

SHINY OBJECTS

by Catherine Marie Hall

WGA 1276477

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET, COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

NJ suburban town, bright, late afternoon sun.

An eight foot long rack of dresses on coat hangers moves along a sidewalk, past storefronts.

Two TALL WOMEN strut behind the rack --

Near the street, EDI DEWEBBER, in a chic red outfit, talks and laughs into her phone.

HILDY DEWEBBER, in chic denim, idly picks at the fabric of a dress on the rack.

A third TALL WOMAN, CARLA DEWEBBER, casual chic, pulls the rack of clothes. As she walks, Carla observes her surroundings with keen interest.

CARLA'S POV

Silver light pulses from the surfaces of cars, people and buildings, suggests lightning.

Partial skeletons glitter through living bodies (people walking down the street) and then recede.

A stop sign transforms into interlocking cubes.

BACK TO SCENE

People walk down the sidewalk, drive down the street.

Carla's eyes follow a leaf that flutters to the pavement.

The coat hangers' paper coverings tear in the breeze -- sunshine glitters on the exposed metal hangers.

At the back end of the clothes rack, Edi laughs, closes her phone and pokes Hildy's shoulder.

EDI

Buy me a drink, somebody. Come on,
we can take your car.

Hildy glowers and kicks the clothes rack.

EDI (CONT'D)

Oh, you're mad. Don't be mad at me!

HILDY

You stole my customer. Right in front of me! My --

EDI

Oh, come on! Teppers? I can't help it if those guys like me, what was I supposed to do?

Edi swings her hips, jauntily.

HILDY

(angry)

You... you... bend over to fix your shoes, bend over to get your sales book, "oh, check my butt, I dropped my sales book!"

EDI

I'm clumsy!

HILDY

And then you tell the manager that I brought the wrong dresses!

EDI

Alright, alright.

Edi primps at her own reflection in a store window.

HILDY

And you owe me for lunch, too!

EDI

Alright. I'll give you the shop on Cookman Ave.

HILDY

You'll *give me*?

Edi strikes a pose and grins at some men passing by, who regard her outfit with pleasure.

Edi suddenly looks bored and weary. She swats at Hildy's arm and pleads.

EDI

Hildy, let's have some fun! That cute guy from last night was *crazy* about you. We'll look for him.

Carla stops at the corner curb -- Hildy bumps into the rack, Edi laughs loudly.

At the intersection, Carla looks up and down the streets.

CARLA'S POV

A shower of tiny diamonds. Tiny diamonds bounce off of every surface.

The passersby are silhouettes, lights shoot through the outlines. Some of the images revert to color and three dimensions.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla gets a better grip on the clothes rack and carefully guides it across the street. Her face shows intense concentration.

Edi and Hildy greet an OLDER MAN, walking by, they stop to talk, their voices suggest playful rivalry.

OLDER MAN

(to Edi)

Don't you look all cheerful in red!

HILDY

Cheerful? Everybody knows red makes you look cheap.

OLDER MAN

(laughing)

We know that's not true!

EDI

Not like Hildy's "camo", what is she, crawling around in the trenches?

Edi manages flirtatious crawling motions with her fingers and wiggles her rear end.

Hildy grits her teeth, seethes.

In the distance, Carla continues to pull the rack of clothes up the next curb, down the next block.

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

Beyond the stores, on a block with few buildings, Carla stops in front of a factory warehouse with a sign in lights:

SEW-MUST-HAVE! The Misses Family Business

Leaves swirl on the pavement, Carla pulls the clothes rack through a side door, into the factory.

INT. FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Door closes behind Carla, she walks through the dark warehouse past racks of clothes, piles of fabric on bolts.

CARLA

(softly)

The right... brain as you know can understand... that is to say comprehend words --

Carla pulls the clothes rack further along, near rows of WOMEN working, hunched over sewing machines.

The women talk to each other (in English, with Spanish, Swedish and Polish accents) but don't look up from their work.

CARLA'S POV

Colored, pulsing lights surround each woman and sewing machine -- the lights pulse to varying lengths and brightnesses.

CARLA (CONT'D)

(softly)

-- comprehend words, but it cannot verbalize, I say, verbalize --

BACK TO SCENE

Carla looks around the room for a moment still pushing the squeaking rack of dresses.

GRETТА, a seamstress, YELPS as Carla bumps the clothes rack into a work table.

Carla's voice is a little breathy, surprised and generally happy -- she speaks slowly, draws a breath before beginning.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Whoops! That's got some volume.
Sorry, Gretta.

GRETТА

Go through the garage, like the other sales girls!

The other seamstresses snicker.

BEV briskly cuts thread from the garment she sews.

BEV
She don't drive a car!

GRETТА
Carla! When they going to give you
back a license?

CARLA
License? Driver's... gun...
fishing... nuisance alligator
collector...

BEV
Drunk driver. How bad do you have
to be so they take away the license?

GRETТА
Come on, Carla, you try to get your
license back or what?

CARLA
What. What and more what.

Carla takes the dresses from the clothes rack, replaces them
on other racks in the back of the room.

GRETТА
What'd you sell, nothing?

CARLA
We introduced the style. Step one,
introduction, very important.

GRETТА
That Hildy, that sister of yours,
she could sell anything.

BEV
Even this junk.

Shadows in the workroom stir. A petite woman, TESSA MISSES,
jumps forward.

TESSA
Sew-Must-Have does *not* sell *junk*.

Nervous chatter and giggles from the seamstresses.

ANOTHER SEAMSTRESS
We don't mean... she don't mean...

Gretta catches Carla's eye, indicates by expression that Carla should stay silent.

GRETTA

Carla said everybody like the new dress, Mrs. Misses.

TESSA

Five dollars a bolt for those fabrics, I guess they should! Where's Edi, anyway, didn't she come back?

Carla focuses on Tessa, thinks a moment.

CARLA'S POV

A small light struggles to glow around Tessa, as the light dims, Tessa seems to fade away.

CARLA

Yes. Yes. Or? She's on her way?

TESSA

You don't know. You don't know. Well, which is it, did she come back with you or not?

Carla begins to answer, Tessa waves her off.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Her *Uncle Rocko* has been calling all day... I don't need trouble from anybody's *Uncle Rocko!*
(fake accent)
Gonna make I can't refuse!

Polite, nervous laughter from the seamstresses.

Tessa lifts the skirt of a half finished dress from Gretta's sewing machine.

The seamstresses wince, look quietly angry.

CARLA

Uncle Rocko, he's my uncle, too!

GRETTA

(to seamstresses)
Edi is Carla's cousin.

Gretta wriggles in her seat, mimics Edi.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

Hildy's her sister.

Gretta scowls, Hildy-like.

CARLA
I'll call Uncle Rocko. I'm his niece.

Tessa takes this as a direct challenge.

TESSA
Well! He lives right next door to
my house!

Carla nods then smiles, quite radiantly.

TESSA (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
One of those crap houses that should
all be flattened. I'm supposed to
forget about my property value?

Tessa rips an unfinished dress from one of the work tables,
shoves it up to Bev's face.

TESSA (CONT'D)
Junk? This is what you call junk!

CARLA
(rambling)
Tract houses that the soldiers could
buy, the whole country was so grateful --

Silence in the room. The seamstresses wait and watch.

Tessa's face tightens in rage, she's about to explode.

CARLA (CONT'D)
-- that was WWII, when Rocko's father
was in the service, he was my Great
Uncle Vito, and my Godfather, too --

Tessa sputters.

TESSA
Grateful? Somebody ought to be
grateful to me! This country is
built, is *carried* on the backs of
small business owners!

Behind Tessa, Bev bends down, pretends to stagger under a
heavy load -- the other seamstresses cover their laughter.

Tessa sputters and spins around.

TESSA (CONT'D)
Make *all the hems... two inches lower!*

Tessa exits, angrily, her heels snap the concrete floor.
The seamstresses try to muffle their laughter.

CARLA
(softly)
The right brain, as you know can
understand words...

CARLA'S POV

Tiny cubes of light expand and pop like bubbles.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla stands still, looks around.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I'll go call. My uncle.

Carla exits, unnoticed.

INT. BAR / RESTAURANT - DAY

Soft rock music, a few couples dance.

Hildy and Edi sit at the bar, flirt and laugh with a CUTE GUY
who stands between them.

Cute Guy leans closer to Edi, pulls her to the dance floor.

Edi looks back at Hildy and laughs victoriously. Hildy glares
then flicks a straw at the happy couple.

The front door opens, daylight invades.

Tessa enters, marches up to Hildy.

TESSA
Is this what you do on my time?

BARTENDER
Oh-oh, Hildy, your boss is here!

Hildy regards Tessa with loathing, then smiles charmingly.

Hildy pats the empty bar stool next to her.

HILDY
We're celebrating! I got a big sale
in the works. Big sale, hear that?

Edi drags her dance partner back to the bar and drapes her
arm around Tessa, (Tessa is much shorter than Edi).

EDI
 Here's what we're going to do! You
 'member my little sister Ellen?

Edi laughs uncontrollably, Tessa and Hildy stare at her.

EDI (CONT'D)
 Ellen's my *little* sister... and she's
short! Too!

Hildy breaks into giggles.

Tessa's face shows no tolerance for "short jokes", and the deep breath she takes indicates a tirade is to follow.

EDI (CONT'D)
 Wait, wait... Ellen can sew! She
 can help me work off all that money
 you made me owe you!

Tessa chokes on the unleashed tongue-lashing and struggles to catch the bartender's attention.

TESSA
 Bloody Mary!

The bartender blows a kiss at Tessa.

HILDY
 Forget it. Ellen's making money
 selling cars.

EDI
 But! There's the economic *down turn!*
 The *down turn* is even worse for cars!

TESSA
 She can't sell cars and you can't
 sell dresses! Don't think I'm going
 to let you get past another deadline!

Tessa receives her drink from the bartender and nods toward Hildy -- Hildy groans and pays for Tessa's drink.

Edi laughs, pinches Tessa's cheek, Tessa swats her hand away.

TESSA (CONT'D)
 And the interest, the full payment
 and the interest!

Hildy smirks.

TESSA (CONT'D)
 What are you smirking at -- you're
 just about to fall behind, too.

HILDY
I'm keeping up with the payments!

TESSA
Yeah, this month. We'll see about
next month.

Hildy takes a gulp from her drink, seethes.

Edi slaps Hildy on the back.

EDI
Hildy, you're a piss... a piss a
pistol! You remember that day your
Mom got struck by lightning?

TESSA
She wasn't born, idiot. Stupid idiot.

EDI
I know, I know, your Mom was pregnant
with you and Carla.

TESSA
Woman gets hit by lightning and all
she gets is those two doozies.

EDI
(laughing)
That's it! And everybody always
says, Carla got the sparklers...
Hildy got the gristle!

HILDY
(furious)
Sizzle! I got all the sizzle!

EDI
Oh. What'd I say... gristle, sizzle,
gristle...

Edi fluffs up Hildy's hair, to its detriment.

TESSA
(to Hildy)
You look like a wild boar. Carla
got the pretty hair, too.

Edi boogaloos back to the dance floor where several men and
women greet her, happily.

EXT. DEWEBBER BACKYARD - DAY

Late afternoon, a small tract house, red and gold leaves
blow across a well kept back yard.

An open toolbox stands next to a '61 Pontiac Tempest.

ROCKO DEWEBBER, short and sturdy, wears mechanic's coveralls, slides out from under the Tempest as Carla approaches, on foot.

ROCKO

Carla! You're such a good girl!

Rocko jumps up and grabs Carla's hands, then notices the grease on his own hands, with surprise.

ROCKO (CONT'D)

Your Aunt Amanda, something's wrong...

