

# Soup Is Good Food

by

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FADE IN:

INT. PITCH DARK SCREEN.

Complete darkness. There is a vague sound in the background, like someone speaking far-off in the distance.

Pulling back slowly, the darkness fades to dim light and then we discover we are pulling DIRECTLY OUT of a human mouth. The tongue moves. Gloved fingers work on shining teeth.

A thin metallic instrument scrapes a tooth. The vague sound from earlier now becomes clear as the voice of the dentist.

His voice is muffled by a surgical mask. The patient is an elderly woman who is squirming around in the examination chair.

The dentist is HERBERT WALLACE, DMD. He's new to his field, recently having graduated from dental school. He is understated, good-looking in a quirky sort of way.

HERBERT

(Indifferently)

...And that's how I came to practice dentistry. Isn't that something...?

(beat)

Ma'am, you're an old pro at this.

The patient mumbles a reply. Still squirming.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Just a second and we'll seal this cavity up for ya.

The patient screams. Herbert's forehead beads with perspiration as he performs a task with great force.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Good. That outta just about do it.

Herbert leans back and places his instruments on a nearby procedure table. He looks at his wristwatch.

The office secretary walks in the room. This is RAOUL, the gay Puerto Rican secretary. He has an overtly flamboyant gait. He chews gum and wears a telephone headset. He looks very busy as if preoccupied with much more important matters than the one at hand.

RAOUL

Excuse me doctor Herberto, but your mother is parked on line three.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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RAOUL (CONT'D)

You should thank me, Honey, because we've been talking for a good LONG time. She almost forgot that she was calling for you.

HERBERT

(From behind the mask)

Thanks Raoul. Umm, can you tell her I'll call her back later?

RAOUL

We all know what that means.

(Laughs)

She said she'd hold until you pick up. Sorry, big guy. Tootaloo...

Raoul bounces out of the exam room. Herbert stands up and removes his surgical mask. The patient sighs with relief.

HERBERT

Mrs. Schofield. The procedure was a complete success. Though you may feel some discomfort when the local wears off, you'll be in tip-top shape soon enough. Brenda'll wash you up now.

The dental Hygienist, BRENDA, steps over to Mrs. Schofield. Brenda is a very heavysset young woman, presumably just out of hygienist school. Mrs. Schofield grimaces and stiffens in horror.

BRENDA

(High, irritating voice)

Didn't Doctor Wallace do a wonderful job on your teeth? Oh, Doctor. You are so good.

Herbert uses an uncomfortable pause to leave the room. The last thing we see is Brenda's huge body pouncing upon Mrs. Schofield.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S OFFICE

Herbert enters the office. It is a sparsely decorated room. The desk is an old circa 1970's piece that is tattered and worn. There is a single certificate of graduation from Wayne State Dental school enclosed within a cheap black frame hung crookedly on a plain white wall. A light blinks on the phone, which sits upon the desk. A BEEPING SOUND and Raoul's voice comes through the phone's speaker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROUL'S VOICE

(Through the speaker)

Oh, Herberto. Don't forget your poor mother on line two. She's such a kooky girl. I just love her. She's just a country girl at heart, being from Alabama and all. By the way, your next patient's arrived. I'll sick Brenda on him while you get the phone. Hasta...

The phone beeps again. Herbert sighs and rubs his eyes. As he leans back, the chair makes an awful cracking sound and becomes stuck in a reclining position, which he can't seem to fix. Stuck in an uncomfortable reclining pose, he picks up the phone and awkwardly presses line two.

HERBERT

Hello?

HERBERT'S MOTHER

(Her voice is audible from the end of the phone's receiver)

Honey? Is it you, boy?

HERBERT

Hey mom.

HERBERT'S MOTHER

Son, I know you busy and all, but I need yo' expert medical 'pinion.

Herbert quietly listens while trying to fix the chair.

HERBERT'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Your Pa and I ordered a new product that's supposed to energise our metab'lism. It give the body a kick-start, a jolt, if you will. It's got some 'sential enzyme an a pro-biologic formula that regular diets don't got. I feel better already and I haven't even used the stuff yet. This may be just what I need to slim down. Honey?

Herbert finally makes the chair unstick, almost tossing him forward onto the floor.

