
there? What're you doing to me?  
I'm in this until I get paid. You  
can't get rid of me with anything  
less.

RAY

I'm sending him to keep you alive,  
get it?

BENNY

You're sending us where we might  
get killed? That sounds real  
savage to me. How do you get off  
calling them horrible? You're no  
better.

RAY

I won't let you get killed. She'd  
sacrifice her sorcerer in a heart-  
beat. I'll stick by you until we  
win.

BENNY

You didn't protect yourself very  
well, did you?

Sammy sighs and rolls his eyes. Benny glowers at him. She gets ready for something really biting.

RAY

Would you try and cooperate, just a  
little? Separated, you're dead.

Benny stomps into the kitchen. Sammy looks after her. He turns to Ray and nods. He and Ray have some kind of agreement.

EXT. ISLAND SWAMP - DAY

Cindy's SHACK, perched by the SEA, is near a small RIVER. A short distance up the river is a SWAMP.

Deep in the heart of this lush tropical swamp is a small PAVILION on a grassy KNOLL. A flat-bottomed Adirondack guide BOAT or piroux is tethered here.

INT. PAVILION - DAY

CINDY and TIM are sitting in folding CHAIRS. A COOLER sits between them. Cindy's agitated, SMOKING non-stop and drinking heavily. Tim is trying to lounge.

TIM

Are you sure you want to do this thing?

CINDY

She'll be back. She's the kind that always comes back for more. She's got a loyal streak so wide it's a target.

TIM

She won't have the gun this time.

CINDY

That was the point.

TIM

I can get him again, you know.

CINDY

I don't think so. He's got some chumps and pawns he can sacrifice. You might never get past them to him.

TIM

You think he's got a healer? I don't like healers. Me and healer's don't mix. You can't trust 'em, you know?

CINDY

(bitter)

I know his healer. The good news is that he can't cover two at once. I'm doing the only thing that makes sense.

TIM

It's necromancy. I don't have to like it.

CINDY

Go back where you came from and face the music. If you're staying with me, you're gonna work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim is pissed off, but decides to keep it to himself.

INT. PAVILION - NIGHT

An oil LANTERN sits on the ground. TIM takes the last BEER out of the COOLER. He dumps out the last of the ICE WATER. Tim drops the empty cooler in the BOAT. The EMPTIES roll around in the bottom of the boat.

CINDY has just finished erecting some magical CIRCLE on this grassy KNOLL.

As Cindy lights the CANDLES, Tim puts out the lantern and sets it in the boat.

Cindy sits in the circle with her BOOK. She has a small POT in which she mixes some things. Tim fetches SWAMP WATER in another POT. They CHANT and MIX.

A VAPOR comes out of the pot. It swirls around the knoll. It is hemmed in by the candles and starts to rise up. A sudden gust of WIND extinguishes the candles.

An unearthly light remains.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

A HAND of BONES, devoid of living flesh, reaches up out of the WATER. Wrist, tibia and fibula, eventually a whole arm.

An animated SKELETON sits up in shallow water. The swamp water drains out of the SKULL. MUD and ooze slide off the bones.

It rises to standing. Mud and ooze drop out of the PELVIS and run down both FEMURS.

The skeleton turns, hearing the call, and walks away.

EXT. SWAMP KNOLL - NIGHT

The VAPOR has dispersed, leaving CINDY and TIM bathed in UNEARTHLY LIGHT. There is a squelching, SLOSHING sound. A twig CRACKS. Tim and Cindy are both startled and look toward the sound.

The SKELETON emerges from the MIST. They shrink back, revulsed at first. Tim is about to puke. Cindy chokes back her gorge.

CINDY  
(finding it hard to speak)  
Let's go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim unties the BOAT. His eyes are glued on the skeleton. It stands, inert. Tim helps Cindy to find a seat on the boat. As she moves, the skeleton follows, keeping a fixed distance.

As soon as she is seated, Tim takes up the POLE and pushes the boat off shore. The skeleton walks down the knoll and into the water. It sinks pretty deep, but keeps on trudging. It drops out of sight in a channel, but BUBBLES leaking from the skull and a WAKE mark its progress.

While Tim poles, Cindy relights the lantern.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

A LANTERN comes swinging through the TREES. TIM emerges, stumbling as he tries to look over his shoulder. He has the lantern and is dragging the COOLER. CINDY follows. She carries her BOOK. The SKELETON follows.

They pass an open PIT or shallow grave. Tim keeps going. Cindy and the skeleton stop. The skeleton tumbles into the pit.

Tim returns with a SHOVEL and buries it under a few inches of SAND.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

The LANTERN sits on the TABLE. CINDY is reading an old SCROLL by the light of the LANTERN. TIM enters, disgusted.

TIM

I wonder who it was when he was  
with the living?

CINDY

Don't start! It coulda been  
anybody. It's just a pile a bones,  
no different from chicken bones or  
clam shells.

TIM

You just rationalizing! It ain't  
right, and I don't have to like it.

Tim throws himself into a chair. Cindy continues to read.

TIM (CONT'D)

You know, you have alternatives.  
Let's get some support.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY

Stuff it! There isn't anyone else.  
I'm trying to keep us alive here.  
He has money, he has hired guns.  
He wants the Star. He'll do  
anything, you know.

TIM

And you a picture of kindness,  
moving around someone bones like  
that.

CINDY

They're coming for us. I'm  
standing in his way. I live here,  
it's mine. I'm gonna get it.

TIM

Why not share it?

CINDY

How? There's nothing in that.  
There's no 'joint and several' in  
this art. When we have it, we have  
real power. When he has it, we  
have nothing. One of us will die.  
(beat) You can just keep your  
opinions to yourself. Who's paying  
your bills? Who's keeping your ass  
out of trouble?

TIM

And when I'm gone, will my bones  
guard your hut?

CINDY

Cut the crap. You've got work to  
do.

Cindy hands the lantern to Tim. Tim stomps off, incensed at  
Cindy's casual desecration of the dead.

EXT. CARIBBEAN MARINA - DAY

A MAIL BOAT pulls in. SAMMY and BENNY are on board. Benny  
is green, and doesn't like it a bit. Sammy is damp and  
rumped, but putting up with it.

As soon as the boat reaches the PIER, Benny leaps out. She  
stops, closes her eyes and sighs a few times, trying to  
settle her stomach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

When the GANG-PLANK is out, Sammy waddles down the plank, his shoes pinching him. Someone tosses out LUGGAGE: two large VALISES and a DUFFEL BAG. Sammy winces when the valise bounces.

Sammy looks around for transportation. He sits down on his suitcases.

SAMMY

This salt air will ruin this suit.

BENNY

Now I know why I was happy to leave the corps. You should fly like everyone else.

SAMMY

(ignoring her)

Ach, no taxi?

BENNY

There isn't much of a town, you can hump it to the motel.

SAMMY

In this heat? With all this luggage? The sweat will ruin this hat, too.

BENNY

Yes, with all your luggage. Why do you get those outfits, anyway?

She motions for him to get up. Sammy stands, reluctantly. Benny picks up both valises and they toil down the dock.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - DAY

SAMMY is sitting by the POOL, drinking ICED TEA. He is fanning himself with the a rumpled daily PAPER. He is sitting in the SUN even though there is SHADE close by.

BENNY comes by, dressed in SWEATS.

SAMMY

How can you dress like that in this heat?

BENNY

I'm going diving.

SAMMY

I didn't think you liked the ocean.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BENNY

Dumpster diving. I've got to find my piece.

SAMMY

I find you to be a very nice piece.

BENNY

Don't start, fat-man. The only men I ever liked saluted and called me captain.

SAMMY

(Mock seriousness, clumsy salute)  
Yes, sir.

BENNY

(pointing to near-by shade)  
You sweat less in the shade.

Benny leaves. Sammy looks around. He ought to move his chair. This is not simple for a big man.

He struggles to stand up. It takes some wheezing to shove the chair along the deck into the shade.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

This is third-world trash-hauling at its worst. There is GARBAGE piled everywhere. The DUMPSTER welds have popped open at one corner; it's partially collapsed, leaving trash spilling out.

BENNY ambles down the alley. She takes a quick look around, pulls a knit cap over her hair, and lifts the lid on the dumpster. Flies erupt out of it. She recoils, holding her nose.

BENNY

Who is so stupid as to throw away meat? Madre de dios.

She puts a foot on a bracket and scrambles in. Benny CRASHES and BANGS inside the dumpster, searching for her gun, cursing and groaning.

A BUM strolls by. He pauses to listen. He bangs on the side. There is sudden silence.

BUM

Hey, mon, that shit's a week old.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bum moves on.

INT. DUMPSTER - DAY

BENNY peers out of the collapsed side of the DUMPSTER, watching the BUM go by. At the end of the ALLEY there is a big blue TARP. The bum pulls this aside and disappears.

Benny opens the dumpster LID and scrambles out. She lowers the lid slowly to minimize noise.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

This place is filled with old CLOTHES, tattered MAGAZINES, and other JUNK. The BUM tosses CLOTHES into a pile in one corner. This clears a path to a CUPBOARD.