Rocko shakes his head nervously, searches Carla's face for reassurance.

CARLA

I'll go see her, inside?

Rocko walks ahead of Carla, as if clearing a path.

ROCKO

I think that little PJ from next door must of wet all over. Pee all over the place.

Rocko takes a deep breath, prepares to pull the back door open. He laughs, nervously.

ROCKO (CONT'D)

Like down in the tunnels. You're a six, you're a seven, urinate! In a piece of gauze to breathe.

Rocko glances around the yard, suddenly, fiercely alert.

Bright leaves flutter from the trees.

CARLA

Tunnel rats. You're a hero, Uncle Rocko. My mom told me about it.

Rocky shakes his head, hesitates to open the door.

ROCKO

After Viet Nam, everybody wasn't so nice, you know? But I tell you what, your mom? Runs up!

(softer voice)

"Hey, Rocko! Welcome home!" she says, gives me a big hug --

Carla's eyes well up with tears.

ROCKO (CONT'D)

-- middle of the A & P, me with my
GI haircut, back then...

Carla and Rocko enter the small house.

INT. DEWEBBER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

PJ MISSES (2 year old girl) chases a mechanical toy.

AMANDA DEWEBBER, frail, sits in an arm chair, facing but
not watching a television.

PATRICK MISSES, skinny, spaced out, worn out teenager, sprawls
across a couch.

Rocko exits.

PJ runs to the couch, lifts the noisy toy up to
Patrick's head.

PJ

Dadda's pretty hat.

Patrick pushes the child away, sees Carla, drags himself to
a sitting then standing position.

Amanda puts her arms out toward Carla and starts to cry.

AMANDA

Little Carla!

Carla smiles, kneels by the arm chair, embraces her aunt.

PJ and toy run to Carla and jump into the group hug.

CARLA

Hi, hi, everybody! Aunt Amanda, how
'bout we go freshen up?

AMANDA

I'm so tired...

CARLA

You'll feel more comfortable?

Amanda looks around, vaguely, finally locks onto Carla's
gaze -- Amanda's confusion seems to lift.

AMANDA

I never forgot Carla. I always pray
for you, even in the bad times.
Especially. Always.

CARLA

Always. I know those prayers.

Carla helps Amanda to her feet, they walk slowly to the bathroom, PJ holds Carla's leg as they walk and then sits outside the bathroom on the floor, with the toy.

Patrick peeks out the window then quickly looks through drawers and cabinets in the kitchen and the television room.

EXT. BAR / RESTAURANT - DAY

Hildy and Edi, wobbly, stand outside the Bar's front door, Hildy searches through her purse.

EDI

Is it *morning*? Oh, hell, you made me stay out all night again!

Edi and Hildy look at the afternoon sun, momentarily confused.

HILDY

Who took my keys!

Edi dances at the edge of the street, acts like she's going to run through the traffic.

EDI

I'm flyin' and you're dryin' up.
Ha! You're drunker!

HILDY

Wait, did I give my keys to the bartender or not... did I?

EDI

Ask him. Wait, don't ask him, he'll think you're stupid.

As a police car pulls up to the curb, one of the bartenders joins Hildy and Edi on the sidewalk.

BARTENDER

Hildy, we'll take my car, alright?

Bartender waves to police officer.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

I'll drive them home, it's okay.

Hildy and Edi take the bartender's arms and walk happily with him.

INT. DEWEBBER HOUSE - LATER

Kitchen -- big double sinks, chrome and Formica table, linoleum floor.

Amanda, in clean clothes, sits at the kitchen table, chatting with Carla and PJ.

PJ
I saw farm that grows snow.

AMANDA
That sounds pretty!

Patrick snaps his fingers and then signals to Carla from the next room. She walks toward him.

PATRICK
You know who I am? You work for my Mom and Dad.

CARLA
Sure, Patrick.

PATRICK
My Mom's your boss. We live right over there, you know?

Patrick points to Tessa's big house nearby, Carla nods.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
That's why I'm over here, to help out a neighbor, like.

Patrick pulls on Carla's arm and lowers his voice.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
So, some money for my time and expenses, like, five hundred for the three days, for my time and expenses.

CARLA
It's not enough... to mean well. Patrick. It's not enough to mean well. But it's not nothing, either.

PATRICK
Great, that's great. Loony bird. You got till tomorrow or something.

Patrick takes a few long steps toward the door, scoops up PJ from a chair as he walks by.

PJ
I'll stay here.

Patrick sets the child on the floor.

AMANDA
PJ, your Grandma Tessa will... want
you home with your Daddy.

PJ
But... oh, yeah.

Patrick exits with PJ, the toy follows.

Carla closes the door behind them.

AMANDA
He's a funny kid, that Patrick.

CARLA
He give you any trouble, Aunt Amanda?

AMANDA
He wouldn't dare! But I feel bad,
you know, I watched him grow up...

Amanda starts to look small and sad, again.

CARLA
How 'bout we fix something for dinner?

AMANDA
Noodles and sauce is fine. Just
open a can. Do you mind, honey?

Amanda points to a wall with three rows of shelves.

Carla scans the pantry shelves: onions, garlic, cans of
tomatoes, tins of olive oil, a pasta machine.

Amanda watches Carla and taps her fingernails against each
other, nervously.

Carla leans toward the shelves.

Suddenly, the look of confusion on Carla's face changes to
intense study.

CARLA'S POV

Overlapping generations of women strain whole tomatoes and
roll out pasta dough.

The women smile at Carla, nod encouragingly.

Carla watches them, then reaches through the vision for a can of tomatoes.

BACK TO SCENE

The phone rings, Amanda answers.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

No, I'm not all by myself. *Carla's*
right here with me.

Carla browns ground meat in a pan, then uses a potato masher to push the tomatoes through a strainer over a pot.

INT. BARTENDER'S CAR - DAY

Sleepy-eyed Hildy and Edi sit in the back seat.

HILDY

That Tessa took my keys what you
bet. Evil bee-itch.

EDI

And she's making me pay back all
that money... that's not fair.

HILDY

She took my keys and she took my
car.

EDI

That's not fair! Where'd she take
your car to?

HILDY

I hope she drives off a cliff.

EDI

That could happen. You know what?
That could happen and that'd be fine
with me. I wouldn't even care.

HILDY

I wouldn't care but I'd be happy.

Edi squints, folds her arms smugly.

EDI

Somebody's gonna put a potato in her
tailpipe someday, make her drive off
a cliff.

HILDY

What? What in her tailpipe?

Edi and Hildy laugh uncontrollably.

BARTENDER
This is your house, Edi, right?

EDI
Right.

BARTENDER
You got keys? Can you get in?

Edi shows a ring of keys, she suddenly looks sober and bored.

EDI
Thanks for the ride, sweetie.

EXT. EDI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Late afternoon.

Edi and Hildy exit the car, Bartender drives away.

HILDY
Hey, where's my house?

Edi walks toward the front door of her house.

EDI
You live further down.

HILDY
I know where I live!

Edi enters her house, closes the door behind her.

Hildy, miffed, strides down the sidewalk.

INT. DEWEBBER HOUSE - LATER

Rocko and Amanda sit at their kitchen table, plates of spaghetti in front of them.

Carla brings two mugs of coffee to the table.

ROCKO
And coffee too? You made coffee?

AMANDA
She's such a good girl.

Amanda nods to Rocko, who nods back, supportively.

Carla (looks very tall) stands near the backdoor, straightens her hair, in a mirror.

Carla's POV

Carla's reflection in the mirror as we see it, then as a skeletal face, then glittering with swirling cubes of light.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla wipes a smudge from her face.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Can't you stay and eat with us?

CARLA
Today I have to go. Call me, alright?

Rocko and Amanda hold up their mugs of coffee.

ROCKO
Salute!

Carla smiles and waves happily, exits.

AMANDA
See how good she's doing, now.

Rocko squeezes Amanda's hand. They happily eat their dinner.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Carla hurries toward the corner just as the bus pulls over, a few people get out.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Carla gets on the bus, shows the driver her monthly ticket.

BUS DRIVER
Miss on-at-Millhouse-Street! What
are you doing at Burbury?

Carla smiles, nods to the driver and the people on the bus.

The bus lurches on.

Carla holds the metal rod, overhead, leans with the motion of the bus -- all eyes are on Carla.

She moves toward the first empty seat, sits.

Carla looks out the bus window, darkness falling on the town.

EXT. STREET, COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - CONTINUOUS

Silver shining restaurants, bars, garages, laundry.

EXT. HILDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hildy walks heavily, angrily, up the street, and turns at the driveway of 29 Millhouse Street.

Hildy lifts her eyes, suddenly weary.

EXT. HILDY'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

A bulldozer, engine running, faces the garage on her property. MEN in work clothes, hard hats and orange vests stand waiting. A WORKMAN, with clipboard, approaches Hildy.

WORKMAN

Ms Hildy DeWebber? This's a notice,
from the Sheriff of McGeehee County -

HILDY

There's a Sheriff of McGeehee County?

Hildy squints.

HILDY'S POV

Outside a saloon in the Old West, a SHERIFF in a tartan kilt points a six shooter at her.

BACK TO SCENE

The workman's distant voice finishes the explanation. The workman shows the clipboard to Hildy, hands her a pen.

WORKMAN

As per the Municipality of Willey,
County of McGeeHee.

HILDY

What? What about a Sheriff?

Hildy struggles to read the printed papers on the clipboard.

WORKMAN

If you're the owner of the property...

HILDY

My sister, Carla lives there.
Don't... don't blame me...

WORKMAN

Carla's the other name on here, where
is she at?

The workman studies the paperwork, too.

WORKMAN (CONT'D)

Same birthday, huh? Twins? Identical
or fraternal?

HILDY

Just... sister-nal... cistern. All.

The workman nods, decides not to pursue that.

HILDY (CONT'D)

I'm the owner! And her. Does this
say Homeland Security?

All of the workman nod, solemnly.

HILDY (CONT'D)

You do what you gotta do, I'm too
tired and I don't want trouble with
the police. Or the government, you
got that? I'm not a terrorist!

WORKMAN

Sign here and here.

Hildy signs, returns the clipboard, lets herself into her
house -- door locks, drapes close.

The bulldozer starts up and plows through the garage. With
a few passes, backwards and forwards, the bulldozer demolishes
the structure.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The bus stops near a block of warehouses, Carla exits. People
on the bus watch her as she walks to a building between two
warehouses.

A large sign on the building:

THERE BUT FOR FORTUNE Soup Kitchen

The bus driver calls out to Carla.

BUS DRIVER

Food good, huh?

Carla turns back and smiles.

INT. THERE BUT FOR FORTUNE (T.B.F.F) KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

An institutional kitchen, long counters, PEOPLE WORKING.

Carla enters, workers casually wave to her, yell greetings.

Carla puts on an apron and rubber gloves, begins scraping dirty dishes. A half wall separates the kitchen from the dining room where patrons dine, quietly.

Carla washes dishes. Carla dries and puts away dishes.

CARLA'S POV

A light snow falls in the kitchen. As snowflakes touch a surface, they become flat hexagons. As Carla moves around the kitchen the hexagons become spinning cubes.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla hangs up her apron in the now empty kitchen.

FATHER JAMIE enters as Carla prepares to leave.

FATHER JAMIE

You'll take care of the wash-rooms
now, Carla,... the little boys'
and the girls'.

Carla waves good bye, walks toward the exit.

FATHER JAMIE

Just help with the mop, girl.

Father Jamie's smile broadens and his face reddens.

CARLA

Tomorrow. I'll mop tomorrow.

Carla opens the door to exit.

FATHER JAMIE

(furious)

What are you people wasting my time
for? You want your credit for
community service and then say
"tomorrow"!

Carla, startled, turns around, shakes her head.