HERBERT

Ah, yeah. Right. The formula...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HERBERT'S MOTHER

What did Yo' School teach you guys about enzyme and pro-biologic stuff? I figure that if I mix this formula with my new diet, than I can slim down. Oh, how I tried so many diets. It's just been awfully hard on yo' poor Pa. The protein shakes made me fatter. The grapefruit diet made my gut ache. The Atkins diet gave me the gout. But do ya know what seem to be working best? Do ya?

HERBERT

What? I mean, no, Mom. I...

HERBERT'S MOTHER

Soup.

HERBERT

What?

HERBERT'S MOTHER

Soup.

Herbert twists a knob on the shaft of his chair and the whole thing comes apart. He and the chair fall to the floor.

HERBERT'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Herbert, Honey? Son? Are ya there?

HERBERT

Mom, I need to get to the next patient, ok?

HERBERT'S MOTHER

Soup. Yo' father getting' to be a master at makin' soup. We eat it every meal. Soup... and vitamin.

HERBERT

Goodbye, mother. It's been...

HERBERT'S MOTHER

I need to get going now. Take care. Come on over fo' dinner tonight if ya can. We havin' cream of leek.

The phone disconnects before Herbert can say goodbye. He stands up and sets the phone back on the receiver. A beep sound startles him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RAOUL'S VOICE

(From the intercom)

Herberto, Sir. Mr. Wiley's in room three. Brenda is done assaulting him, we hope. You better save the poor guinea pig from her torturous claws.

HERBERT

Thanks, Raoul.

The intercom clicks off and Herbert walks out of his office while putting on his surgical mask.

CUT TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM THREE

MR. WILEY is an elderly gentleman with yellowed teeth. He writhes in the chair as she scrapes a metallic instrument repeatedly.

BRENDA

Mr. Wiley, you haven't been flossing, have you?

Herbert enters the room. Brenda stops working on Mr. Wiley and turns around to greet Herbert. Her large frame barely fits in the pink medical scrubs. One can sense her smiling widely behind her surgical mask when speaking.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Oh, Doctor Wallace. You've got some work ahead of you on this one. It seems Mr. Wiley forgot to floss for about a zillion years. Isn't that right Mr. Wiley?

Mr. Wiley mumbles a reply, but his mouth is filled with gauze.

HERBERT

Well, thank you Brenda. Hello there, Mr. Wiley. Nice to see you again. Now, let's see. Last week, if I remember correctly, we were focusing on tooth number 17. Let's have a look-see.

Herbert picks up a metallic instrument as Brenda stands aside. She is completely engrossed with Herbert as he begins to scrape Mr. Wiley's teeth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Hmmm. Oh boy, this tooth must go.  
Yes, I do believe this one's gotta  
be history. I'm sorry, Mr. Wiley.  
Brenda?

Brenda stands at attention, as if ready for battle.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Bring out the turbo drill.

BRENDA

(Excitedly)

Oh, Doctor! The turbo drill?

Mr. Wiley looks around the room frantically.

HERBERT

Yes. The turbo drill.

We fade out of the scene as the drill's motor screeches and  
Mr. Wiley moans.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S APARTMENT

This is a one-bedroom loft unit, which is located on the 2nd  
floor of a building in what is called the Warehouse District  
just north of downtown Detroit. The ceilings are high. The  
room is large and open. The front windows look out over the  
Detroit River to the east and the buildings of downtown  
Detroit to the south.

Herbert walks through the large door and throws his keys onto  
a table in the hall. He walks over to the kitchen area and  
throws open the refrigerator door. He looks inside and  
scratches his head. He grabs a bottled beer and shuts the  
fridge door.

Twisting the bottle cap, he walks over to his answering  
machine. Herbert presses a button on the answering machine  
and takes a long swig of beer. The machine BEEPS.

ANSWERING MACHINE

(Computer voice)

You have two messages. First  
message sent today at 4:48pm.  
"Beep".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FEMALE VOICE

(On the answering machine)

Herbert. It's me. It's about five o'clock and I'm just leaving work at the mall, so I'll be home in a few minutes, ok? Oh, by the way. I went to look at the ring today during my lunch break. I don't know what's going on with those second-rate jewellers. I mean, what do I have to do to get them to meet my needs? I don't know where you found these people, Herbert, but I have a mind to take our business elsewhere. It can't be too hard to figure out. I mean, it's like reinventing the wheel each time I talk to them-

Herbert finally reaches over and cuts off the rest of the message. He takes another long swig of beer and enters his bedroom to change his clothes.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Next message sent today at 4:51pm.  
"Beep".