He takes a COFFEE CAN from the cupboard. He pulls a small fold of MONEY out of the can. He counts out \$10.00 in fives and ones. He puts the LID on the can, and puts it away.

He turns to go out. He opens the DOOR and struggles down the STEPS. There is a vicious CRACK and he stumbles forward to land on his face, sprawled in the bare yard.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

A BUM pitches down the STEPS from his trailer. BENNY pounces on him, holding him FACE down in the DIRT. She takes a handful of HAIR and smacks him into the GROUND a few times to loosen him up.

BENNY

You live here?

BUM

Si.

BENNY

You found a pistol in the dumpster?

BUM

Si. I found una pistola in the basura. What do you know?

BENNY

I was sent to get it back. Where is it?

BUM

You got money?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Benny pulls his head back, puts the truncheon across his THROAT and starts to choke.

The bum gasps and wriggles, but is unable to shake her off.

BENNY

You're optional, you know.

The bum coughs. It's not worth the fight. He may as well give it to her. He goes slack and coughs again.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Did you say drawer?

The bum coughs his assent.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Which one?

BUM

Left and debajo de--you know--the sink.

Benny jumps off him.

BENNY

Don't turn around. Don't come back.

The bum struggles to his feet. He hobbles away. After a few steps he pauses to rub his shin. Then he struggles a few more steps.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

BENNY rummages in a DRAWER. Under some MAGAZINES, she pulls out a GUN.

She drops the CLIP, works the SLIDE, checks the BARREL and reloads.

Benny looks around the squalor. She reaches into the drawer and gets a magazine. It's PLAYBOY. She flips open the gatefold photo. She is torn--she likes looking at women, but maybe this is politically incorrect exploitation.

She sets the gun inside, and rolls the magazine around it. She tucks it under her arm.

She bends over and finds a TWENTY in her SOCK. She drops the money in the drawer where the gun was.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

BENNY pushes the DOOR open and takes a look around. She pauses, listening carefully. She takes a big jump, landing well away from the trailer. She drops to a crouch and turns around, checking in all directions. Satisfied, she stands and saunters away like nothing happened.

EXT. DUMPSTER - DAY

BENNY wedges the ROLLED-UP MAGAZINE between the DUMPSTER and the WALL, temporarily. She peels off the HAT and throws it in the dumpster.

She shrugs out of the SWEATSHIRT and throws this in. She's soaked with sweat, and her clothes cling to her. She kicks off the SWEATPANTS and throws those in. She's wearing running SHORTS.

She smells her HANDS and is not pleased.

She gets her gun in the rolled-up magazine and walks away.

EXT. POOL - DAY

SAMMY is still fanning himself. The iced tea is gone. A FAMILY with screaming CHILDREN are splashing in the pool.

FAT CHILD

Why do we have to go here? St.  
Maarten is better.

Dad takes us to St. Maarten.

MOTHER

Please! Your step-father likes it  
here!

BENNY strolls in, carrying her MAGAZINE. She stops at Sammy's TABLE.

SAMMY

Have a nice dive?

BENNY

How do you guys do it? The first  
place I look, like someone put it  
there for me to find.

SAMMY

(shrugs)  
It always works that way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The FAT BOY from the screaming family is ROARING, splashing and generally terrorizing his SHRIEKING little SISTER. Benny and Sammy look at them.

BENNY

I hate that shit. Why beat up on someone defenseless?

SAMMY

They're just kids.

Benny looks at him, recognizing the similarity between the bratty fat kid and Sammy.

BENNY

When he grows up, he'll turn out okay. A doctor or something, right?

SAMMY

Sure, a doctor.

BENNY

And get his license yanked for selling parts from the morgue.

SAMMY

(hisses in anger)

Don't drag that out. I was forced into it. You don't know what horrors I endured. It was hell on earth.

BENNY

(backing up)

My momma says never mess with something you don't understand. You were in way too deep.

SAMMY

Join the club, sweet-heart. You're in just as deep as old Sammy.

BENNY

I'm emigrant labor. I can leave anytime I want.

SAMMY

(ending the conversation)

Emigrant? Migrant. And you're wrong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sammy returns to fanning himself. Benny walks along the pool side. The fat boy ogles, shamelessly. He's too young to be ogling women. His mother hits him on the side of the head.

MOTHER

Cut that out.

STEP-FATHER

(ogling)

Would you please quit nagging the boy. We're on vacation.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

SAMMY examines his SCROLLS. They are spread on a TABLE. He fans himself with a rumpled NEWSPAPER. Benny is reassembling the GUN after field-stripping it. She's dressed in black T-SHIRT and JEANS. She has BLACK SNEAKERS.

SAMMY

Be back before dark.

BENNY

Sure, papa.

(her father's voice)

Don't drink too much, Bonita. And those boys you hang around with. They're no good.

SAMMY

Ach, just listen. Dark is their most powerful time.

BENNY

(seriously)

You're making it really difficult.  
(beat) I'll try to be back before dark.

Benny starts out the DOOR. She turns.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Can you go to the airport to meet the six o'clock from San Juan?

SAMMY

What on earth for?

BENNY

Cover. I want you to meet a former gunnery sergeant named White at the airport.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

You should have said something earlier. How can I arrange transportation at the last minute like this? I'm not dressed! This is terrible.

BENNY

That's the point, tubby. Scramble. Call everyone with a taxi in this stinking island, if you have to. Run around shouting. They'll follow you two. They'll lose me.

SAMMY

What stops them from catching me?

BENNY

Suddenly you got no power?

Sammy tosses aside his newspaper in disgust. Benny smiles.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

BENNY catches a glimpse of Cindy's SHACK. She stops and squats to take a good long look.

She hears a sound and hunkers down lower. TIM comes strolling by.

She watches Tim go into Cindy's shack.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - DUSK

The TABLE is clean. Small BOWLS are set out with mysterious contents. CINDY is cat-napping, her head is resting next to one of her old BOOKS. The westering SUN is framed by her DOOR. TIM enters and she sits up, a little groggy. He slides into a seat.

Cindy's head half-lifts from the table.

CINDY

Well?

TIM

They split up. The healer take a taxi out to the airport. Good damn thing, too, I hope he leaves.

Cindy sits up all the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY  
(rattled)  
Where is she? What's she doing?

TIM  
(shrugging)  
She out hanging around.

CINDY  
Where? Where'd she go?

TIM  
Keep calm, no one's seen her. She probably soaking up rays on the beach.

CINDY  
No, she wouldn't.

TIM  
(disapproving)  
It'll be okay. You've got Mr. Insurance buried in the yard.

CINDY  
(thinking)  
We can't lose it, not yet.  
(resolved, and depressed)  
He's made her powerful.

TIM  
So what do we do?

CINDY  
Do?

Tim's puzzled, and tired of the moodiness. Since she's not talking, he might as well get a beer. Tim goes to the COOLER, and finds that it's empty. Miffed, he slams the LID. Cindy startles.

TIM  
I'm gonna run the generator and the fridge for a couple of hours.

He gets a CIGARETTE from her PACK, saunters over to the DOOR and pushes it open. He strikes a MATCH on the JAMB.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - DUSK

TIM stands in the doorway of Cindy's SHACK. He lights his CIGARETTE and blows out the MATCH.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Benny's former vantage point is empty. Tim appears to be alone in the yard.

Tim saunters out of the shack. He pauses, looking out at the setting sun. He closes the DOOR.

EXT. CINDY'S SHED - DUSK

TIM wanders through the YARD toward the SHED. He looks east at the first STARS. He turns a few times to get oriented. He is a mystic and knows the secret significance of the zodiacal CONSTELLATIONS.

Walking backwards, Tim stumbles on the shallow GRAVE.

TIM  
(Addressing the grave)  
Sorry.

Tim ambles toward the SHED.

He pauses, looking up, puffing his CIGARETTE. BENNY moves out of the shadows behind the shack. A chair SCRAPES inside the shack.

The door to the Cindy's shack BANGS open. CINDY sprints out of the shack. Benny steps out from behind the shed to shoot Tim.

CINDY  
(shrieking)  
NO!

BENNY  
You!

Benny spins from Tim and fires on Cindy. She squeezes off three controlled rounds as fast as the gun will work. Tim dives into the shrubbery. Cindy collapses in mid stride, spilling over the grave mound, bleeding from a pair of nasty HOLES.

Benny dives into the bushes.

Cindy's BEER lies next to her. It is gushing out onto the ground.

Tim creeps across the yard in a squatting duck-walk.

TIM  
What the hell was that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY  
Get me inside.

TIM  
What is this you've done?

CINDY  
I bought us time. I'm the only one  
she can't destroy totally.

TIM  
Why do you say 'us' when you gonna  
be dead?

CINDY  
Don't auction my books, yet. I  
still have a lotta power. When  
it's dark, we'll get him. We'll  
get him good. We'll teach him to  
get in our way.