CARLA
It can not verbalize.

Father Jamie stabs a finger toward her.

FATHER JAMIE
When they were hauling you off to
prison, you didn't have a friend in
the world, don't forget that!

CARLA'S POV

Gaping cracks appear in the floor beneath Carla's feet.
Through the cracks is an abyss.

She hears "What are you wasting God's time for?" over
and over in her head.

BACK TO SCENE

CARLA
(carefully)
The right brain as you know can
understand. I'll come in tomorrow.

FATHER JAMIE
What are you wasting God's time
for? Do what I tell you!

Father Jamie stomps out of the room, slapping shelves and
walls as he exits.

O.S. clatter of doors slamming.

Carla listens, looks in the direction of the clatter. With
determination, she exits, to the street.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

On the dimly lit, empty sidewalk Carla rubs her arms and
shivers. She walks on tiptoe to the corner.

CARLA
But it cannot *verbalize*, I say
verbalize or control speech, unlike
the left brain...

The bus approaches from the darkness, Carla hurries up the
steps, the bus roars into the darkness.

INT. TESSA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Darkness.

Small, unevenly shaped room, above the workrooms.

One large desk and throne-like chair, large window behind them overlooks the street.

Tessa stands, in the dark, close to the window glass, peers outside with binoculars.

BRENDAN MISSES, agitated and squinting, enters. He pulls the door shut behind him, flicks on the light switch, Tessa and Brendan both jump.

TESSA
Put that light out!

Brendan abruptly switches the light off and then on again.

BRENDAN
What?

Tessa presses the binoculars up to the window, then jumps out of sight from the street again.

Tessa's heels rat-a-tat across the room, she swats down the light switch and slaps Brendan's hand and arm, hard.

TESSA
Bad enough I'm married to a drunk
but you're a sorry-ass drunken
idiot... don't touch that light!

Tessa returns to the window, yanks the horizontal blinds down and closed.

In the now complete darkness Tessa walks back, silently, and switches the light on.

Brendan, frightened, leans against the door, covers his eyes when the light comes on.

Tessa reaches over and opens the door behind him, as she steps toward him she grinds the high heel of her shoe into the toe of his sneakers -- one, then the other.

TESSA (CONT'D)
See how bright the light is?

Tessa's voice is cold, but she's lost interest... she glances at her wristwatch, sighs.

Brendan laughs, nervously, steps back.

He exhales, wearily, braces himself for more pain, but seems more composed and focused.

O.S. Heavy footsteps.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Brendan exits Tessa's office, Tessa follows.

PATRICK

Mom?

Patrick, with PJ in his arms, walks up the metal stairs outside of Tessa's office.

TESSA

What, baby?

PJ reaches for Brendan as Patrick ascends the stairs.

PJ

My granpup!

Brendan, smiling, reaches for PJ, but is not quite ready for her as PJ leaps from her father's arms onto her grandfather's shoulder.

TESSA

Moron! Drunken moronic idiot!

BRENDAN

I got her!

PJ

I got her!

Patrick starts to walk backwards down the steps.

PATRICK

Mom, take the baby tonight?

TESSA

C'mere to Grandmamma Tess-tess,
baby...

PJ crawls around Brendan's shoulders like a baby lamb.

BRENDAN

(chuckling)

What a pretty scarf!

Brendan tickles PJ's feet and kisses her fingers, PJ giggles.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Is this the most beautiful scarf I
ever seen, or *what*?

PJ hangs onto Brendan's hair and hugs Brendan's neck tightly,
with her little body.

Brendan patiently unwraps the child from his neck and arranges
her in his arms, against one shoulder.

TESSA

Choke him, baby, choke him good!

PJ faces the unsmiling Tessa and quickly crawls back around
Brendan's shoulder.

PJ

Sc-arf! Arf!

Tessa sniffs the air and grimaces.

TESSA

What do you feed this child,
sauerkraut... kibble?

PJ barks and growls, softly.

INT. TESSA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Brendan, with PJ in his arms, sits in the desk chair.

He opens the blinds, looks out on the street for a moment.

In the semi-darkness, Brendan and PJ fall contentedly asleep
almost instantly.

INT. STAIRWAY / FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Tessa follows Patrick down the stairs, her shoes clacking at
each metal step.

TESSA

You both leave me again, to clean up
all this mess by myself...

Seamstresses stop working, crouch, half hiding, at their
sewing machines.

Tessa catches Patrick by the arm, he stops moving. Tessa
arranges his arm around her own shoulder.

TESSA (CONT'D)

I'm your mother, I'm used to it, of
course, I'm used to it...

PATRICK
I'm sorry, Mom...

TESSA
I know, baby. Oh, this big, old place, big, old dilapidated... wish it would burn down, just burn away...

PATRICK
I know, Mom...

TESSA
Why do I bother paying insurance for, anyway, what am I paying those outrageous premiums for, anyway?

PATRICK
I don't know, Mom...

They walk through the workroom to a side door. Patrick reaches for the door, before he can bolt away Tessa grabs the back of his collar and pulls.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I know, Mom...

Tessa shoves him out the side door.

TESSA
(mutters)
Useless...

GRETTA (O.S.)
Mrs. Misses?

Tessa walks briskly back to the workroom.

GRETTA (CONT'D)
This lady says she's with the town...

Gretta points to STACIE SMYTH (30, well dressed) and two young SCHOOL GIRLS, smiling eagerly, in the half darkness.

TESSA
Stacie! I'm so glad you're here!
And these must be our two artists!

Tessa leads them towards the front door of the factory.

STACIE
When I told the girls you were going to let them decorate for Halloween!

The girls giggle and shove pictures at Tessa.

Tessa tries to summon a look of delight and settles on what might pass for pleased-surprise.

TESSA

What... fun! These two windows in the front here, is that alright?

STACIE

And they can decorate around the door, here, too, you know...

TESSA

Oh, could they? Around the door?

STACIE

You know, with dry corn stalks?

TESSA

Great fun, you girls are so talented!

O.S. a crack of thunder, flash of lightning.

EXT. HILDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain falls.

Wide, muddy tire tracks cross the yard and driveway.

Carla walks quickly up the sidewalk, past the house, to the backyard, searches in her purse for keys.

EXT. HILDY'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Carla looks around where the garage apartment should be.

Carla stands, head tilted, peers through the rain.

CARLA

Unlike the left brain which can and of course, does. Who asked you.

A NEIGHBOR with an umbrella runs out from the house next door, she talks excitedly to Carla. (Mute under the sound of the falling rain).

The neighbor energetically recreates the action of the bulldozer, with gestures.

Carla watches the neighbor and keeps looking up to where the apartment used to be.

The neighbor shakes her head, sadly.

Carla bends down to the ground, two small cats run to her.

INT. HILDY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hildy crouches, peeks through the curtains, grits her teeth.

HILDY
I don't need this.

Knocks on the door.

CARLA (O.S.)
Hildy?

Knocks.

CARLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hildy?

Hildy throws open the door.

HILDY
You are in some kind of bad trouble
and I got nothing to do with it!

Carla stands in the doorway, the cats hide in her arms.

Hildy steps away from the door, Carla enters.

Hildy menacingly holds up the papers that the workmen left.

CARLA
What...

Hildy shakes the papers, Carla leans over to read them, the two cats in Carla's arm lean toward the papers, too.

CARLA (CONT'D)
What does this mean?

HILDY
Mean? Means you're a *criminal*, and
now you dragged me into it!

CARLA
This paper says Mill Road. This is
Millhouse Street.

HILDY
I know what this is! I know what it
says! What does it say...

Carla points toward the back yard.

CARLA

My address is 29 Millhouse Street,
Rear. This says 29 Mill Road, house.
It's wrong. That's not my, my, my -

HILDY

So, what am I supposed to do?

Carla takes dishtowels from a drawer, dries the cats.

CARLA

God's business. Justice is. Totipotent.

LATER

In the darkened room, Carla and the cats look out the window at unending rain pouring over the flattened debris of the garage.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Blastula.

INT. HILDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

KITCHEN

From the counter, a cell phone ring-tone calls out, in what sounds like actress Linda Darnell's voice.

CELL PHONE RING

*Anybody that wants me can come and
get me. This ain't a drive-through!*

HILDY (O.S.)

Get that!

Carla makes coffee in the sun-lit kitchen. She reaches for Hildy's phone and the cats follow her, sit by her feet.

Hildy enters, groans, grabs the phone from Carla's hand.

INT. BAR / RESTAURANT - MORNING

Edi sits at the bar, talks on her cell phone.

EDI

Hildy? You dead? I was hoping we
were both dead. My head hurts like
it's growing antlers. And I'm riding
a bicycle, today, so watch out.

Edi checks her reflection in the mirror behind the bar and gleefully waves the screeching phone in the air.

Edi brings the phone back to her face.

EDI (CONT'D)
 Gibson's called me! They'll buy ten
 ugly sheath dresses and take another
 fifty on approval! Hello?

Edi laughs and waves the phone around.

A BARTENDER pours Edi a paper cup of coffee.

EDI (CONT'D)
 Deep down, she's happy for me... but
 it's real, real deep down!

The bartender laughs, puts a lid on Edi's coffee.

Edi sashays toward the door, the bartender and several other
 PATRONS whistle appreciatively. Edi exits.

INT. HILDY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

KITCHEN

Carla stirs milk into a cup of coffee, Hildy glares at her.

HILDY
 Edi got a dress order from Gibson's.

CARLA
 Should be yours. Some mouse cancer
 cells are reeducated to be healthy.
 The blastula's totipotent.

Hildy noisily fixes a cup of coffee for herself.

HILDY
 If those cats peed in my house...
 If you're in trouble again, I
 swear... I'm not kidding...

Carla tidies the kitchen, calmly.

CARLA
 I'm going to the police. To get
 everything sorted out.

Carla holds the cats and a paper cup from which they drink.

CARLA
 Why'd it take so long to give the
 mutating cell the option to, you know,
 reconsider its options?

HILDY
You were doing alright there,
for a minute.

Hildy goes back toward her room.

Carla opens a can of tuna, sets it on the floor.

The cats run to the food, Carla pets them.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Good girls.

She checks the sink faucet. Listens. Exits.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Phones ring, dispatchers' voices drone from several speakers.

Carla sits near the desk of OFFICER STEVENS and watches him
type rapidly on a laptop.

Officer Stevens scans two computer screens.

OFFICER STEVENS
So, your family's lived in Willey
City a while... right? Generations?

Carla nods then glances around, leans toward the laptop.

CARLA
Yes.

OFFICER STEVENS
Your name's Irish? Not your race, I
mean or religion or color or --

Carla leans in toward the keyboard, again.

CARLA
Neandertal.

Officer Stevens laughs, dryly.

OFFICER STEVENS
I'm trying to keep this friendly,
lady. But you're facing accusations
of very serious crimes.

Carla nods, thoughtfully.

OFFICER STEVENS (CONT'D)
The thing is, Carla, a *crack house*
is just real bad for a neighborhood.
And you and your sister already have
one strike...

CARLA
I'm the only one that went to jail.
But it greatly impacted my sister's
life, too --

OFFICER STEVENS
You don't have to tell me, I've got
two brothers!

Carla looks keenly interested.

Officer Stevens smiles into Carla's lovely eyes, shakes it
off, remembers where he is.

OFFICER STEVENS (CONT'D)
I'm... I'm looking at the date here,
on this paperwork. The date of that
previous conviction...

Carla lifts her purse from the floor, to her lap.

OFFICER STEVENS (CONT'D)
Now... about the crack house. You
were given fair warning, it says
here a notice was posted...

Officer Stevens clears his throat and sits up straighter as
Carla reaches into her purse.