HERBERT'S MOTHER

Herbert? Are y'all there? Pick up if yo' there, please. Herbert? Ah well, I need to cross-reference somethin' with you. It's about that pro-biologic stuff that they put in them vitamins we ordered. I'm beginning to get nervous about usin' it n'less you can reassure me that it's ok. Herbert, I wish you'd call yo' poor momma when you get home. Anyway, yo' father's soup is filling the house with the most wonnerful aroma. Bring Cassandra fo' dinner. Say, 6:30 or so. Ok, bye...

HERBERT

(under his breath)

My God...

He looks out of the south windows toward downtown Detroit. He swigs the beer again. The apartment door creaks open and CASSANDRA enters the room. She is a very attractive woman in her mid-20's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Short, brown hair surrounds her neat, beautiful face. She moves rapidly, with purpose. In her arms, she carries 3 shopping bags. She hastily sets down the bags and tosses her keys and purse onto the hall table. She doesn't seem overly happy to see Herbert, though she acknowledges his presence by briskly walking over to him and planting a very slight kiss on his cheek.

CASSANDRA

Hi. You got the message, I presume?

HERBERT

Yeah, but wha-

CASSANDRA

I don't know who these people think they are. Do they really expect me to just accept anything they make? I mean, to put an almost flawless diamond in that lower quality setting. It's ludicrous, I tell ya. Totally ludicrous. You know what I mean?

HERBERT

Yeah. Sorry about that. I just thought-

CASSANDRA

Hey, don't apologize. How were you supposed to know that you were dealing with morons? You aren't a diamond expert. But I tell ya what. After seeing what goes on out there, I think we could be better jewellers than most of the jokers who hang up a shingle and call themselves pros. I mean, it's our ENGAGEMENT. They should be professionals, you know?

HERBERT

Sure. Sure they should.

CASSANDRA

We've been dating for how long now?

HERBERT

(In a thinker's pose)  
I don't know. Maybe 3, 4 years.

CASSANDRA

Try 4 and a half.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HERBERT

Oh-

CASSANDRA

Yeah, that's right. That's a long time. We deserve a perfect engagement ring for having put in so much time. Don't you think?

HERBERT

Um.

CASSANDRA

Of course we do. That's all I'm saying. I think the longest time we've spent apart was when you and those guy friends of yours went down to that country down there.

HERBERT

Costa Rica?

CASSANDRA

Yeah, that's the one. Why three dental students would want to waste three weeks of their last summer break of their lives tromping around in some third world country is beyond me. I mean, I would probably melt from the humidity and die from the bug bites.

Cassandra walks into the kitchen and opens the refrigerator. She reorganizes a few items on the shelves and finally pulls out a bottle of mineral water. She brings the bottle over to Herbert and holds it out for him to take.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

I don't know why you insist on cluttering the fridge with that cheap beer. Here, will you open this for me, hun?

Herbert grabs the mineral water bottle and easily twists off the cap. He hands the cap-less bottle back to her. She holds the bottle up and takes a dainty swig of its contents. Herbert looks at his wristwatch.

HERBERT

Hey. I have an idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CASSANDRA

Oh no. Is this another one of your grand schemes where we rent a low-grade movie and sit around all evening? I don't think I can do that again, hun.

HERBERT

No. Nothing like that. I was thinking about having dinner at my parent's house.

CASSANDRA

(Interested)

Now, I like your mother. I mean, Polly is such a class act. I can talk to her for hours. She's my type of lady. But how does she put up with your father? She must be a strong woman.

HERBERT

So, is it a date?

CASSANDRA

(Stretching her arms in the air as if tired)

Yeah, fine. But we need to be back early. Me and Dee-Dee are running at the crack of dawn. What're your folks having for dinner?

HERBERT

Soup.

Cassandra stops in the middle of walking to the hall table. She turns around to look at Herbert inquisitively.

CASSANDRA

What?

HERBERT

I guess they're having soup.

CASSANDRA

(Speaking mostly to herself)

Soup? Hmm, just what is that woman up to this time?

CUT TO:

## INT. HERBERT'S PARENTS' HOUSE

Evening on a Detroit fall night. Herbert and Cassandra walk up the steps to the front porch of a ranch-style house. The quaint, single story house is plain, however, the shrubbery and lawn are immaculately groomed. Cassandra hugs her coat around her body like she is freezing to death. Herbert grabs the front doorknob and opens the door. He lets Cassandra scurry into the house first.