Tim tries to find a way to pick her up. She raises her arm, willing to stand and lean on him, if he will help pull her up.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

TIM and CINDY sit amid a litter of CANDLES, CONTAINERS, and other MYSTIC SIGNS. Cindy's changed into new clothes, but she's BANDAGED and wearing an improvised SLING. They've been hard at work.

TIM  
Will she really come to us?

CINDY  
She should. If her controller  
interrupts it, we'll find another  
way to get rid of her.

TIM  
(revealing a hopeful side)  
And if it work out?

CINDY  
Everybody gets lucky eventually.  
Even you.

TIM  
(not amused)  
Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim tries to hide his feelings by fumbling for a CIGARETTE. He doesn't like to be cut down like that. He's not last on the list of people to get lucky. He'll do well someday.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - NIGHT

The pool-side TABLE has a litter of DELI BAGS, TISSUE and STYROFOAM CUPS. This was a take-out dinner from some local restaurant. SAMMY brushes CRUMBS off his ample gut. He is a picture of joy, beaming with self-satisfaction.

BLANCA is tall and has long hair, a shapeless cotton-print dress with a Spandex exercise suit underneath. She doesn't shave legs or arms and it shows. She is dunking a TEA-BAG in a Styrofoam CUP. She talks with her hands, very expansive but also with very crisp, aggressive gestures.

BLANCA

How long do we wait? It's hours past sunset.

SAMMY

Don't worry your pretty little head. She's not dead.

BLANCA

(tired of the patronizing)  
There's a long frontier between not dead and all right.

SAMMY

They can't do anything to her.  
(He fusses with his crumbs.)  
Did I get butter on this suit?  
Ach.

BLANCA

(going over it again)  
But you said they were desperate.

SAMMY

(exasperated)  
But not stupid. They can't get past old Sammy.

BLANCA

I can see why.

Sammy decides to chuckle along with her.

She's gotten on his nerves. He has worked out a truce with Benny. But not with Blanca.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY enters, looking drained and lifeless. Blanca and Sammy are relieved. Blanca needs Benny's concrete and level-headed approach to the magic. Sammy needs someone to take Blanca off his hands.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Benny!

SAMMY

Finally.

Blanca runs to hug Benny. Blanca whirls her around, dancing and giggling. Benny doesn't really respond.

They separate and both do a clumsy, self-conscious at-ease.

BLANCA

Isn't this so great! Much better than the 'hood back in Chicago. Sunshine, pool, beach, palm-trees.

BENNY

Trash, bums and drugs. It's the same hustle on a different avenue.

SAMMY

Okay then. Can I--

Blanca cuts Sammy off.

BLANCA

It's us two again, isn't it? Just like the corps.

Sammy sighs and glares holes through Blanca.

BENNY

I'm really hungry, what do you have to eat?

BLANCA

I have some coffee left.

BENNY

Is it still hot?

Blanca peels the lid off of a Styrofoam cup.

BLANCA

(crisp and military)  
No, ma'am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Benny looks around for a chair. The closest seat is occupied by Sammy. Benny frowns for a moment.

Sammy wheezes up to standing.

SAMMY

I'll go. You two catch up on things.

BENNY

(to Sammy)

Thanks.

Sammy leaves, wheezing and sweating. Blanca's happy to see him go.

Benny sits heavily in the CHAIR. She struggles out of her BACKPACK after she drops into the chair.

BLANCA

So what's the terrain?

BENNY

She lives in a shack between the beach and a swampy area on the east side of the island. She's tough, she volunteered for three rounds of nine mil this afternoon.

BLANCA

(loving the story)

Ouch!

BENNY

She's pretty cheap and flashy looking. Big jewelry, wide-open shirts, short shorts that leave her butt cheeks showing.

BLANCA

No! She doesn't sound like some-- you know--controller.

BENNY

I guess they come in all shapes and sizes. Even tubby was some kind of--sorcerer?

BLANCA

(sotto voce)

What's his story?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BENNY

He got into deep trouble. Someone set him up to take a fall. Now he's a chump, licking boots and hobbling at the scraps they throw him.

BLANCA

And us?

BENNY

We just have to rough up the opposition a little. Then we collect our money and go back to Chicago. We're outta here whenever we want.

BLANCA

Or maybe go to the beach for a few weeks.

Benny makes a face at the suggestion of going to the beach. She's had it.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

(changing the subject)

So what has she got?

BENNY

(puzzled)

That's strange...

BLANCA

What?

BENNY

I had him in the cross-hairs, and now I can't remember...

BLANCA

Remember what?

BENNY

(panic)

Get Tubbo. Something's happened to me.

BLANCA

(like a pro)

He went for coffee, he'll be back in a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BENNY

(giving orders)

Get him here now! Something's happened to me.

BLANCA

You'll be fine. Just relax. I'm here, nothing's wrong with you.

BENNY

No. No. Something changed. I could see him. I did see him, I know I did. But he's gone. You gotta get me help.

BLANCA

Okay, just sit quietly while I get Sammy.

Blanca charges off. Even though she's all flowing skirts and long hair, she wears black track shoes. She hikes up her skirt and runs full speed in the direction of Sammy.

Benny's eyes roll back in her head and she starts to shake.

She stops shaking and passes out. Her eyes flutter. She pitches forward, hitting her shoulder on the table. She slumps into the shadows under the table and lays there. Another tremor wracks her body. Her eyes drift open. She sits and then tries to stand. She looks asleep.

She flops back onto the ground. She has lost all of her crisp military bearing. She is a husk.

Blanca and Sammy return. Sammy has two Styrofoam CUPS.

SAMMY

Don't run, I'll spill this coffee all over my seersucker suit. Ach. What is this?

Blanca bends over to help Benny sit up. Benny is groggy and weak.

BLANCA

How are you feeling?

BENNY

(slurring her words)

Much better. I must be over-tired from today's mission. I think I'll get some rest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Blanca looks at Sammy's cups.

BLANCA  
You haven't eaten anything. Here's  
your drink.

BENNY  
Right.

BLANCA  
(to Sammy)  
Coffee?

Sammy holds out one CUP, Blanca takes the other CUP. The cup with the tea bag dangling from it.

Benny ignores the TEA BAG and sips some of it.

Blanca clutches at Sammy's elbow. Sammy sets the other cup down on the table. Blanca is very, very worried.

BENNY  
(to Sammy)  
She hates tea.

Sammy doesn't know to be worried. He motions for her to relax.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
I need some sleep. We've got to  
finish this and get out of here.

Benny gets up and starts to wander away. She is doing better, but has lost her perfect posture and march. The change is profound. Her will has been drained away.

BLANCA  
(to Sammy)  
She's not right. She hates tea.  
What happened?

SAMMY  
The poor girl's exhausted.

Blanca takes this as a personal slap in the face; women are not weak.

BLANCA  
And I suppose she's frail, too?

SAMMY  
(not getting it)  
Look at her. Just skin and bones.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (6)

BLANCA

I don't think she's fit for this mission.

(to Benny)

Benny!

Benny slowly turns back to Blanca.

Blanca looks at Benny critically. This examination goes from critical to icy.

BENNY

Are you questioning my fitness?

BLANCA

(unsure)

Are you fit?

Benny steps up, putting her face a few inches from Blanca's.

BENNY

You have any questions?

(she almost adds

'soldier')

Blanca straightens up, but doesn't retreat. Benny is a fireball, but Blanca is tough.

BLANCA

No, ma'am.

BENNY

You have questions, you take them up with me, understand?

BLANCA

Yes, ma'am.

Benny looks around, ignoring Blanca.

SAMMY

Please. We've got to be careful. They are provoked and might do something rash tonight.

Benny snaps into focus, she stares at Sammy.

BENNY

What do you know?

SAMMY

Lay low, stay together, keep away from them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

BENNY  
Comments?

BLANCA  
(still appraising)  
No.

Benny whirls on Blanca and shoves her. Blanca staggers back a few feet. Blanca is pissed and ready to pound Benny. She drops into a lower stance, ready to hit.

BENNY  
Go ahead!

Blanca sees the trap, and lowers her fist.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
Cut the crap! I'm fit, goddammit.  
I've had a long couple of days.  
(beat) Here's the plan. Are you  
following this? I cruise the bars  
and put a tail on him if he shows.

SAMMY  
Why don't we--

BENNY  
You're not in command here.

Sammy nods in agreement.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
We rendezvous at midnight at the  
Turtle Bar. Be there or send word.  
The go code will be 'Raymond'.

Benny and Blanca glare at each other for a moment.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
Questions?

Blanca turns away, confused. She turns back, but Benny is in her face.

Blanca leaves, with Sammy in tow.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

TIM and CINDY are packing up everything they need to perform some mystical spells and rituals. Cindy has BOOKS, CANDLES, a LANTERN, and other things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

You want help with that stuff?

CINDY

I have it. I'll do fine.

TIM

Don't be the martyr. I know what you did for me.

CINDY

You have some errands to run. Best get started soon. Take care of the power before you go.