DETECTIVE VELDOR SOURENIER, world-weary, at the next desk,
now keeps his eyes trained on Carla's movements.

Carla stops moving, then pulls her feet under her chair,
carefully.

She slowly takes papers from the purse, unfolds the papers,
smoothes them on her lap, closes her purse.

CARLA
If I could show you...

OFFICER STEVENS
I got everything right on these
screens.

Detective Sourenier casually approaches Stevens's desk.

CARLA
... the order from the Sheriff.

The police officers look at the papers.

CARLA (CONT'D)
I circled the address, and here,
like I think I mentioned, is *my*
address...

OFFICER STEVENS
That's a circle?

Officer Stevens reads the papers suspiciously and begins a search on his laptop.

OFFICER STEVENS (CONT'D)
Two addresses. Two properties. Two
addresses. Two properties...

Det. Sourenier stands straight, very tall.

DET. SOURENIER
Officer Stevens, you want me to go
out there, with the lady?

OFFICER STEVENS
(relieved)
You got time, Vel?

DET. SOURENIER
Sure, I got a minute.

The officers exchange a look and a nod.

Det. Sourenier extends a hand to Carla, escorts her toward the station door.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
So, what part of Neandertal are you
from, anyway?

CARLA
(laughs)
All of me.

Det. Sourenier nods and smiles. He's dealt with beautiful women before, he's dealt with crazy women before, he's ready for anything.

CARLA (CONT'D)
I didn't mean to say... it was a
surprising question.

DET. SOURENIER
 Were you lying then or are you lying
 now? That's a trick question.

Carla shakes her head and laughs but walks very carefully,
 as if the ground under her feet might break apart.

CARLA
 Lie? No. That's the worst kind of
 isolation. Self imposed.

They reach the door of the Police Station, Det. Sourenier
 holds the door for Carla and leans in to get a scent of her
 hair as she passes.

EXT. POLICE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Det. Sourenier holds his car's passenger door open for Carla.

CARLA
 Speculation, on the other hand. So
 to speak. Is just unfinished truth.

Carla puts on her seatbelt, Det. Sourenier gets into the
 other side of the car.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Myself, I'm confident in the
 Neandertal connection.

DET. SOURENIER
 And you don't pronounce the "h", I
 notice, you being a member, and all.

CARLA
 The "h" is alright --

Det. Sourenier outlines an "H" in the air.

DET. SOURENIER
 It's even on all sides. What's
 special about Neanders. So to speak.

CARLA
 Oh, the Bicameral mind. The
 speculation is they heard the voice
 of God, directly in their heads.

Carla peers carefully to the left and right as Det. Sourenier
 pulls his car into the traffic lane.

He glances at Carla.

Carla pays close attention to the surroundings.

DET. SOURENIER
You nervous? I'm a good driver.

Carla smiles and nods.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
It's everybody else, right? I gotcha.

Carla looks out the window -- her eye movements suggest travel at tremendous speed.

EXT. HILDY'S BACKYARD - DAY

The car stops. Carla and Det. Sourenier get out, walk around the stretch of debris that once was the garage apartment.

They both look at the Sheriff's Notice and at the property.

DET. SOURENIER
Absolutely right. Wrong address.

Carla walks around, points to different areas, as though the building still stood.

Detective Sourenier takes pictures of the empty area, looks up from the camera, looks around the sky.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
Did you say something?

CARLA
Did you hear something?

Carla smiles, she doesn't look surprised.

Carla walks around, bends down, picks out a few items. She stands, looks at the trees and smiles, earnestly.

CARLA (CONT'D)
You can see this, right? It's like I said, right?

DET. SOURENIER
Something went wrong, quite a few ways. Guess I ought to get the wrecking crew to the right address.

He stares at the Sheriff's Notice, then looks blankly at the wreckage.

CARLA
It's important --

Det. Sourenier regards Carla, uncertainly.

CARLA (CONT'D)

It's important to my sister that there's no trouble with the police. Or the government. Or anything.

DET. SOURENIER

How long did you say since you were in jail? I overheard you talking to Officer Stevens, but I didn't really get the details...

CARLA

Nineteen years. Ago. Nineteen.

Det. Sourenier gazes at Carla and smiles.

DET. SOURENIER

That's... virtually *expunged*. Makes you as good as *perfect*! Perfect... record, I mean.

Carla continues to pick up small things from the ground.

CARLA

Oh, good, my pen... and I think... this's an old arrow head!

Det. Sourenier sits on the ground to look with her.

INT. HILDY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hildy peeks out the window, scowls, then retreats to a corner.

HILDY

Take her away! Arrest her!

Hildy nervously strains to hear what's going on outside. She sniffs the air, the flush of anger returns.

HILDY (CONT'D)

You cats are done for.

The cats sit in the sun, unconcerned.

INT. FACTORY - MORNING

Gretta and the seamstresses cautiously look up from their sewing machines as CHILDREN paint pumpkins and ghosts on the front window.

Tessa carries a tray of cookies as she walks among the children.

TESSA
Help yourself, kids, oh my, you're
all working so hard.

Gretta and the seamstresses exchange glances, keep their heads down.

Two children struggle to attach bundles of dry corn to the front door and the walls on either side of the door.

Another child tapes green gourds and dried corn stalks around the stair railing.

TESSA (CONT'D)
So pretty!

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Hildy walks down the sidewalk, talks on her cell phone.

HILDY
Where's my car? You have my keys?
Hello? *Damn!*

She snaps her phone shut, walks quickly, looks coldly at the cars driving by.

In the distance a tall woman on a bicycle approaches, fast.

Hildy narrows her eyes.

It's Edi, on the bicycle -- smiling, waving, ringing the bicycle bell.

Hildy bends down and picks up a twig from the sidewalk.

Edi lifts her feet from the pedals as she approaches Hildy, doesn't slow down.

Hildy waves and smiles, doesn't slow down, either.

Just as Edi sails by, Hildy flicks the twig toward the bicycle wheel.

EDI
Whoa!

Hildy doesn't look back.

O.S. Crash sounds, like a bunch of doors slamming.

Hildy walks a few more steps, looks surprised, turns around. People on the street run toward Edi's fallen bicycle, try to lift it off of her.

Edi lies in the street, unmoving.

MAN ON THE STREET
Sun got in her eyes, I saw it!

WOMAN ON THE STREET
Squirrel ran by. Or a rabbit. Must
of spooked her!

TRUCK DRIVER
Bicycle wheel was loose, wobbled!

PEOPLE hurry to get out of cars, several cars are damaged.

WOMAN IN A CAR

She wasn't even looking!

Hildy joins the group gathering, everyone talking at once.
A siren sounds. More people arrive, talking loudly.
Hildy keeps shaking her head even as a man in the front of
the crowd announces --

UNIDENTIFIED MAN

Yes, she's dead. Poor girl.

The crowd is silent, then full of noise.

INT. BUS - DAY

Carla gets on the bus, shows the driver her monthly pass.

BUS DRIVER
On-at-Millhouse.

Other bus riders stare at Carla, she nods and smiles.

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)
Don't get *her* mad at you.

Carla sits in the first available seat.

Carla smiles at the woman opposite to her seat, the woman
looks away, moves slightly away.

Carla looks around, the other riders stare at her, a woman
diagonally across from her speaks to Carla.

WOMAN ON BUS
I heard you hit that priest. And he
had a coronary.

A man in the front of the bus stands, leans over a seat.

MAN ON BUS

Why'd you leave him there? Couldn't
you call nine one one or something?

Carla looks from face to face, not understanding.

BUS DRIVER

(yells)

Where you go for the food! Priest
keeled over, said you left him there.

The driver pauses to make a turn then talks above other
people's voices.

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

He told them in the ambulance you
walked out on him when he asked you
to help him!

Carla stands, walks to the front of the bus.

CARLA

Ambulance?

People on the bus nod and point toward the hospital.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Let me out, here, please.

Carla exits the bus.

The bus pulls away, slowly.

Everyone on board watches Carla walking.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Carla strides determinedly toward the hospital. Sunshine pulses
like metallic feathers on her back and her shoulders.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carla stands in the doorway of a private room, Father Jamie,
dressed in street clothes, sits on the side of a bed.

A male nurse stands next to him, takes his blood pressure.

FATHER JAMIE

That's her! Bitch left me for dead!

CARLA

(sternly)

You were fine when I saw you, last.

FATHER JAMIE
 You're... making my blood pressure
 go through the roof!

MALE NURSE
 No, you're fine. He's fine.

Father Jamie glares at the nurse and then at Carla.

INT. FACTORY - MORNING

Hildy bursts into the factory, the seamstresses work at their
 sewing machines, nobody looks up.

Hildy's shoulders drop, she looks lost.

She walks quietly, up the stairs.

INT. TESSA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tessa, at her desk, talks on the phone, cranes her neck to
 look out the window.

She turns her chair, abruptly, as Hildy approaches.

Hildy knocks softly on the door frame.

TESSA

Later!

Tessa hangs up the phone.

Hildy starts to turn away, confused.

TESSA (CONT'D)
 (coldly)
 What'd you do?

Hildy blinks, gulps as if she'd been slapped, then frowns
 and regains her full height.

HILDY
 Excuse me?

Tessa throws up her hands.

TESSA
 What happened and how much's it gonna
 cost me?

Hildy, calm, for a fraction of a moment, searches Tessa's
 eyes for any sign of recognition. She's surprised to hear
 her own voice say --

HILDY

Something's happened. Edi's... dead.

Tessa drops her arms onto the desk and stares, defeated.

Tessa scurries to her feet, her arms jab the air in crazy wig-wag movements.

Hildy's stance displays elegance and majesty.

Tessa pushes Hildy in the chest as if to jolt information out of her.

TESSA

What? What?

Gretta enters, pushes Hildy out of the doorway.

GRETTA

Truck run over poor Edi! My brother-in-law just call --

Hildy and Tessa double-take, Gretta continues, authoritatively.

GRETTA (CONT'D)

He said that Edi girl that works here, they just brought her in and she's dead!

HILDY

Brought her in where?

GRETTA

Hospital! My sister's Joe, he works there!

Hildy's lost again, she looks angry.

TESSA

Truck run over? A truck ran her over? You're kidding.

GRETTA

My sister's husband said!

Tessa sits back down at her desk, picks up her desk phone, taps a message onto her cell phone and waves Hildy and Gretta away, all at the same time.

Gretta hurries away to spread the news elsewhere.

Hildy follows, grumbling.

INT./ EXT. BUS - LATER

Carla exits the bus.

CARLA

Thanks.

BUS DRIVER

On Millhouse, off Bridgeport. Watch
your step.

Carla pauses, thinks about that, doesn't turn around.

She walks very carefully, looking at the ground.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Carla enters the factory through the side door, as the sun pours into the room, the seamstresses look up. No sewing machines are in use.

Carla looks around, surprised by the silence.

CARLA

Hello-y-o...

Carla blinks and holds her hands on either side of her face as if to give herself focus.

A collective gasp takes the air out of the room.
ELLEN DEWEBBER, a smaller, more refined version of Edi, enters the factory, from the front door.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Ellen!

Carla walks toward Ellen to greet her, Ellen looks stunned.

As Carla places her hand on Ellen's shoulder, Ellen falls into Carla's arms and sobs.

Particles of light bombard Ellen's silhouette.

Things in the room are starkly outlined in light.

Hildy enters from another part of the first floor, Tessa descends the stairs.

TESSA

Is that Ellen? Edi's sister? Is
that Edi's sister?

HILDY

I'm... we're all so sorry about Edi,
Ellen. They said she wasn't looking
at the traffic and there were all
these trucks and a rabbit, maybe...

Hildy starts to cry and walks toward Ellen and Carla.

Carla looks around, questioningly, scanning faces as
if they were texts.