CASSANDRA  
Helloooo. Anyone home?

Herbert's mother, POLLY ANNE WALLACE runs into the hall. She's in her late fifties, heavysset, round, but lively and bouncy. She is dressed in a short, bright colored skirt. She wears just a little bit too much makeup, especially around the eyes. When she sees Herbert and Cassandra, she throws her arms up in the air and emits a short "yelp" of excitement. The house has the character of a home from the 1970's. Artificial flower arrangements blossom in corners and hallways. Wallpaper adorns the walls of every room of the house. But somehow, it all seems to work.

POLLY  
Oh, hi kids. I didn't know if y'all were gonna to make it or not. But I'm so glad ya did. Here, come on in. Let me git yer coats.

CASSANDRA  
Polly. You look so young and cute. That skirt just does you right.

POLLY  
Do y'all really think so? I gotta say I was a little nervous about gettin it.

CASSANDRA  
I'm so glad you did, sweetie. It gives you that sexy look.

POLLY  
What? Get outta town. Sexy look?

CASSANDRA  
Seriously, Polly. It's YOU. Totally YOU.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herbert kisses his mother on the cheek and leaves the front room for the kitchen. Cassandra and Polly continue talking in the front room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN

Herbert walks into the kitchen, which is decorated like the inside of an aquarium. Blue wallpaper with fish covers the walls. The cabinets are a similar shade of blue. The knobs on the front of the cabinets are manufactured seashells. Herbert's father, OREN WALLACE, stands in front of the stove stirring a pot staring at a small television. The gameshow "Jeopardy" is playing on the TV. He stomps his feet and yells.

OREN

Damnit! What is the Vatican! Come on, Ross. Don't ya know nothin'? What is the VATICAN!

Herbert sits down by the kitchen table and looks at the TV. Oren realizes that his son is in the room and he turns down the heat control on the stove and dips a spoon in the pot. He walks over to Herbert while blowing on the spoon.

OREN (CONT'D)

Son. I'm glad yo' here. Taste this soup for yo' Pa and tell me what you think? It's a recipe I made up fo' cream of leek.

HERBERT

Yeah, sure. How's it going, Dad?

OREN

Fine, boy.

Oren glances back at the TV. Apparently Ross, a contestant on Jeopardy, is not impressing Oren at all.

OREN (CONT'D)

NO! Ross, you idiot. Take Countries fo' 400. My gawd, what a complete moron. How do people like that git on a show like this? Scrape 'em off the bottom of the ocean?

(beat)

Here, son. Taste this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herbert leans forward and slurps a portion of the soup. He pleasantly nods and looks at Oren.

HERBERT

Dad. That isn't bad. I'm impressed.

OREN

Well, it's the only thing that seem to be getting' the weight off yo' mother. Her poor buns have been through more diet plans than a bear lost in the jungle. If she gets any fatter, the only way I could have sex with her is to bite her tit until she pisses and then follow the stream up river like a mountain trout.

HERBERT

What?

OREN

No! Not again. This damn Ross is an A number one ass. You knew that, didn't you, son?

HERBERT

What was the question? I didn't hear it?

OREN

The answer. Trebeck gives the answer. The contestant gives the question.

HERBERT

Well, that's what I meant.

OREN

It was something 'bout the capital city a Holland. Who doesn't know that? My gawd.

Oren puts the spoon back on the stove. He gets out four bowls and spoons and sets them on the table. Herbert helps him with the place settings.

OREN (CONT'D)

(Yelling out to the front room)

Ladies? Soup's done. Come and get 'em.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

POLLY(O.S.)

Ok, babe. Be right there.

Oren picks up the TV remote controller and almost switches it off.

OREN

Ya lousy sonofa-

Oren walks up to the screen as if to threaten Ross.

OREN (CONT'D)

I have a right mind to tar and feather that damn Ross for missing that one. Son, did you hear that? That one was right up yer alley.

HERBERT

No, I missed it.

OREN

I never even been to Costa Rica and even I know the capital.

HERBERT

San Jose.

OREN

Right. That's right. That's the sort of thing you learn when you travel, right son? Three single guys traveling through Central America. When was that? Last summer?

HERBERT

It was two summers ago. Between my junior and senior year of dental school.