Cindy goes outside with her stuff. Tim watches her go. He grabs a couple of BEERS for the trip.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

CINDY limps across the YARD. She places CANDLES around the shallow GRAVE. TIM comes out with BEERS in his hand.

Cindy sits on a PILLOW at the head of the grave. She starts her chant. Tim watches as he goes to the shed and kills the generator. When the GRINDING of the generator stops, the WIND comes up, the TREES whip around in the tempest. The candles are untouched. Tim leaves.

Cindy finishes her chant. The candles slowly die out, leaving the unearthly light behind. A HAND of bones pokes through the dirt.

The SKULL rises from the ground. SAND cascades out of the various foramen. The bones emerge from the earth.

The normal cycle of life, death and corruption is stood on its head.

CINDY

Go!

The skeleton, shedding beach stand, climbs out of the shallow grave.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

BLANCA and SAMMY are walking. Blanca is held back by Sammy's hobbling.

BLANCA

She seems to be--I don't know--  
under a lot of stress?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

(scoffs)

It's far worse than that. She's not with us anymore. Don't go to the Turtle bar tonight.

BLANCA

What are you talking about? Leave her alone? She's made! They'll be able to get her.

SAMMY

She's gone. They've already got her. We have ourselves to defend tonight. New clothes, change motels, lay low, keep moving.

(hissing with emotion)

She'll lead them to us, she's been turned. By tomorrow they'll be able to use her against us.

BLANCA

She can't, she's... she's...

SAMMY

(sincerely concerned)

I'm sure you were close in the corps.

BLANCA

Before that, too, in the 'hood in Chicago.

SAMMY

This is bigger than your ghetto girlz street gang. (beat) She's gone. Count yourself lucky they took her and not you.

BLANCA

Go away. She can't just turn on me like that. I wouldn't never turn on her.

SAMMY

Ach. Listen to me. She didn't turn. They control her. Her self is repressed. All that's left is her body. And her gun.

BLANCA

(conflicted)

We shouldn't abandon her!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BLANCA (CONT'D)

What do we do to get her back? All she wants to do is get paid and get out of here.

SAMMY

We won't win her with tender looks and affectionate words. You need really powerful magic. I don't have it, but Ray might have something in his library.

BLANCA

What about me?

SAMMY

Stick with old Sammy, I can protect you.

BLANCA

(bitter)

You! You cut Benny loose and told me to be thankful! What will you do when they come for me? Thank them for leaving you alone? Get away from me!

Blanca snorts and leaves Sammy. Sammy hobbles down the pavement after her.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

BENNY storms down the STREET. An ancient PICKUP bounces past her with TIM at the wheel. It's going the same direction she is.

She watches it go by. It breaks her stride. She becomes vague, and dithers. She pulls at her hair, twirling it. She bites her lip.

She hugs herself.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

This is an American-style chain grocery store. BENNY walks up to Tim's beat-up PICKUP in the PARKING LOT. She glances into the BED. She walks around, glancing into the CAB.

She heads for the grocery store door. She opens it and starts to go in. Then doesn't actually go in.

She walks back to Tim's TRUCK, considering her alternatives. Finally, she opens the door, and hops into the passenger seat of Tim's truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Absentmindedly she starts twirling her HAIR. Then she notices what she is doing, and tries for force her HANDS to lay still. She doesn't know what is happening: her cool detachment is gone, and she's doing things poorly.

TIM comes out of the store with his BASKET full of BEER and other GROCERIES. He sees her in the truck. He strolls over to her window.

TIM

I don't believe I got your name.

BENNY

You won't either.

Benny shows him the GUN in her lap. Tim understands more perfectly than she does--he knows this threat is empty. He smiles, confident and calm.

Tim hefts the beer into the truck, plus several reusable mesh bags of groceries.

Tim slides into the front seat.

TIM

Where to?

BENNY

Someplace secluded.

Tim shrugs and starts the truck. He stops and thinks after he gets it running.

TIM

You know I'd be safer here. Why should I drive you anywhere?

BENNY

I'll wait.

TIM

I'd call the cops.

BENNY

But will they come when you call?

TIM

How long you prepared to wait?

BENNY

Till everyone goes home. Then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She points a finger at him like a gun. She looks away as she shoots.

TIM  
I'm bored of waiting.

He puts the truck into gear. They drive away.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY bounce along in the TRUCK.

TIM  
So, the show's over for the two of us?

BENNY  
What do you mean by 'us'?

TIM  
We're tools, and when we lose our edge, we buried.

BENNY  
We're no 'us'. I haven't lost any edge. You're the one who's going to shove off.

TIM  
What do you mean shove off? Like leave this island?

BENNY  
Just drive.

The LIGHTS of the TRUCK illuminate the BONES walking down the highway. Tim hits the brakes, SCREECHING and swerving to avoid the skeleton.

Benny twists around in her seat to watch the skeleton as it slides into view and then slides out of view as Tim drives away.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
What was that?

TIM  
Mr. Insurance.

BENNY  
A Halloween skeleton? Are you joking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tim smirks. Benny doesn't know what to make of him.

EXT. HIGH PROMONTORY - NIGHT

Tim's TRUCK rounds a turn and winds up to the high promontory. The truck crunches to a stop on the overlook. The ocean pounds away out there in the darkness. The driver-side DOOR swings open, and TIM puts his FEET up on the window sill. The dome light illuminates Tim and BENNY.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY are sitting in Tim's TRUCK. Tim is relaxed, feet propped on the truck's open DOOR. Benny is tense, holding her gun for comfort.

TIM  
Got any cigarettes?

BENNY  
(a little lost)  
No...

Tim shrugs and takes out a cigarette.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
You're gonna smoke in here?

Tim shrugs and starts to get out of the truck.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
Where do you think you going?

TIM  
(slightly amused)  
Outside for a smoke.

BENNY  
Stay right there.

Tim pushes in the LIGHTER on the dashboard and sits down. They wait in silence for a bit.

TIM  
So how'd you get in this? You're not bookish, so I bet you have some friend who showed you some powers. You know, told you that you could have multiple orgasms if you'd --

BENNY  
I'm not into the weird shit.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

TIM  
(genuinely interested)  
What you doing here then?

BENNY  
I'm the paid protection.

The lighter pops out. Benny jumps. Tim smirks.

TIM  
You do this for money? I got  
money.

Tim reaches into his shirt picket and pulls out a handful of  
BILLS. He drops these in Benny's lap.

TIM (CONT'D)  
We got lots and to spare. What are  
you getting? A grand a week? We  
can do that.

Benny makes a face. She won't even dignify this kind of  
offer with a 'No.'

TIM (CONT'D)  
Two grand? Three?

BENNY  
I'm not a mercenary! I have some  
loyalty.

TIM  
Loyalty! That's a two-way street.  
You give loyalty, but what do you  
get?

Benny thinks of a way to phrase her answer. She needs to  
translate the marine corps' Semper Fi for this low-life.

BENNY  
I know who to trust. I know where  
I'm safe. I have a place where I  
don't have to look behind every  
door for trouble. When I'm done I  
can leave without being followed.

TIM  
Who can you trust? When your  
controller is done with you, you'll  
be back on the street, hustling.  
You trust me, and I can really  
protect you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

This is a raw nerve: Benny's been dropped back on the street more than once by Ray. She turns away, disgusted.

EXT. RIDGE - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY walk along a RIDGE, BEACH and OCEAN below them. She follows Tim grudgingly, but still she follows. Tim leads, unsure that she will continue to follow. This is a tentative evening stroll. Tim has to turn and talk over his shoulder.

TIM

You know. We safe here forever. You can drop out of this mess and retire. Eat three squares, jog on the beach, go fishing. People work fifty weeks of the year to come here for two. I set you up to vacation here for fifty weeks of the year. You go to Chicago for two weeks out of the year and see how the other half suffer.

BENNY

Retire. You can't retire without money to live on.

TIM

Get out! This is paradise. You don't need much money here. We got plenty. We know where to get more.

BENNY

That's were I come in? A little drug trafficking, robbery maybe?

TIM

Nothing. We'll pay you retainer to stay out of the way. When we get what we after, we make you comfortable.

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY walk up to a TRAILER. There is a Formica-covered CABINET leaning against the trailer. Tim opens the DOOR to the CABINET. He hangs the KEYS on a HOOK. They turn around and go.

TIM

You don't know what you're feeling, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Benny glares at him. This is true, but it's none of his business.

TIM (CONT'D)

It goes with the (beat) territory.

BENNY

Territory! What were you going to say? It goes with what? Did you put some stinking -- thing -- on me? Some weird curse shit?

TIM

Why do you ask? Feelings all mixed up? Confused? Self-conscious? Heart racing?

(baiting her)

Could be you in love.

BENNY

You're arrogant. And padre-- patronizing.

TIM

It happens.

BENNY

Don't flatter yourself. You're repulsive.

TIM

Is that you heart or you politics?

BENNY

Politics? Nothing's political about my preferences!

TIM

Are you sure? Aren't you feeling conflicted? Here's a man, but you're too tough and independent to need a man. Maybe you ain't as independent as you wished you felt.