GRETTA

Psst! Edi got...

Gretta makes a slash-the-throat motion.

Carla considers this information.

ANOTHER SEAMSTRESS

Edi got run over. Gretta's brother-
in-law called from the hospital.

Ellen stands up straight, takes a deep breath.

ELLEN

We weren't very close! We really
didn't get along... at all!

Ellen looks amazed as tears stream down her own face.

Gretta blots Ellen's face with a tissue then runs a
comb through Ellen's hair.

GRETTA

You see how she rode that bicycle
with her feet up in the air? Now
look at her, dead, in the hospital.

Carla exits, quietly.

Tessa grabs Ellen and pulls her toward the stairs.

Hildy and Tessa walk Ellen up the stairs, Tessa manages to
release Hildy's grip on Ellen and when they reach the top of
the stairs only Tessa and Ellen enter Tessa's office.

Hildy descends, angrily.

HILDY

I'm buying coffee and donuts, anybody
going with me?

All of the seamstresses grab their coats and follow Hildy toward the front door.

EXT. FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Carla stands near the front door, looking toward the street.

CARLA'S POV

Spinning, glittering cubes of light fade away, the ordinary scene looks flat, gray.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla watches her hand tracing figure 8s in the air.

Hildy and the seamstresses rush past Carla, pulling on their coats, they hurry down the street.

INT. TESSA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tessa sits in her chair, behind her desk, sun behind her head makes a warm glow.

Ellen sits on a tall stool, in front of the desk.

TESSA

Your sister tried very hard to be
our best salesgirl.

Ellen nods, sadly.

TESSA (CONT'D)

She was cute... she'd try so hard!
Promised us all she'd make record
breaking sales!

Ellen smiles, shifts her feet on the rungs of the stool.

TESSA (CONT'D)

But... *she couldn't*, you know. She
did push herself, but... not very
realistically.

Ellen arches her back, tries to get comfortable.

ELLEN

That's my sister.

TESSA

Yes. And you see, dear, your sister
left me right behind the eight ball.

Tessa moves her chair back, toward the window, the light goes over her head and her face is in shadow: she looks much older, more tired, suddenly.

TESSA (CONT'D)

I... I don't know what I'm going to do! Your sister borrowed a lot of money from me!

ELLEN

Oh? Oh.

Tessa slumps a little and sighs, sadly.

TESSA

Oh, why did I let her talk me into lending her all that money?

Tessa sighs.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Month after month! Edi would borrow against her future sales and month after month she'd beg me to extend her loans!

ELLEN

Oh. No.

TESSA

Yes! Oh, Yes! Here, let me show you!

Tessa opens a file on her desk, turns it toward Ellen.

ELLEN

I don't... I can't...

Ellen tries to get her feet to the floor.

TESSA

Maybe you can, more than you know! You're in sales, right? You could take up where Edi left off!

ELLEN

I sell cars.

TESSA

But look at you, you've got style! And class! Something poor Edi, bless her, sorely, sorely lacked!

ELLEN

Me sell clothes?

TESSA
 I shouldn't do this, there'll be
 hell to pay with the other
 salesgirls...

Tessa slaps her own knee.

TESSA (CONT'D)
 But... yes, I will, I'll give you
 Edi's territory. The best stores!

ELLEN
 Here? Around here?

TESSA
 You can! You could start right away!

Tessa pushes Edi's file closer to Ellen.

TESSA (CONT'D)
 And, dear, you take the file, it's a
 copy. You discuss it with your
 lawyer, with anybody you want!

Ellen gets to her feet, finally, takes the file, starts to
 back out of the room.

ELLEN
 I... will. I will. I guess, I will.

Tessa stands up, smiling, the sun pours over her hair like
 gold dust.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
 I guess.

Ellen exits.

INT. FACTORY - LATER

Hildy, Ellen and the seamstresses sit at the work tables,
 eating donuts.

HILDY
 She gave you Edi's territory? No
 way. First of all it's really mine,
 mostly.

ELLEN
 Fine. You want to repay Edi's loans?

HILDY
 What do you know about high fashion!

Ellen gets up and examines some of the dresses on a rack.

ELLEN
No wonder Edi couldn't sell this
stuff, it's depressing!

Soft laughter among the seamstresses.

HILDY
I can sell it, I can sell anything.

ELLEN
You should let me at one of these
sewing machines, I could make
something a lot cuter...

Frowns from the seamstresses, angry stares.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
I'll tell you what... I've made lots
of dresses *and suits*, I even have
this kind of sewing machine...

GRETТА
You think it's easy?

HILDY
Ha!

Ellen looks up from the dresses on the work table, surprised
that everyone looks angry with her.

ELLEN
What'd I do?

Looks, from Hildy and the seamstresses, of jealousy, anger,
annoyance and accusation.

Ellen shakes them off, sits at one of the sewing machines,
takes a deep breath, concentrates on getting the needle
threaded.

A loud BELL rings, throughout the building

The clock on the wall shows five o'clock.

The seamstresses sigh, groan, put on their coats, exit.

Each seamstress takes unfinished work home with her.

INT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Ellen sews at a work table.

Hildy stands before a full length mirror.

Hildy wears one of the shapeless dresses from the rack: she regards her reflection, adds a bright bolero jacket, long strands of beads and a wide, fancy belt.

Carla enters.

HILDY

Pack it up! These here, put them
all in my car. Hurry it.

Hildy nudges a pile of dresses on hangers across a table.

CARLA

Ellen, I'm so, I'm so, so, so...

ELLEN

I know, Carla.

Carla hugs Ellen, who doesn't stop working.

Carla gathers the pile of dresses on hangers and exits.

HILDY

Nobody takes my sales territory!

Hildy exits.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A side street behind a row of stores, light rain falls on
Hildy's parked car --

INSIDE HILDY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Hildy turns her rear view mirror toward her face and reapplies
lipstick.

Carla sits in the back seat of the car, arms stretched across
the pile of dresses, smoothing them, as if they might try to
jump out of the car.

Hildy starts the engine.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Hildy exits her car from the driver's side, walks confidently
toward the front door of a dress shop.

Carla climbs from the back seat, with dresses, and follows.

Carla's POV

The rain sparkles against the traffic lights.

Individual drops of rain hang from surfaces, each rain drop is hexagonal and filled with light.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. WOMAN'S CLOTHING STORE - CONTINUOUS

Brightly lit, the patrons and merchandise are plainly visible to anyone on the street.

Hildy enters the store.

HILDY (O.S.)
Hi, everybody! Wait till you see
what I've got!

STORE OWNER (O.S.)
Whatever it is, I -- oh, my God,
that's a great looking dress...

EXT. HILDY'S CAR - LATER

Hildy walks proudly, from the store to her car.

Carla eases a few dresses on hangers back into the car.

HILDY
I'm best because I'm best, not because
there's no competition anymore.

Hildy frowns into the darkness, swats away streams of bugs.

INT. HILDY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Hildy starts the engine, turns angrily to Carla (in the front passenger seat), blurts out --

HILDY
Why'd Edi have to fall like that?
You think she was drunk?

CARLA
Or hungover, or maybe a migraine.
That's a half the head headache.

Carla cranks a window open, Hildy push-buttons it closed.

HILDY
How dare you pick on her! Oh, I
see, you're blaming me!

Carla keeps trying to open the window, speaks calmly.

CARLA

Edi was always on the edge. You know how some people are "on the edge"? And sometimes she fell off the edge. This time, a truck happened to come along...

HILDY

You're the worst wet blanket. Who are you to talk, anyway.

Hildy punches buttons on the dashboard. All of the car windows open.

HILDY (CONT'D)

(bitterly)

You're a wet blanket and you bring everybody down. And it's holding me back. And I'm done with it!

Carla blinks and frowns.

CARLA

Wait, I thought I held you back because I'm an ex-con.

HILDY

(glaring)

Goes without saying!

Hildy drives fast, stops hard at a red light. Carla hangs onto the door handle. Hildy slaps the steering wheel.

HILDY (CONT'D)

You have no idea the crap I've had to endure!

Carla looks out the window.

HILDY (CONT'D)

Because of you! I hear it all the time! Your sister Carla's the convict, right? She *did time*, right?

CARLA

I'm sorry.

HILDY

Shut it! Shut your stupid mouth!

Hildy jerks the car to a stop at the next red light.

Carla turns away from the conversation to look at something on the window that apparently disappears into the night.

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Hildy stops her car under the Sew-Must-Have sign, Carla exits with an armload of clothes on hangers, Hildy speeds away.

Patrick stands in the doorway of the factory, doesn't allow Carla to enter.

PATRICK

You have the money for me?

CARLA

Do I? No.

Carla waits for him to move.

Patrick shoves his hands in his pockets and then pushes an elbow at Carla as she walks past him.

PATRICK

Don't say I didn't warn you...

Patrick stands outside, Carla is about to close the door.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I said... something bad could happen.
Think about that.

Patrick walks away, checks over his shoulder to see if Carla is watching -- she is, then closes the door.

INT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Carla turns on a light and looks around.

CARLA'S POV

Streams of glittering dust cross each other like a sand storm.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla walks further into the factory, puts the dresses on a rack. Ellen stands near the worktables, puts on her coat.

CARLA

Ellen? How 'bout some ice cream?
You want to go for some?

Ellen shakes her head.

ELLEN

Too much to do. So much.

Ellen and Carla both glance up the stairs, uneasily -- but no one is there.

Ellen's cell phone rings. Carla nods and exits.

EXT. HILDY'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Det. Sourenier rakes the ground, slowly, looking at the ground, lit by the headlights of his car.

Carla walks from the street to the backdoor of the house.

CARLA

Det. Sourenier? Can I help you with something?

Det. Sourenier looks up.

DET. SOURENIER'S POV

Sparkling, misty rain radiates from Carla as she approaches in slow motion.

For a moment the rain turns into flowers.

BACK TO SCENE

CARLA (CONT'D)

Did something else happen...

Det. Sourenier looks with some surprise at the ground and the rake in his hand.

DET. SOURENIER

Just thought... in case there's anything you might want... before it rains hard...

Carla smiles.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)

It's Veldor. My name. Det. Veldor Sourenier. Please, you can call me Veldor.

Carla nods, walks over to the debris, sits on her heels.

CARLA

Veldor. This looks like something... over here...

Carla dislodges some bracelets from the debris.

DET. SOURENIER

Watch out for splinters. Better let me do that. Ouch.

He helps.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
I thought if you had anything like...
picture albums. Far as I know no
wedding albums, right?

CARLA
Goes with no-wedding.

They pick through the remnants of the wreckage.

DET. SOURENIER
You ever think about the kind of
wedding you would want?

CARLA
On the water, or the sand. Or in
snow, maybe. You? You ever think?

DET. SOURENIER
I used to think about what music I
would want for a wedding. Now I
think about for my funeral.

He laughs.

Carla nods, unperturbed.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
I guess in some cultures the groom
gets as dressed up as the bride,
what do you think?

He leads Carla toward his car, they both lean against the
bumper.

CARLA
Sure, the bride enters the marriage
like a big, white, perfect flower.
On a cupcake.

DET. SOURENIER
Exactly.

CARLA
And the groom should, too. I think
you're on to something, Veldor.

Carla takes the few retrieved items in her arms.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Thank you for your help. Again.

Det. Sourenier smiles, then snaps his fingers as if something
had just occurred to him.

DET. SOURENIER
 About that *Bicameral Brain*. So you
 say it involves hearing voices...
 inside...

He flutters his fingers near the side of his own head.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
 Voice of the gods? Or aliens?

Carla walks backwards, toward the back door of the house.

CARLA
 (broad accent)
 Aliens. Allow me to be introducing
 myself.