BENNY

What do you know about how I feel?

Tim shrugs and walks away. He knows pretty well how she's feeling.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY grab the grocery BAGS from the back of the TRUCK.

BENNY  
What about the beer?

TIM  
I'll come back for it later.

Benny throws down the bags she is holding.

BENNY  
What the hell am I doing?

She grabs out her GUN and points it at Tim.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
(not rhetorical, she  
really wants to know)  
What the hell am I doing?

TIM  
Sorry. We got to keep ourselves  
safe.

BENNY  
(almost shrieking)  
Safe?

TIM  
Safe. You're not safe around that  
healer. They're slippery. It's  
okay now, no one can hurt you.

BENNY  
What about me? Don't I get any say  
in what I do?

Tim sets down his bags. He goes over to her. He puts his hands on her shoulders. She shortens her aiming position, but continues pointing the gun at his heart.

TIM  
I'm sorry. I really do like you.  
But, we can't let you hurt us  
anymore.

Benny pulls away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY

What did you do to Ray? You could have killed him!

TIM

Eventually. If we don't win this, we've lost everything. Everything. Nothing left for us except this.

BENNY

He's in the same boat. He's put everything he has into this. He's in hock way over his head. What will happen to him if he doesn't get what he's after?

TIM

One of us has to die.

BENNY

How can you do that?

TIM

I don't know him and I don't care. He cares less about us.

Tim picks up his grocery bag and leaves. Benny, helpless, watches him.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY march down the ROAD lugging grocery BAGS. Tim is in no big hurry. Benny marches along at a brisk pace, but not too far ahead of Tim. She has to wait for him to catch up.

CINDY comes out of the SHACK, waving a BEER. She leans on the door post, catching her breath. The GRAVE is empty.

CINDY

(Forced and gushing)  
Hi, how are you?

Benny just glares at her.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Please don't be mad. It's safer for everyone this way. We're not bad people, and you'll get what you came for in the end. Come on, be a sport.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BENNY

You can force me to do everything else. You'll have to force me to cooperate. Go on do it.

CINDY

I could, but you'd feel much worse. You'd have panic attacks, become depressed. We'd much rather you relax, think things through, and make up your own mind.

BENNY

Since there's no choices left for me, what's to think about? You shoulda been killed.

TIM

I'd like to stay and debate free will and determinism, but I have to make two more trips to bring all the beer down.

CINDY

(venting on Tim)

Why are you being such a snot?

TIM

Don't talk to me about bad attitude. I ran your damn errand. I almost ran over Mr. Insurance doing it.

Cindy looks down at the open grave. Benny notices the look and looks down, also. The candles are still spread around. The impressions of bones and FOOTPRINTS are clearly visible. Benny is aghast as she recognizes the connection between the skeleton on the highway and the open grave.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

SAMMY hangs up the PHONE. He waddles back to a TABLE. Blanca is idly spinning her DRINK on a NAPKIN.

Sammy puts his hand on Blanca's. She dislikes his patronizing attitude. He's all she has, and for Benny's sake she endures him. She doesn't have to suffer in silence, thought: she makes a face.

SAMMY

Ray just gave me some bad news.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCA  
About Benny?

SAMMY  
No, about us. I don't know how to  
say this...

BLANCA  
Then don't.

Blanca yanks her hand away from Sammy.

BLANCA (CONT'D)  
What about Benny?

SAMMY  
Benny is safe. We're not.

BLANCA  
Why not? If Benny's with them,  
how's she safe? We're free to act,  
right? How's that put us in  
danger?

SAMMY  
(hissing)  
Would you listen to me! She's  
controlled by them. She's just a  
mindless hulk, stripped of her  
will. Would you please just--just  
imagine that she's sedated or  
something!

Blanca is mad at Sammy for describing such a situation.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

BENNY is purple with rage. She storms around the yard  
yelling at CINDY and TIM.

BENNY  
What the hell are you doing?

CINDY  
I can say it again, but I can't  
understand it for you. It's just a  
pile a bones we sent out to protect  
us.

BENNY  
A bunch of bones?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIM

Don't have an aneurysm.

BENNY

Especially not around you two grave  
robbers! What would you do to me?  
Use my bones for your horrid--  
(She fumes, looking for  
words)

CINDY

Knock it off, I said! Let's go  
inside and calm down.

BENNY

Who's gonna make me?

TIM

She can.

This defuses Benny. Cindy goes into the shack, Benny follows, grudgingly. Tim wanders away.

EXT. BAR ALLEY - NIGHT

BOXES of returnable BOTTLES are stacked against a wall. A kitchen DOOR is open. The kitchen is quiet but the LIGHT is on. An exhaust fan DRONES into the night. A JUKEBOX plays a tinny song over the fan. The SKELETON shuffles up.

A COOK leans out and pulls the back DOOR shut and the lock CLUNKS home. The skeleton shuffles away.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

BLANCA and SAMMY are about the last two patrons. The place is quiet and nearly empty. One other PERSON lingers over his drink. He is asleep sitting up.

The BARTENDER, a young kid, smoking, comes over. He's tired.

BARTENDER

Anything else?

SAMMY

One more brandy.

BARTENDER

Ma'am?

Blanca looks at her DRINK.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BLANCA  
 (to Sammy)  
 Where is this going?

SAMMY  
 We wait to see what she does.

The bartender leaves, ignored.

BLANCA  
 Why wait? Why don't we--

SAMMY  
 Hsst. Don't even think of a plan.  
 Tell me about your senior prom,  
 your first boyfriend, anything!  
 Don't give them a hint as to what  
 we're going to do.

BLANCA  
 Where can you go without a plan?

SAMMY  
 Instinct. You wait and let your  
 instincts take over. They can't  
 see that, so matter how hard they  
 look. Luck and instinct are all  
 you have.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

BENNY is sulking on the COUCH. CINDY wants to lay there, but doesn't want to mention it and start a fight. She leans on a CHAIR, wincing.

BENNY  
 So what's that--that thing going to  
 do?

CINDY  
 Scare the piss out of 'em. They'll  
 be off this island on the 9:02 to  
 San Juan.

BENNY  
 You're grotesque.

CINDY  
 What's worse? You shooting a gun  
 through the front door their house,  
 or them seeing a ghost? You're  
 doing real damage with real  
 weapons. This is just a big scare.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY (CONT'D)  
 Maybe the biggest they'll ever  
 have.

This shuts Benny up for a moment.

BENNY  
 Do you know where it is and what  
 it's doing?

CINDY  
 Not exactly. We know when it makes  
 contact with someone. Same way  
 your boss knows where you're at.

BENNY  
 (half-hearted)  
 Bullshit.

If Ray knows where she is, how much does he know about what she's doing? Will he see her as collaborating with the enemy? Her determination is being sapped by each revelation. She slumps lower.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - NIGHT

The SKELETON shuffles past the POOL. It comes to a MOTEL DOOR where it pauses.

It moves on to the end of the wing by the OUTDOOR PHONE, turns the CORNER and stops. The big toe shows from around the corner.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

BLANCA and SAMMY emerge from the bar. Sammy is teetering more than usual. Blanca is fed up with the inactivity, she storms down the street. Sammy hobbles with her.

Sammy and Blanca come to a GATE with a motel SIGN. What about the skeleton? Could it be lurking in the darkness here?

SAMMY  
 We need to be careful.

BLANCA  
 I thought you said we should just  
 wait and see.

SAMMY  
 We've waited. I think they're  
 waiting. I want to get some  
 luggage and move to a new place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCA

Move? Now?

SAMMY

Yes, we can try and stay ahead of them. I don't want them to find us.

BLANCA

So we're going to get our stuff and go? Not even check out?

SAMMY

Nein, we don't check out till morning. They won't know where to find us.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - NIGHT

BLANCA slinks along, looking in every direction. She is graceful and alert. She moves smoothly and slowly, nothing sudden, nothing risky.

She approaches a ROOM. Gently, she touches the HANDLE and rattles it. She listens at the DOOR for a moment before she puts in the KEY.

She throws open the door and then snaps her head around the CORNER and back. She pauses, digesting what she saw. Satisfied, she waves to SAMMY. Sammy hobbles up. Blanca slips in quietly after him.

A LIGHT flips on. It comes from the bathroom, deep in the motel room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SAMMY grabs a FOLDER and some BOOKS. He throws these into his CASE with the magical items. He closes this and sets it aside.

Sammy gets out a VALISE. He goes to the CLOSET area and starts grabbing CLOTHES. He flops them on the BED, and goes back for more.

After the second load is flopped on the bed, BLANCA starts stuffing the valise. She just crams things in. Sammy goes into the BATHROOM. In there, he kills the light.

The skeleton slips into the room from around the corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blanca finishes stuffing. The toilet FLUSHES. Sammy comes out of the bathroom. He has his SHAVING kit. Blanca has the valise.

From Blanca's POV we see Blanca and Sammy in the MIRROR.

Blanca's about to take the SHAVING KIT from Sammy and put it in the VALISE. Between Blanca and Sammy, the skeleton steps into the light, revealing itself.

Blanca screams and whirls around. She is terrified. She retreats, crashing in the DESK and DRESSER. She is shrieking and fumbling, trying to get away. As in a bad dream, nothing happens, she can't move fast enough. Sammy retreats the other way, hissing, protecting himself with the shaving kit.

The skeleton closes with Blanca. She backs into the corner, wide-eyed and panicked. The skeleton reaches out for her. She smashes it with Sammy's valise full of clothes. Some RIBS break off and the skeleton staggers back from the blow.

Blanca realizes that it's fragile. She narrows her eyes, controls her breathing. She grabs a handful of SKIRT and stuffs it in the waistband of her sports SHORTS.

The skeleton advances, attempting to choke her. She parries the extended arms. She makes a vicious chop to the ELBOW. The bones crack, and the RADIUS breaks free.

The skeleton regains its balance from the parry. It shoves her and she flips over the BEDS and rolls into a heap across the room.

The skeleton walks around the beds, ignoring Sammy. Sammy is clutching his shaving kit as he backs away from the skeleton.

Blanca is on the floor, ready as the skeleton attacks. From the floor, she kicks the skeleton in the KNEE. The PATELLA breaks off and the FIBULA breaks. The skeleton staggers backwards.

Blanca gets up and chases it.

Blanca hits it in the SKULL, breaking the MANDIBLE into two pieces. TEETH are knocked out: some go flying, others drop from the sockets.

SAMMY

Tear its head off! Break the spine!

Blanca kicks the skeleton in the STERNUM, breaking it and knocking more RIBS out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She backs up half a step. The skeleton, as she expected, lunges. Again, she parries it to the side. This time she hooks it around the neck, and grabs the SKULL in the crook of her elbow.

She gives a mighty wrench, but the skeleton writhes around successfully. It shoves and they both spill out the door onto the SIDEWALK. They collapse in a heap by the POOL. The skeleton pulls free before she can recover.

EXT. MOTEL POOL PATIO - NIGHT

From its knees, the SKELETON grabs BLANCA around the neck. She reaches up and tries to pull the SKULL to the side, but her fingers slip off the smooth dome.

Then she puts her fingers in the eye sockets. With this added leverage -- plus a big scissors kick -- she throws the skeleton off her.

She staggers to her feet. The skeleton charges a third time.

She steps to the side parrying the ARMS and, hooking the skull with her elbow again. Her fatigue leaves her off balance, the skeleton propels her through the pool-side TABLES and CHAIRS.

After colliding with the furniture they crash into the POOL.

EXT. MOTEL POOL - NIGHT

BLANCA floats, face down in a spreading pool of BLOOD. The SKULL is bobbing in the water. The other BONES lay among the pool FURNITURE.

SAMMY shoves his way through the upset furniture and plunges into the water.

LIGHTS have come on, and PEOPLE have started to gape at the proceedings.

Sammy, transformed, drags Blanca from the deep water. He lines her up with the edge of the pool. He squats and with a big shove rolls her up onto the deck. He leaps up the LADDER.

He stoops over, tips her head and checks for breathing. He rolls her on her side and WATER pours from her mouth. He rolls her back, pinches her nose and blows into her mouth. She coughs.

SAMMY

You don't die with Sammy at hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her eyes open briefly then close again. She coughs some more.

Rather than elated, Sammy is despondent.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

That was it, my lady, all I have.  
For one of us, tonight may be our  
last night. There is still her  
sorcerer, and he can kill.

(looks up)

Ray, please have a way to save us.

A skinny COP runs up with a FLASHLIGHT.

COP

What the hell's all this?

SAMMY

(pointing at the bones)

We are surrounded by death.

The cop pokes at the bones with his shoe. He is repulsed.

COP

Wait here, I'm calling the  
detective.

SAMMY

(bitter)

After the way we've been used? I'm  
leaving and--

(starting to lose it)

I'll never come back.

The cop didn't stay to listen. Blanca coughs and sputters some more. Sammy puts a hand on her head.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Relax and make your peace. It's  
not over.

Blanca rolls her head to look at the bones among the upset pool furniture. She struggles to get up.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Not that. That's broken. Their  
sorcerer is still at large. He can  
take one of us.

She rolls back and closes her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BLANCA

This is a horrid place. How can he--  
-you know--how could they--you know--  
-

SAMMY

Shh. Don't ask, you don't want to  
know. Catch your breath and we'll  
get out of here. We'll relax and  
enjoy what's left of the night.

The cop comes back. He gets the cleaning NET and scoops the  
skull out of the pool.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

TIM and BENNY look out the window. Tim has a CIGARETTE.

CINDY comes out of her SHACK, goes up to Tim and taps him on  
the shoulder. They exchange a meaningful glance. Tim tosses  
down the cigarette and really smashes the hell out of it.

Tim turns toward the BEACH. Benny looks at him, wondering  
what they are up to. But she can't bring herself to ask.

CINDY

It's late, you might wanna get some  
sleep. Now.

Benny struggles with this. She wants to ask, but has been  
commanded not to. She flaps her mouth, but can't make any  
noises. Conflicted, she goes back into the house.

TIM

Why you treat her like that?

CINDY

What's your problem? Finish him.  
Then we'll take care of her.

TIM

You said I...

CINDY

Don't be naive, we can't keep her  
around.

TIM

We agreed that she would be mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY

We didn't agree. You agreed. I've made the healer vulnerable, you finish him.

Tim storms off, mad as hell.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

TIM has found a spot and is rapping his chant. The WIND is picking up. Tim's DREADLOCKS are blowing around.

He raps his chant. The wind and SURF rise with the intensity of his song.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

SAMMY and BLANCA walk down the street. The STREET is empty. It is very dark and very lonely.

Sammy looks disdainfully at a STOOP. He takes out his HANKY and dusts it off before sitting on it. Blanca can't sit still, and paces back and forth. Sitting on a stoop is a tough operation for a big man and involves a lot of wheezing and teetering.

BLANCA

You think someone will die tonight?  
If we're going to go down, why  
don't we go down fighting?

SAMMY

We did.

BLANCA

What? Bashing up that--you know--

SAMMY

Call it Mr. Anatomy Lesson. It could have killed you.

Blanca shivers.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

What do you think you could do?

BLANCA

Find them, find Benny, get the gun.  
Do some real damage. I can take  
them both.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SAMMY

Not against the sorcerer. If you move, then you're dead. Wait and your dead. Waiting's easier.

BLANCA

Bullshit. I'm going to find Benny.

Blanca leaves, pissed.

SAMMY

(calls after her)

Not during the night. Wait till daylight when they have less power.

Sammy is just tired. Who will they choose?

An AMBULANCE drives by, slowly with the lights and sirens off; presumably taking the skeleton to the morgue. Sammy watches the ambulance go by. He sighs and rubs his eyes with his hands.

BLOOD erupts from under his SHIRT.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Oh, God. I hoped it wouldn't be Sammy. Why did it have to be me? Ray, where are you? Can you do anything? Oh, God.

He topples off the stoop and slumps to the ground. No one is around. Blanca is gone, the ambulance went the other way. No one will be by here until morning.

Sammy gasps and chokes. He struggles for a while. He realizes that this is the end. He can only hope for help from Ray.

FADE TO: BLACK

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

CINDY sits in the swamp in a LAWN CHAIR. She is tapping on the arm of her chair, impatiently. She us irresolute, getting more and more upset with something that is not working.

Suddenly she realizes something has fallen into place. She has a wicked grin. Awful to behold.

CINDY

It's done. Come back to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She slaps her lawn chair until it is folded flat. She flings it into her BOAT.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

A young M. E. has the SKELETON bits stretched out on a GURNEY. He has the BODY BAG on a nearby table. He is carefully picking up BONES from the bag and laying them onto the gurney.

He puts a bone in place. He tips up the body bag and pours out one last bone. It is the SKULL. He places this on the end of the spine. There is a moment of discomfort under his cool professionalism.

His discomfort turns to shock and horror. The skeleton sits up on the gurney. The M. E. backs up suddenly, bangs his HEAD against a CABINET, and flops to the ground. The skeleton climbs off the gurney.

INT. RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

RAY'S condition has not improved. He's stretched out on the COUCH. The floor is littered with PAPERS and BOOKS. He is reading some old SCROLL. His photocopies of the drawing of the IRON STAR are taped on the wall.

He heaves a big, sad sigh, knowing he sent people to their doom. In a few days he'll be dead, too.

The PHONE RINGS. He knows what this is. He'd rather not face it. How can he face Blanca knowing her fate is the same as Sammy's?

The phone rings. What can he say to Blanca, knowing she's separated from Benny by a power he can't overthrow?

The phone rings. Ray picks it up.

RAY

Blanca, I'm sorry about what's happening. Things are out of control.

(listens)

Yes, I knew it. When Sammy saved you, he couldn't save himself. They're a rough bunch. Blanca, can you do me a favor? Be sure he's buried, not cremated. Got it? No cremation.