DET. SOURENIER
 Ha Ha, that's pretty good. Boris
 and Natasha, right? Bullwinkle?

CARLA
 Wassamatta U.!

Carla giggles, then laughs, waits for his reaction.

Det. Sourenier chortles, then tries to laugh more maturely
 but ends up chortling louder.

Carla pushes back her damp hair with her sleeve, smiles
 graciously and gives a slight "good-bye" wave with her hand
 as she enters the house.

Det. Sourenier watches her, then watches the closed door.
 He gets in his car, drives away, slowly.

INT. HILDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In dim light Carla pets the cats, feeds them and attends to
 their litter box.

Carla looks around the house, briefly.

CARLA'S POV

Tiny diamonds shimmer faintly, across the walls and furniture.
 The shimmering lights fade.

BACK TO SCENE

CARLA
 Are you home, Hildy?

Carla washes her hands, straightens the kitchen.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Guess not.

The cats watch Carla, protectively.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Carla sits near a window, looks out.

CARLA'S POV

Light segments join neon signs and cars' headlights in gently rolling honeycombs.

The Sew-Must-Have Factory flattens out, as if made of paper.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla stands as the bus slows, her eyes keep traveling back and forth like a cursor down a page of typing.

She looks uneasy, she's trying to figure something out...

EXT. T.B.F.F - MOMENTS LATER

Carla hurries from the bus to There But For Fortune.

INT. T.B.F.F - MOMENTS LATER

Several KITCHEN WORKERS chatter, prepare food, etc.

KITCHEN WORKER

Hey, Carla!

Carla struggles to catch her breath, as if she'd been running.

CARLA

I can get started on the rest rooms
if you don't need help here.

KITCHEN WORKER

Great!

Carla puts on an apron and rubber gloves.

Ordinary clatter and chatter from the kitchen, in the background.

INT. T.B.F.F HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Carla gets buckets, etc. from a utility closet.

INT. T.B.F.F MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carla props open the door, places a "One Moment Please" sign near the men's room entrance, attaches a hose to a sink faucet, fills a bucket, pours liquid soap and ammonia in, mops the floor.

Several noisy YOUNG MEN enter.

FIRST YOUNG MAN
Gold mine!

CARLA
Two minutes, boys, I'll be out of here.

FIRST YOUNG MAN
Take your time!

The boys close the door, circle Carla.

SECOND YOUNG MAN
You like to hang out, baby?

FIRST YOUNG MAN
Pretty lady in the toilets, that's my kind of --

He grabs Carla's left wrist, turns it behind her back.

Carla jabs the top of the mop handle directly into his chin, he falls backwards, onto the floor.

SECOND YOUNG MAN
Hey! You kill him, I kill you!

Carla holds the dripping mop parallel to the ground. She eyes the young men with grave calm.

The First Young Man stirs, on the floor. He cries out in sudden realization of pain.

Carla moves the mop, slightly, side to side. Her calm suggests she could wait a long time.

The ambulatory young men exit, fast.

Carla stands above the fallen First Young Man, her stance now cautiously protective.

With one hand she flips open a cell phone.

CARLA
It's Carla. In the men's room. We need an ambulance.

Carla puts down the mop, removes her gloves, rinses her hands, holds wet paper towels against the young man's bleeding lip.

CARLA (CONT'D)

You'll be alright.

EXT. T.B.F.F - NIGHT

Ambulance in the street, E.M.S. workers guide a wheeled stretcher, with the First Young Man onboard, out of the building.

Carla nods to the First Young Man, walks with the stretcher, to the ambulance.

LATER

Carla stands on the corner, the bus stops, Carla gets on.

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Carla, seated, looks through the window.

EXT. STREET, COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - CONTINUOUS

In the night, softly sparkling lights outline the buildings.

In the distance, the factory is dark. Patrick's car is parked in front of the factory -- the driver's door is open, wide.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Carla quickly stands, gets out at the next stop.

BUS DRIVER

What's she up to, now...

He slowly, noisily, drives away.

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

Ellen drives her car slowly past the factory, reverses, parks.

Ellen looks twice at Patrick's car with its open door...

PJ stands in the street near the car.

Ellen exits her car, runs to the child and scoops her up.

PJ

My Daddy's inside.

Ellen looks around in Patrick's car, grabs the diaper bag, then follows the child's pointing arm to the factory.

One of the factory windows breaks, from the inside, and black smoke billows out.

Ellen jumps away from the building.

Carla runs toward her, from the other side of the street.

Ellen, stunned, holds PJ.

ELLEN

Child said her Daddy's inside?

PJ nods and points emphatically to the factory.

Dark smoke pours from the front door.

Carla opens the diaper bag on Ellen's arm, pulls out a wadded up, wet diaper, runs toward the smoke, into the building.

INT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Darkness. Carla crawls under the smoke, breathes through the diaper. Fire chews through a bolt of fabric.

Patrick lies in a heap at the foot of the stairs, with gourds and a cardboard ghost.

Carla hurries as embers burst in the smoke, she hoists and shoves Patrick across the bottom shelf of an empty clothes rack and wheels him from the building, out to the night air --

EXT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Sirens sound, in the distance, Ellen and PJ wave from the other side of the street.

ELLEN

I called the fire department!

PJ

Hi, Dadda!

Carla shoves the diaper under Patrick's nose, he wakes up.

CARLA

He's alright!

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT

Near a clump of trees, Tessa stands next to her parked car. She peers through binoculars at the factory.

She throws the binoculars into the back seat, gets into the car, slams the door, quickly drives away.

EXT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Firetrucks arrive, firemen attend to the smoldering fire.

An ambulance worker attends to Patrick.

Gretta and Bev drive up in their own cars, they both park and run from their cars toward the factory.

Brendan runs toward the factory, from the street -- he looks for PJ, sees her in Ellen's arms, hurries toward her.

PJ tries to leap into Brendan's arms, Ellen restrains her, regards Brendan cautiously.

Brendan looks disheveled, like he woke up from a nightmare.

Bev hurries toward them.

BEV

Mr. Missus? I'm Bev, from your factory. You and PJ want a ride home?

BRENDAN

Who's that -- oh, Bev, honey, from the factory. Could you do that?

BEV

Sure I can, I got my car.

PJ

Daddy's car!

BRENDAN

Look's like Patrick's alright, right? Bev? Who's this lady with PJ?

ELLEN

I'm Ellen, Edi's sister.

BRENDAN

Oh! Poor kid, jeez, I'm sorry about Edi and everything. Bevvie? I'll just go get the baby's seat from my son's car, is that okay?

Bev walks with Brendan to Patrick's car.

PJ tries to climb down, Ellen restrains her.

ELLEN
 Carla? You think it's okay for the
 baby to go with them?

CARLA
 Oh, sure. Bev's a good kid.

ELLEN
 (softly)
 Got her eye on Mister Mister?

Brendan and Bev return with the car seat.

BRENDAN
 Bevvie, you call me Brendan. I know
 I'm an old man but you humor me,
 alright?

BEV
 Oh, gee, Mr... Brendan, you're not
 old!

Brendan takes PJ, they go with Bev, to her car.

ELLEN
 I guess!

CARLA
 Brendan's just...

ELLEN
 He's the one that got you in trouble,
 right?

In the darkness and the emergency lights, Ellen searches
 Carla's face for answers.

Carla slowly find words...

CARLA
 Just arrested. I was a passenger
 with a drunk driver. He was the
 drunk driver. Many long years ago.

Carla and Ellen slowly walk away from the firetrucks, etc.

Gretta runs toward them.

GRETTA
 Bev's with Mr. Misses? And the baby?
 You see that? Mrs. gonna be pissed!

INT. TESSA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Tessa stares ahead, drives fast with fast moving traffic.

She passes cars, exits the highway, onto a less traveled, poorly lit road lined on both sides with gnarled, leafless trees.

Tessa drives faster, flips open her cell phone, speaks in a cold, calm voice.

TESSA

To whom it may concern. I am tired,
sick to death and tired of carrying
all of you on my back.

The few cars going in the opposite direction give Tessa's car extra room.

TESSA (CONT'D)

No appreciation. None of you. Well,
now you're on your own. See how you
like that!

Tessa tosses the phone on the passenger seat.

The screen on the phone reads: NO SERVICE

Tessa drives faster, in the middle of the road.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Now where does the ground fall off --

Headlights approach from the opposite direction.

TESSA (CONT'D)

The cliff...

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Hildy's car speeds toward Tessa.

INT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tessa aims her car at a front corner of Hildy's car and forces her off the road, through the trees, down down down.

Tessa continues driving.

TESSA

There's always tomorrow.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Hildy's car crashes through trees, down a steep hill, lands on its nose -- Hildy sits crushed between the airbag and the seat, unconscious.

The front car door falls open, the airbag deflates, Hildy falls from the car, into branches.

EXT. HILDY'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Det. Sourenier stands outside the backdoor, Carla's two cats nuzzle his feet.

Carla approaches.

CARLA
Veldor! Hello!

DET. SOURENIER
I broke into your house.

CARLA
Oh!

DET. SOURENIER
I saw your cats in the window and I rang the bell and then I heard a crash and nobody came to the door --

Carla nods, turns the knob, opens the door.

CARLA
I was at the fire and I guess Hildy is still out, too.

Carla and Det. Sourenier enter the house, the cats follow.

INT. HILDY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CARLA'S POV

Stalactites shimmer from the lights and the ceilings.

BACK TO SCENE

DET. SOURENIER
The fire at the factory? I was on my way there, that's why I stopped here to see if you --

CARLA
Oh, that was nice.

Det. Sourenier lowers his head, as if it would bump the ceiling.

DET. SOURENIER
I just picked the lock, I didn't break it. You might want a better one, though.

Carla nods.

CARLA

It's a mess over at the factory, I
think Patrick went to the hospital...

Det. Sourenier straightens his sloping shoulders, head doesn't
bump the ceiling.

DET. SOURENIER

I'll... head over there, now. Try
and straighten things out.

CARLA

Thanks again.

Det. Sourenier exits.

Carla and the cats watch him depart.

MOMENTS LATER

Carla enters the kitchen, takes a cooked fish fillet from
the refrigerator, cuts thin slices, for the cats, breaks off
pieces of the rest, eats it from her hands.

She sits at the kitchen table, her eyes move as though reading
text in the air.

She walks, with a chunk of fish in her hand, to a bedroom.

She looks in.

INT. HILDY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chrome and acrylic furniture, black and silver striped bed
spread and pillows.

CARLA'S POV

Darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

Perplexed, Carla looks at her wristwatch, squints, glances
around, confused -- she holds the wristwatch up to her ear,
and then under her nose -- confused...

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Carla looks out the window.

CARLA'S POV

Darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla exits the bus.

BUS DRIVER
This isn't your stop!

Carla hurries down an unlit side street.

The bus driver watches her, the few people on the bus stand to try to see where Carla goes.

The bus idles in the street a few moments, then slowly departs.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Hildy sits upside down in a tangle of branches, she opens her eyes.

Lightning flash...

HILDY'S POV

JENNY DEWEBBER, a ghost with an angel face and tiny lightning bolts around her hair, floats through the branches, sits upside down, near Hildy.

HILDY
Hi, Mom.

JENNY
Hi, Baby.

BACK TO SCENE

Hildy closes her eyes.

EXT. MISSES HOUSE - NIGHT

Bev holds PJ as Brendan tries to open the front door with his key.

BRENDAN
(nervously)
I think she might have changed the locks again.

Brendan stares at the door and at his key.

PJ, in Bev's arms, swings her foot at the door.

PJ
Hey! What is yo problem!

Brendan shudders, on the verge of tears.

BEV

Hey, now. Brendan? Brendan? We can go over to my place. I got baby stuff there, from my sister's kids...