(listens)

It's down to you to stop her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY (CONT'D)

I know there's a way to release Benny from their control. I just haven't found it, yet.

Ray slams down the phone. He's not mad at Blanca, he's frustrated by his inability to control the situation. Ray eases himself off the couch, chucking the scroll off to the side.

He opens a FILE DRAWER and tries to take out a sheaf of old parchments. It's bulky and takes both hands. When Ray reaches his other hand in to support the folder, he feels something.

Puzzled, Ray pulls out this misplaced sheet.

His eyes grow big when he realizes that this is what he's been looking for. He doesn't pump his fists or do any usual victory dance: he gazes in wide-eyed wonder at his good fortune. This serendipity is real magic; the other stuff is just hocus pocus.

RAY (CONT'D)

Benny!

Ray shoves the junk off his desk. He sets the new paper down. He grabs his mortar and pestle. He grabs his stubby candles. He pauses because his wounds hurt. He sets aside his bottle of aqua vitae.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - DAY

BENNY is lying on the COUCH. CINDY is nodding over her SCROLLS at the TABLE. Tim is nowhere to be seen. Benny's eyes snap open. She sits up on the couch. The room starts to spin. She fights to sit up, but fails and flops back down. Cindy is still snoozing.

BENNY

Madre de dios, not again.  
(exhausted)  
This is supposed to be my life,  
spare me.

Benny sits back up again. She has trouble catching her breath. She starts to hyperventilate. She needs air and lurches outside, gasping to breathe.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - DAY

BENNY doubles over, sucking wind in the worst way. She stumbles around in the yard, trying to keep her balance. She stumbles over the GRAVE mound.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The DIRT is kicked around, and bony FOOTPRINTS lead in every different direction. She almost steps on the SKULL, buried there.

Benny falls to her knees, her breathing more under control. She has a few last shuddering gasps. She takes a few last sighs until she is fully under control again. She checks her WATCH.

She sits down in the dirt, much more relaxed. She starts to wonder what in hell she's doing here. She rubs her head a bit, thinking.

She looks up and Cindy's SHACK.

She takes out her GUN and looks at it. She sights in on the BULLET HOLE in the door.

She is just inches from the bones showing in the dirt.

BENNY  
Mother of God! Ray!

She springs to her feet. Free from the earlier enchantment, she has a small, grim smile.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
This is it. Do the mission. Do  
the mission.

She hefts the gun. She works the SLIDE, checks the MAGAZINE, and fires three controlled rounds through the WINDOW, turns and runs away.

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - DAY

CINDY'S head snaps up as a BULLET SMASHES the beer BOTTLE next to her. Two other bullets blow out her WINDOW and punch big holes in the WALL.

Cindy darts across the room to the door. She opens it a crack and looks out. She waits for more gunfire. Cindy runs back to her table and fumbles her papers into the floor under the table.

Hands shaking, she searches.

CINDY  
Where was it, I just had it! Where  
did it go? Come on, come on.

She checks all over the place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY (CONT'D)  
Is that it? Yes!

She grabs a candle.

CINDY (CONT'D)  
You want to run? Well keep  
running, then, bitch. If I'm not  
your controller, no one is. You'll  
be a gutless liability.

Cindy lights the stub of the candle and smooths out the scroll.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

BENNY is jogging along the HIGHWAY. She is all smiles.

BENNY  
I got you now, Mrs. Magic Lady.  
I'm sprung loose and now you are  
finished.

Benny glances over her shoulder. She's a little concerned about something.

It's nothing, she goes back to jogging.

It might be something to worry about, so she looks back again.

She starts to realize that she might be in serious trouble and picks up the pace. She nearly reaches panic level before she regains some self-control.

BENNY (CONT'D)  
What are you doing to me? Leave me  
alone!

She tries to slow herself to an easy jog. She struggles to keep her breathing under control. With a big sigh she grinds to a halt and marches along at a good clip. She continues to heave big sighs, fighting down panic.

A nagging doubt steals over her, and she just glances over her shoulder. This erupts into full-blown terror and she sprints away, totally out of control, screaming.

INT. RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

RAY looks pretty bad. His condition hasn't improved any. He's plodding through a BOOK. He has a big PAD and is making some kind of list in several COLUMNS. He stops to obsess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY

(despondent)

They're going to kill me. I gotta... Oh god... Why'd she terrorize Benny? (One Bitter Laugh) Who knew she could? Okay. It's just an obstacle. It's a problem. All I need is a solution.

He forces himself to look down the columns in his pad, checking them again. It's tough, but he's got to keep moving. He sighs -- almost a sob -- with self-pity.

RAY (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have... I mean, what is the point? Do I need it? Am I doing this just because I can? Oh no. This is not helping. I have an objective. I need the money. I've got backers. (beat) It's worth it. Well it is. This is the big one, the one that lets me kick back a little. Drop out of high gear.

Ray starts his task again. He circles an entry on his pad. He finds the corresponding entry in his book. He reads it once and doesn't believe what he sees. He reads it again. He checks his pad.

He's elated to have found this missing spell, but disappointed that he couldn't save Benny or Sammy.

He clears his desk to set to work.

EXT. CINDY'S SHED - DAY

TIM comes strolling out of Cindy's SHACK. He shouts over his shoulder as he comes out the DOOR.

TIM

(Bitter)

Thanks for everything. You couldn't stop her? You got rid of her.

(To himself)

You didn't like her, and you didn't want me to have her.

CINDY comes out the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY

I did what I could. It's goddamn daylight, there's only a few things I can do during the day.

Tim rolls his eyes and makes a mocking face.

TIM

I'm gonna run the power for a while.

CINDY

Listen, Tim, she's gone and she won't be back.

Tim goes into the SHED. He fumbles around a bit. He tries to start the generator, but it SPUTTERS. He tries again, and it doesn't start.

TIM

Damn. What's got into this thing?

Tim tries again. A bolt of LIGHTNING blows Tim out of the shed and into the yard. Cindy is knocked on her ass in the doorway to her shack. She struggles to her feet and runs over to Tim.

Tim is lying into a twisted heap up against the shed.

CINDY

What happened?

TIM

(barely breathing)  
He got into the generator. Did you see the aura on the--  
(coughs)

CINDY

I'm sorry, I shoulda thought.

TIM

Help me to the beach.

CINDY

I'm sorry, honey, but you're too far gone. I'm so, so sorry.

TIM

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CINDY

You want to get him? Let's get him. Together. Okay, honey, just give me one more, just one for momma. I'll help you and we'll do it right here.

Cindy cradles Tim in her lap, they start chanting. She guides his hands.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

BLANCA is hunkered down under the PHONE at the end of the block of motel rooms. She doesn't know what to do with herself. She has her HANDS folded to keep them under control, it almost looks like she is praying. As she reviews her situation, she starts to wring her hands with worry, but pulls them back under control.

BENNY runs down the HALLWAY, out of breath. She jams her KEY into the LOCK and tears the DOOR open. Blanca runs to join her.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

BENNY charges into the ROOM, grabs a DUFFEL BAG, and stuffs her THINGS into it. BLANCA tags after her. Benny just grabs clothes by the handful, indiscriminately. She unslings her BACKPACK, finds her TICKETS and stuffs these into her back pocket.

BLANCA

Benny?

BENNY

I got to get out of here. I've had enough of her and her weird shit. They've used me as their little voodoo doll once too many times.

BLANCA

What about me? What about us?

Benny gives her a perfunctory kiss.

BENNY

Save yourself, honey, before they start using you up, too.

Blanca gasps. Then she coughs and starts to stagger. Benny is stuffing her luggage again and doesn't look at her.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BENNY (CONT'D)

What, you wanted a tender good-bye?  
I'm sorry I started this, and I'm  
sorry I brought you. And I'm sorry  
I hurt you.

Blanca sits heavily on the bed, sighs and coughs. Benny still isn't looking. BLOOD has erupted under Blanca's DRESS from Tim's attack.

BENNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to make this sound like  
the end. It isn't really. Not for  
us. We can still see each other,  
just not on this mission--not this  
island--not for Ray.

Blanca drops onto the floor. Benny looks up for the first time and sees Blanca collapsed on the floor. This is the nightmare she was running from, come true before her eyes.

Benny shrieks, grabs her things and runs.

Blanca reaches up for her, but is too weak to do anything more.

FADE TO: BLACK

INT. CINDY'S SHACK - DAY

CINDY is laying on the COUCH. She's wounded, and has looked better. She swings her legs out onto the floor. She picks up her BEER from the END TABLE.

She stumbles to the door. She grabs the SHOVEL which is leaning there. She stumbles outside.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - DAY

CINDY comes outside with a BEER in hand, dragging the SHOVEL.

In the yard are two GRAVES. Between the shallow GRAVES she drops the shovel and sits down. She struggles to keep from crying.