Brendan's sober blue eyes shine.

BRENDAN

Bev? Tessa will get the house and everything. But I can still work.

Bev smiles, calmly, happily...

Brendan laughs with relief, lifts PJ from Bev's arms.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Sweet Bev. You don't need my problems, young lady.

Bev happily kisses PJ's hands and rubs the back of Brendan's neck.

BEV

Come on, let's go. I live over near the hospital.

BRENDAN

I could go look in on my son.

BEV

Great! We'll wait for you at my house.

BRENDAN

Best day of my life...

PJ smiles and chews gently on Bev's fingers.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Carla walks quickly, down a dark street. She points a small flashlight from side to side and ahead of her.

In the woods many pairs of bright eyes shine back at her.

EXT. STREET, COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - NIGHT

Brendan stands on a corner near the hospital.

Tessa's car approaches, slows, stops.

Brendan opens the passenger door, looks inside, gets in.

Tessa's car, sagging on one side, drives past the commercial district, down the darker roads.

INT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

BRENDAN

He's alright. Patrick's alright,
they said. I just came from inside.

TESSA

I'm so tired.

BRENDAN

It's going to be alright, Tessa. I
think Patrick's going to be fine.
That's what they said.

TESSA

It's too much. I'm too tired.

Tessa slows the car, suddenly.

TESSA (CONT'D)

Would you drive?

Brendan looks twice, with surprise.

BRENDAN

Sure. Sure I will. Where're we
going?

Brendan watches Tessa, realizes he has to walk around the car to get to the driver's seat, opens his door.

EXT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Bent elm trees line the dark road -- the bare branches twisted like enormous tumbleweeds.

Brendan walks around the front of the car.

Tessa steps on the gas, knocks him down, puts the car in reverse. Just as Brendan scrambles to his feet, she hits the gas again, this time just brushes him to the side.

Brendan rolls toward some trees, Tessa's car barrels toward him, he dives in the other direction.

INT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

TESSA

Can't that man do anything right?

EXT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car stalls, the wheels spin.

Brendan leaps to his feet -- blood on his face and clothes, fury in his eyes -- he rushes madly toward the car, jolts it backward a few feet.

He drops to the ground, exhausted, then rushes for the car's front end, again, jolting it further back.

INT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Tessa picks up her cell phone, it shows full bars of service.

TESSA
Nine One One? My emergency is --

Tessa lowers the sun visor to block the windshield.

TESSA (CONT'D)
-- my husband is trying to push me
and my car off a cliff. Yes.

Tessa calmly tries to engage the car again -- the wheels spin but the car doesn't move.

EXT. TESSA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Brendan steps back from the car, gathers his strength, throws his whole weight toward the car.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Hildy remains unmoving, in the branches.

HILDY'S POV

Jenny and Hildy sit on the top of the trees, near the clouds.

HILDY
I'll get a pimp. Make a lot of money.

JENNY
You don't want that...

HILDY
A good pimp. Make a lot of money,
pay off Tessa, pay off --

JENNY
You don't have to worry...

HILDY
Everything's a mess and it's all my
fault and I'm stuck, I'm stuck --

JENNY
Momma love you.

BACK TO SCENE

In the branches, Hildy opens her eyes.

HILDY
That might work.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Brendan loses his footing, falls backwards down the cliff
edge. He slides through the trees, down the hill.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Carla turns off her flashlight, listens intently.
The woods erupt in loud noises.
Carla hurries forward, she looks to each side as she takes
long strides.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Carla runs down a dirt path in the woods, then leaves the
path and climbs as fast as she can, down through the trees
and underbrush.
Way down in the darkness, the back of Hildy's car is barely
visible.
Carla climbs down a bent tree trunk, to the open car door.
Hildy waves, weakly, upside down along side the car.

HILDY
This is what I think we should do.

CARLA
Okay. Okay. Okay. It's going to
be okay, Hildy.

HILDY
That's what I say, too. Did you
call Tessa?

Carla rearranges some of the branches around Hildy's head,
and glances at her cell phone.

CARLA
 There's no service. Hildy, I'm just
 going to go back up to the ground
 and I'll be right back.

HILDY
 I'll stay here.

Carla laboriously climbs back up the steep hill.

CARLA
 But it cannot verbalize, I say
 verbalize or control speech --

She struggles to get a foothold, pauses to catch her breath.

O.S. Crashes through the woods.

BRENDAN (O.S.)
 Who's there?

CARLA
 Carla. Is that Brendan?

Branches rustle, Brendan climbs horizontally toward Carla.

Brendan blinks.

BRENDAN
 You hiding?

CARLA
 No.

Carla reaches over, brushes a spider from Brendan's hair.

CARLA (CONT'D)
 I have to make a phone call. Would
 you mind going down a little ways
 and keeping Hildy company?

BRENDAN
 Hildy?

CARLA
 She's stuck in some branches. But
 she's hurt, Bren, don't try to move
 her. I'll go get a crane.

BRENDAN
 Crane. Okay, Carla.

Carla resumes climbing and then stops.

CARLA

I don't think there's any bones
outside the skin, but you check,
too, alright?

BRENDAN

Okay, Carla.

Brendan climbs down, disappears into the sideways growing
trees.

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

Hildy! S'okay, sweetheart.

Carla looks up into the darkness, ascends more quickly.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Carla stands at the side of the road, speaks into her phone.

CARLA

Hello? Emergency?

From further down the street a group of people hurry toward
her, on foot, led by the Bus Driver.

BUS DRIVER

We heard a crash --

CARLA

Oh, thank you!
(to the phone)

And a crane.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Spotlights illuminate Hildy's car, a basket type stretcher
lifts Hildy to the surface.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Emergency workers and the people from the bus maneuver the
stretcher into an ambulance.

The ambulance drives away.

The Bus Driver and his passengers walk back, around the
corner, to where they left the bus.

The Bus Driver exuberantly addresses Carla.

BUS DRIVER

This was some kind of day, huh?
Maybe we'll be on the news!

BUS PASSENGER

There's that girl from channel twelve!

The Bus Driver and passengers run to the arriving NEWS TEAM.
Carla and Brendan move away from the others.

Carla makes another call on her phone.

INT. EDI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellen sits in her sister's bedroom, surrounded by half packed boxes. She looks miserable, weary and on the verge of tears. Her phone rings, Ellen jumps to answer it.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Carla and Brendan walk quietly, steadily, in the darkness. Brendan's eyes are open, very wide -- he is sober. Carla talks on the phone.

CARLA

What do you think, Ellen... can you do it?

INT. EDI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellen talks on her cell phone.

ELLEN

The jacket I made, with the peplum, in pink satin. Why not? And you want me to call her?

Ellen makes quick notes as she speaks.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Sure, I can sell it.

Ellen snaps the phone shut.

She spreads some of Edi's flashy jewelry out on the bed, selects a necklace, holds it up to herself in the mirror.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

When in doubt, shake shiny objects at them...

Outside the window, a flash of lightning.

EXT. BUS - NIGHT

Dawn breaks. Brendan and Carla exit the bus.

Another NEWS TEAM pushes past them to interview the Bus Driver and Passengers.

A REPORTER faces the camera and speaks.

REPORTER

A Bus Driver who works for *this same bus company* found an injured woman --

Carla and Brendan walk toward the factory.

Carla's POV

A tunnel of translucent tiled glass -- the tunnel widens to include the morning sky.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla and Brendan walk, softly.

EXT. FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

In front of the sunrise, Bev and Det. Sourenier lean against his car.

BEV

Brendan!

DET. SOURENIER

You're all under arrest. No, just kidding.

Carla and Brendan stare, wearily.

BEV

He's kidding. He's my brother. Brendan? This is my brother, Det. Veldor Sourenier.

BRENDAN

Baby's alright?

BEV

Fine, sleeping.

DET. SOURENIER

Our sister's with her.

BEV

Dee. Our sister Dee.

DET. SOURENIER

She's got two little girls, too.

Brendan looks confused.

BRENDAN
 Maybe I should go there?

BEV
 I'll take you. My car's here.

Bev puts her arm around Brendan, escorts him to another car.
 Brendan waves goodbye to Carla.

BRENDAN
 Okay, Carla?

CARLA
 How 'bout we call if there's --

BRENDAN
 Great!

BEV
 I'll make coffee. You can rest.
 Gee, this is nice!

Brendan smiles, adoringly, at Bev.

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

Carla and Det. Sourenier approach the factory -- he inspects the broken window.

Carla continues toward the door, which seems undamaged, except for some soggy corn stalks.

From inside the factory, Ellen opens the door, greets Carla, nods toward Det. Sourenier.

ELLEN
 Well, it's a small world after all.
 Oh, not that song. Stuck in my head.

CARLA
 Buck up, girl. We're on a mission.

Carla enters the factory.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Scorch marks / water damage, near the stairs.

Ellen leads Carla to spotless work tables and a pink satin fitted jacket with short "peplum" flounce at the back -- and a pink and yellow print skirt, with a flair at the hemline.

CARLA
Ellen! You're a genius!

ELLEN
I know.

Ellen puts two paper bags on one of the tables, takes coffee and donuts from the bags, shares them.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
And I'm *benevolent*.

EXT. FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Tessa walks with Det. Sourenier toward the factory entrance.

TESSA
Am I under arrest?

Tessa looks at him and then laughs, almost hysterically.

TESSA (CONT'D)
Do I have a right to remain silent?

DET. SOURENIER
Always.

He laughs, calmly, guides Tessa to the factory front door.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
Almost can't imagine there was a fire here, last night.

Tessa looks around, momentarily disoriented.

TESSA
That's *right*!

DET. SOURENIER
I heard your son's fine, they didn't keep him in the hospital.

TESSA
Isn't that good.

DET. SOURENIER
And my sisters are baby sitting for little PJ. That's nice, right?

TESSA
Isn't that nice.

INT. FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Det. Sourenier and Tessa enter.

Ellen and Carla stand in front of the work table.
Carla sits down.
Ellen has the floor. She looks straight at Tessa.

ELLEN
You are. A perfect "fit-model".

Ellen sweeps her arm toward the pink satin jacket.

TESSA
Peplum?

Tessa nearly chokes on the word.

ELLEN
Don't say no until you try it on.

Ellen holds the jacket for Tessa, who slips it on.

CARLA
Perfect.

ELLEN
Perfect fit. I knew it.

Tessa looks at her reflection in the mirror.

TESSA
Not bad at all.

Det. Sourenier whistles then clears his throat in apology.

DET. SOURENIER
That is going to be a winner.

CARLA
That is going to sell.

ELLEN
That is going to sell!

In the mirror, Tessa smiles.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Hildy, bruised, in a neck brace, rests in a hospital bed.
Carla and Ellen sit in chairs near the bed.

HILDY
She's really going?

Ellen nods, emphatically.

ELLEN
She loves being the model. You should have seen her. Super-Tessa.

HILDY
And you know how she's always hated models. She hates us mostly because we're models.

ELLEN
You and Carla are *tall* models. Tall, leggy models. Whole different thing.

The male nurse enters, lifts Hildy's arm.

MALE NURSE
Just going to take your vitals.

HILDY
Thank you for cleaning me up. I'm sorry I smelled so bad.

CARLA
My cats peed on her clothes.

The male nurse addresses the room.

MALE NURSE
Be glad they did. It kept the coyotes away from you. You would have been done for. Just red meat.

He makes a few notes on Hildy's chart, smiles, exits.

FATHER JAMIE (O.S.)
Call me if you need absolution!

Hildy seems lost in unhappy thoughts.

FATHER JAMIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Call me if you need absolution!

Father Jamie leans in the doorway, smiles, waves.

FATHER JAMIE (CONT'D)
Call me --

Father Jamie takes a gulp of air when he sees Carla.

FATHER JAMIE (CONT'D)
 Carla, my girl! Sittin' down on the
 job, I see!

He leans in again and says, confidentially --

FATHER JAMIE (CONT'D)
 Remember, man, that thou art dust.
 And unto dust thou shalt return.

He exits.

Carla pours water from a pitcher near the bed. She hands
 a cup to Hildy, who drinks and then offers it back to
 Carla, who takes a gulp, passes it to Ellen.

ELLEN
 So. Tessa's on her way...

FATHER JAMIE (O.S.)
 Call me if you need absolution!

CARLA
 Imagine him thinking we don't know
 that we're dust! Yes, and Gretta
 went with her. To Berlin.

HILDY
 Berlin! Thank God. It's hard to
 get out of there, right?

CARLA
 They used to have that wall... but
 as long as they let Tessa in --

ELLEN
 As long as they let her on the plane,
 and they must have, we would have
 heard...

CARLA
 The suit looked great on her.

HILDY
 She'll take credit for every sale
 that's made.

ELLEN
 Let her. I've got lots of other
 styles I'm working on.

Ellen and Hildy gently high-five. They look relieved and proud.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Carla and Det. Sourenier climb down the emergency service rope ladders near the accident site -- straggly, leafless elms bend on either side as they descend.

DET. SOURENIER
You sure you don't mind?

CARLA
Nope. We don't sue the county for knocking down my home. They don't charge us for rescuing Hildy.

DET. SOURENIER
Golden rule. That the way your Neandertals did things?

CARLA
Even with communal knowledge. Still have to have manners.

They reach the spot where Hildy's car had been, a few scraps of metal remain. Some branches have closed over the opening, already.

DET. SOURENIER
I'll help you if you tell me what you're looking for...

Carla stoops, picks through the underbrush, pries a few rocks from the ground, tests their weight, puts them in her jacket pockets.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
Looking for good throwing rocks, eh?

CARLA
Just ones I like. Anything you want me to look for for you?

DET. SOURENIER
I'm good. Hope you didn't get your pretty outfit dirty.

Det. Sourenier brushes Carla's silky jacket and print trousers, still fresh and perfect.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
What's that, some kind of miracle fabric?

He rubs lightly on nonexistent dirt marks.

CARLA
It's a print.

DET. SOURENIER
Oh. Print. Very nice.

They climb back up to the surface.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Det. Sourenier rolls up the rope ladders.

DET. SOURENIER
So, Tessa just agreed to go out on
the road and promote the new clothing
line, huh... kind of "all of a
sudden"...

CARLA
With Gretta. Berlin, Perth, Oslo,
Manilla.

DET. SOURENIER
In that order?

CARLA
One of the travel sites had a special
deal, first class seats, four star
hotels.

DET. SOURENIER
I would have gone myself!

Carla looks thoughtful.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)
You know what? I kind of like it
here. More and more.

He smiles at her.

CARLA'S POV

Diamonds surround Det. Sourenier's head and shoulders,
playfully.

BACK TO SCENE

Carla and Det. Sourenier return to his car.

INT. DEWEBBER HOUSE - DAY

Sun streams through the kitchen window.

Carla rinses a few broken rocks in the sink, as dirt washes off, shining spots on the rocks appear.

Rocko, Amanda, Det. Sourenier and MICKEY DEWEBBER (short and sturdy) sit at the kitchen table.

Carla blots the small rocks with paper towels, brings them to the table.

Mickey holds a jeweler's loop.

AMANDA

Does he need more light?

ROCKO

You need more light, Mickey?

MICKEY

Hmm.

CARLA

You want tea, Aunt Amanda?

AMANDA

That'd be wonderful, honey.

Carla stands, begins to prepare tea.

Mickey inspects the rocks, turning them slowly.

MICKEY

I never worked in the mines, you know.

ROCKO

Okay, that's okay, Mick.

AMANDA

We appreciate you coming over, Mickey.

MICKEY

Carla, sit down a minute.

Carla returns to the table.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

You found these on the ground? You know what these are?

CARLA

Diamonds?

MICKEY

Diamonds. I'm not going to ask you where you got them from.

AMANDA
 You joking Mickey? Don't joke with
 her, Mickey. Tell him, Rocko.

Mickey pats Amanda's arm, then pats Carla's hand.

MICKEY
 I'm not joking. Like I said, I'm a
 jeweler, not a coal miner.

Rocko takes spectacles from his shirt pocket, examines one
 of the rocks.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
 Carla, I'm not going to ask you how
 you got this, but... if you had to
 swallow anything...

CARLA
 No, Uncle Mickey.

DET. SOURENIER
 This is all theoretical, of course.

MICKEY
 Exactly. I'm just supposing.

ROCKO
 Carla says she found them on the
 ground.

MICKEY
 Let's say she found them on the
 ground.

Det. Sourenier nods.

O.S. CAR HORN BEEPS. Everyone looks around, startled.

Carla goes to the window.

CARLA
 I told Patrick I'd go out on sales
 calls with him. Can't wait till the
 stores see Ellen's new designs.

AMANDA
 That's good!

ROCKO
 Good, honey!

MICKEY
 You come back, later, right? S'okay
 if we hang onto these, for now?

Rocko, Amanda and Mickey watch Carla, carefully.

Carla waves casually, exits.

Det. Sourenier follows, glances back at the others, exits.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick stands outside his car, holds the passenger door open for Carla.

DET. SOURENIER
(sternly)
You up to this, Patrick?

PATRICK
Yup. Yes, sir.

DET. SOURENIER
This isn't your mom's car, right?

PATRICK
No, sir.

Det. Sourenier checks the car door, smiles at Carla, waves.

Det. Sourenier watches the car drive away. He looks back at the house -- Rocko, Amanda and Mickey peer from the window, watching him.

Det. Sourenier waves to them, walks back inside.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

PATRICK
You'll do most of the talking?

CARLA
The customers do most of the talking.

INT. DEWEBBER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Rocko, Amanda, Mickey sit at the kitchen table. Det. Sourenier rejoins them.

MICKEY
Detective, you own property here in Willey City?

DET. SOURENIER
I own a house.

MICKEY
You're going to be a rich man.

ROCKO
That's not a bribe.

AMANDA
Tell him you're not offering a bribe,
Mickey!

MICKEY
Not a bribe, just a fact. Rocko's
already had offers to buy that piece
of land next to his house, here.

DET. SOURENIER
Because people are picking diamonds
up off the ground around here? Were
you lying to Carla?

MICKEY
Why should I lie to my favorite niece?

AMANDA
Who would lie to Carla?

DET. SOURENIER
I don't want to find out she's getting
jerked around.

MICKEY
That's good to know.

ROCKO
I'm glad you're on her side.

AMANDA
She's a good girl. Like the horse
of the different color. Different
drummer.

ROCKO
She's a wonderful girl, little Carla
is. Just like her mother.

INT. BACK OF GIBSON'S CLOTHING STORE - LATER

Carla and Patrick watch as women emerge from the dressing
rooms wearing Ellen's newly designed fashions.

CARLA
That looks great. That looks great,
too. That looks really nice. That
looks really nice, too.

The women regard their own reflections with growing approval.

PATRICK
Makes your ass look really great.

The women look at Patrick, questioningly.

CARLA
All your asses. Look great.

The women are pleased.

More CUSTOMERS in the store show interest in the clothes.

EXT. PATRICK'S CAR - NIGHT

Patrick and Carla pack up the car.

PATRICK
I can't believe how good I did. I
did good, right?

CARLA
Excellent.

PATRICK
And nobody was mad, or anything!

They get back into the car.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Patrick starts the engine. He glances behind, as he pulls
the car into traffic.

Carla watches the headlights.

PATRICK
You ever think that maybe you're my
real mother?

CARLA
No.

PATRICK
Like say, my Mom had you brainwashed
or something so you couldn't remember.
You don't think she'd do that?

CARLA
Oh, sure. But I remember waiting
with your Dad when you were born.

PATRICK
Wow.

CARLA

It was just after I got out of prison,
they kept me in the hospital for a
while.

Patrick drives.

PATRICK

Prison was pretty bad, huh?

CARLA

I was only there six weeks. But I
couldn't sleep or eat the whole time.

PATRICK

Were you... *sexually assaulted*?

Carla shakes her head.

CARLA

Nobody touched me.

Patrick drives, glances over to Carla a few times -- he looks
surprised and confused.

PATRICK

Couldn't you just... tough it out?

Carla takes a breath, chooses words.

CARLA

You know how sometimes you meet
people and all you can see is that
their little fragile bodies are
barely holding together?

PATRICK

Huh.

CARLA

And you can't even pretend that you
can't see through them.

Patrick starts to light a cigarette, puts it away.

CARLA (CONT'D)

It's pretty much like that for
everybody in jail, I think, but I
just couldn't get past it. I just
couldn't get past it.

PATRICK

How come my Dad didn't go to jail
with you -- he was driving, right?

CARLA

Well, there were mix ups with the paper work, and then they dismissed his case because it wasn't, you know speedy enough. That's the law.

PATRICK

I always figured my Mom had something to do with it. You sure she wasn't the one driving?

CARLA

I'm sure. Nobody was hurt. We just hit a telephone pole.

PATRICK

Huh! I always thought somebody died or something. Why'd everybody always act like somebody got killed or something?

CARLA

Well, they could have been. If anybody had been there, in front of the pole. But no, thank God. And all the saints. And the angels.

Patrick slows his car, stops in front of Hildy's house, engine running.

PATRICK

Could we sell together, again?

CARLA

Oh, sure. But you'll have your own customers, now.

Patrick reaches gently for Carla's arm, glances at his own hand and arm -- he needs to know something else.

PATRICK

Am I, like, all broken bones and...

CARLA

You've got great bones, Patrick.

Patrick nods, sees the benefit of that.

PATRICK

So, tomorrow? We could go around to the other stores?

Carla, smiling, reaches out her hand, Patrick shakes it gratefully, gently -- then heartily, happily...

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Det. Sourenier walks from Hildy's porch to Patrick's car. He opens the passenger door, Carla exits the car.

Patrick waves out the window, drives away.

Stars twinkle in the night sky.

Carla smiles effortlessly, beautifully.

Det. Sourenier points a key toward his own parked car, it beeps twice.

DET. SOURENIER

When you say "diamonds", do you mean those "nanodiamonds" that, a million could fit on the head of a pin?

CARLA

I don't think you can make those into jewelry.

DET. SOURENIER

So --

CARLA

So, no. Why?

DET. SOURENIER

You know where I live? Around the corner, and six blocks that way.

He looks around, as if for the first time.

Carla squints, politely, in the direction that he was pointing.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)

I could have stopped that bull dozer if I'd known. I wish I had.

He looks at Carla and laughs sorrowfully.

DET. SOURENIER (CONT'D)

I wish --

Snowflakes swirl around, crinkle softly when they hit each other and hit the ground.

CARLA'S POV

Cubes of light twirl, change into flat hexagons and back to cubes, gradually opening smaller and smaller cubes.

Det. Sourenier's face and neck appear skeletal, then normal.

BACK TO SCENE

CARLA

We could go for an ice cream.

Det. Sourenier's expression clears, relieved. He loops his arm around Carla's.

DET. SOURENIER

A vanilla cone, dipped in chocolate.
Or sprinkles. What do you like,
sprinkles?

CARLA

Chocolate.

They smile beamingly at each other and begin walking down the street.

DET. SOURENIER

I always used to get cones dipped in
red, but they don't do that so much
any more...

He makes a motion of dipping a cone in the night air.

CARLA

You ever see red diamonds? They're
pretty. But pretty rare.

DET. SOURENIER

I'll keep my eyes open.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