CINDY

(to the skeleton)

So who were you anyway? Some  
pirate? Rum runner? Drug  
smuggler? What get-rich-quick  
scheme laid you out? I wish I  
could tell you we're close, but  
we're not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cindy realizes that self-pity is a trap. She stands up and throws her bottle against the house.

CINDY (CONT'D)

(raging)

What the hell else am I supposed to do? Go quietly without doing my damndest to get what I want? It's mine. I worked for it! It's mine!

(crying)

I'm doing what I gotta do. I can't do any less.

She slumps back down onto the ground between the graves and starts to cry.

FADE TO:

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

CINDY wakes up with a start. It's dark, she's been sleeping on the ground. Her eyes are still red and swollen from crying. She's been sleeping between the two shallow graves. She's back to her old malicious, self-confident self. She runs her hands through her hair and shakes it out.

She looks up at the night sky, sniffs the air. She looks down at Tim's grave.

CINDY

I'm sorry about this afternoon.  
You know me and this topical sun.  
Every flaw, every blemish  
magnified. We got him on the run,  
you know. It's time for the ropa-  
dopa. I'd have given him to you,  
you know, in the end, if we got  
there. I guess I'm out of muscle.  
We'll find out what he fears most.

She goes back in the shack. She comes out with a BEER, a pack of CIGARETTES and some CANDLES. Reverently, she puts these on Tim's grave.

She moves a little away and starts laying out a mystic circle.

EXT. TEXAS AIRSTRIP - DAY

RAY hobbles down the steps from a small COMMUTER aircraft, carrying a neat BRIEFCASE. He shuffles across the tarmac. He doesn't look good at all. He clutches his side. His light cotton sweater is blood-stained.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A calm, confident PILOT comes out to meet him. The pilot is wearing a LEATHER bomber jacket. His hair is very long, in a pony-tail and graying.

They shake hands and climb into the back of a large cargo CHOPPER with big aquatic pontoons. The chopper has a PEGASUS logo and says "Mesa Air Transport".

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

RAY is leaning on a crate in the cargo area of this CHOPPER.

Some papers are spread around on the deck. JEFF, the pilot, is relaxed and confident.

JEFF

Sammy says you're the man. Bailed him out when he... well I guess I don't need to tell you what you did.

RAY

Poor Sammy. I guess I did get him out of a pretty tight spot. So you think you can do this?

JEFF

Sammy knew. For a fact. Sounds like she'll move tonight. If you've told me everything, I'm ready.

(Ray winces)

You have told me everything, partner? She doesn't have some kind of high torque force from beyond... you know...

RAY

(Wincing in pain at his own lies)

I don't know. I don't think so. It's just here and the poor... thing... she raised from some graveyard somewhere.

JEFF

Just the one?

RAY

Yeah, you'll... (shrugs)

Jeff gives him a thumbs up. Ray closes his eyes in resignation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jeff leans out of the open door, looks left, and WHISTLES. From his right, EARL comes up behind him. Earl has a white jump suit, a white hat with the bill pointing straight up. Earl has a TOOL BOX and drops it in the chopper.

INT. CHOPPER - NIGHT

JEFF and RAY are wedged into the front seats of the cargo CHOPPER. EARL is sitting between them in a seat between the flight deck and cargo deck. They're wearing HEADSETS and shout to be heard over the engine's DRONE. Ray and Jeff are grim, peering out the window.

Earl has a DUFFEL of gadgets, Ray has his neat briefcase.

JEFF

That's it.

Earl whips out a FUZZ BUSTER with a big antenna and velcros it to the console. Then he whips out some NIGHT-VISION GOGGLES.

EARL

Oh yeah. East shore. Shack.  
Small Shed. Someone's home.  
Light's on. Something's moving on  
the ground. Go around for another  
pass.

Ray cranes to look out the window with Earl, but can't see much in the dark. The fuzz buster BLEEPs and a LIGHT flashes.

JEFF

Negative. We've got a lock.

EARL

Possible false. I don't see  
anything. No weapons in site.

JEFF

(Scared.)  
Don't gimme that. I've got radar.  
For a fact. I'm hitting the deck.

EARL

Watch the wind-shift.

Ray clutches his briefcase. He watches with only the mildest interest as Jeff struggles with the chopper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF

(Edging toward panic)  
Something's down there! What's  
that? In the ravine!

EARL

Ravine? Negative, it's clear,  
nothing.

Jeff takes a wild bank, slamming everyone around in the  
chopper.

JEFF

Evade! Evade! Evade! Incoming, I  
see incoming.

EARL

Negative! Negative! No incoming,  
I see no threat!

JEFF

(Panic.)  
They're out there! I'm putting  
this down, now!

Jeff starts working the controls to land the chopper.

He struggles with sudden wind-shifts as he gets closer to the  
ground at night with no marked landing zone. Earl scampers  
around with his night-vision stuff trying to scope out the  
dangers into which they're hurtling.

There is a rending WHACK-RIP-WHACK and then the engine  
suddenly REVS UP. The chopper tips to the left and drops the  
last few feet to the ground.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

The cargo CHOPPER lays on the left side half buried in swamp  
water. Bits of mangrove and palm still rain down. The  
engine IDLES, COUGHS and STALLS.

RAY struggles out of the nearly vertical starboard side door.

He turns and slides down to the massive orange PONTOON. He's  
carrying his briefcase. EARL's head pops out of the door.  
He has his CAP with the bill pointing straight up still  
firmly on his head. He looks around, appraising the  
situation rapidly, unlike Ray, Earl moves with real urgency.

Earl reaches back whips out a big coil of yellow, nylon ROPE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He flings this out to Ray. Ray plops his briefcase on it to keep it from sliding off. Earl reaches in again and comes up with a RIFLE.

He scrambles up over the edge of the chopper and slides down to the pontoon with Ray. Earl ties a big knot on the pontoon. He checks the ground carefully, picks a spot and jumps down. There is a muddy SPLASH as he lands in some ooze.

EARL

Come on, we gotta get Jeff out from under this thing!

Ray looks down, dubiously, holding his briefcase. Earl starts paying out the rope, edging away from the chopper.

Slowly, like a stop-action film of young plants erupting from the earth, HANDS spring up from the black swamp water. They reach up around Earl's ankles as he works.

Earl has found a big mangrove TREE and is getting ready to swing his coil of rope around it, when the hands seize his legs and start to drag him down.

Earl shrieks. He is brought to his knees by the hands. He unslings his rifle, works the bolt and tries to take aim, but the hands have him by the BELT now and are bending him too close to the water to sight effectively. Earl resorts to holding the rifle out away, pointing it into the water and firing wildly.

As the hands drag his mid-section down, he arches his back to keep his head out of the water, but the hands pull down his arms and shoulders. Earl holds the rifle up and fires wildly into the water until he sinks out of sight.

The water burbles with a two more rifle discharges. Then it swirls as something under it thrashes its last. Then it's still.

Ray slides off the pontoon into the swamp. He tromps through the muck until he comes up a small rise onto firmer land.

EXT. CINDY'S SHACK - NIGHT

RAY stumbles toward the lighted window of Cindy's SHACK. As he passes the shallow GRAVES, the DOOR opens and CINDY saunters out. She's dressed up in a long, diaphanous, flowing black DRESS with a white WRAP. The soft side-lighting from the door makes her look spectacular.

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CONTINUED:

CINDY

Come to gloat on your handiwork?

RAY

(Trying a belligerence he  
doesn't feel.)

Listen, you don't know who you're  
dealing with. The powers I  
represent are powerful, far more  
powerful than--

CINDY

Don't! Don't waste my time with  
your chest-thumping and posturing.  
Did you come to capitulate?

RAY

I can't, I've got too much in this.

CINDY

Then you came to beg?

RAY

After what you did to my people?

CINDY

What I did? Don't start, don't  
even start. What did you come for?

RAY

I came to get the star.

CINDY

No you didn't. You came to die.

She nods. The SKELETON grabs Ray from behind. The skeleton's left forearm is across Ray's throat. Ray's right hand is grasped vice-like in the skeleton's right hand, Ray's right elbow locked against the skeleton's sternum. The skeleton's pelvis is dug into Ray's back, picking his feet up off the ground. Ray thrashes about, wrestling with the skeleton. Sometimes his hands are free, sometimes he's out of the choke. He struggles vainly against the unyielding skeleton but he never gets completely away.

She spins around on her heel. All around Ray and the Skeleton, THREE SMUDGE pots flare up.

The skeleton's grip magnifies, it becomes more solid and Ray's struggles are instantly weaker and more futile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She opens her mouth, the skeleton's jaw opens, and a horrid GRINDING HOWL arises from around her, Ray, the skeleton and the yawning graves beneath them

Ray twitches vainly for a moment. His briefcase drops from his failing grasp, and pops open. PAPERS blow about in the rising breeze. They flutter into an open, shallow grave. The wind tips over the briefcase and blows the contents away.

Cindy picks up Ray's original FAX with the Iron Star depicted on it. The rest of the papers are left to blow around. It starts to rain.

Cindy stands out in the tempest, rain running down her upturned cheeks. She has no tears of her own left.