OREN

Right. That's right. Ho boy! You guys must've had a swingin' good time. I heard 'bout them women down there. They get excited when an American boy even in the same room. They think you gonna marry them and take them to the great land a opportunity. Oh, I bet you guys had you a good old-fashioned time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Oren finally gets disgusted enough to shut off the TV. He stirs the pot and fills the bowls with the soup. Herbert helps out by placing the bowls on the place setting spots.

OREN (CONT'D)

Well, son? Tell me about it real quick before the girls come in here.

HERBERT

Dad? Why didn't you ever ask me any of these questions when I first came back from Costa Rica?

OREN

Ah hell, I don't know. Maybe I'm finally thinking about it. Maybe it was just on the TV. What does it matter?

HERBERT

Well, anyway. It's been so long. I can't really remember.

OREN

Hmm, you tryin' to tell me you caint remember a year and a half ago?

Polly and Cassandra walk in kitchen laughing. They sit down at the table with Herbert.

POLLY

What are you two boys talking about in here? Y'all look so serious.

OREN

Ah hell, honey. I'm just trying to have a man to man with my only son here. You always telling me, 'You boys should have man to mans more often' and all that. So here I go trying to do it and you're meddling in with your big nose again.

Herbert glances at Cassandra. She is twirling her spoon in the soup and looking down at the bowl. Herbert attends to the soup as well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

POLLY

My nose? You never talked about my nose before. What's a matter with it? Too big?

OREN

Honey, it's just a manner of speech. That's all. Yer nose is fine.

POLLY

Oh, okay. I was just worried that my nose got large like my buns. I just don't know how to get this weight off. If it wasn't for this soup I don't know what shape I'd be in. Herbert, your Poppa's a genius with these soups. I tell ya. A full on genius.

HERBERT

(Rolling his eyes in disbelief)  
I imagine he is.

CASSANDRA

Wow, this soup is pretty good. How long have you been making soups like this?

OREN

Hell, probably a couple months now. When I'm not tinkerin' around in the basement tryin' to figure out my next invention, I'm up here puttin' a little a this and a little a that together in that there pot. Oh, I made some bad one's Polly's had to suffer through.

POLLY

(Laughing out loud)  
Yeah, like that beet 'n melon stir-fry soup you made a couple weeks back. I thought you was trying to kill me off that night. Ooh wee.

OREN

But I'm figuring it out bit by bit. Hey, boy. You want seconds or what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HERBERT

(As if snapping awake)  
No! I mean, I'm fine, Dad. Thanks.  
We should actually be going soon.

POLLY

What? What you mean going? You kids  
just got here.

CASSANDRA

Actually, I'm waking up early to go  
jogging. I need my beauty rest.

POLLY

Well, you are beautiful, sweetie.  
I'll give you that.

CASSANDRA

Thanks.

HERBERT

Right, so I guess we eat up and-

OREN

This soup aint goin' nowhere, boy.

POLLY

Just remember to take them  
vitamins. That's what doctor  
Richards says. Most diets is ok if  
you remember to take your vitamins.  
Is that what you learned in dental  
school, Herbie?

HERBERT

Well-

POLLY

Sometimes I don't know what you  
learned there, if anything.  
Sometimes I wonder what you do all  
day, if not work at the clinic. I  
says to your father the other day,  
'What you think our boy does all  
day if not at the clinic?'

OREN

Now, Polly Anne. Don't torture the  
poor boy. Is this what you want to  
do? Torture him? Land sakes alive,  
woman.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

OREN (CONT'D)

All we gotta do is visit the boy  
some day and we know he's working  
in the clinic. That's all. Easy.  
Done deal.

POLLY

Maybe we visit you tomorrow,  
Herbie. How 'bout that?

HERBERT

Uh-

OREN

Then it's a done deal. Just like  
that.

CASSANDRA

It's like my poor engagement ring.

Herbert looks ill. He peers at his wristwatch and then back  
at Cassandra.

POLLY

Oh dear. What pray-tell is wrong  
with your poor ring, sweetie? Did  
Herbie get the wrong size? Oh lord,  
not the wrong size.

HERBERT

(Nudging Cassandra in the  
side)

I think it's time to go now-

CASSANDRA

(Pulling back from the  
nudging)

Don't assault me, Hun. No, not the  
wrong size... Worse.

POLLY

Worse? Oh lord.

OREN

You women just interested in two  
things. Jewelry and sleep. I been  
lucky as hell to get your momma  
eatin' that good ole fashion soup  
for a change. Jewels and sleep.  
Goddammit if it aint true.

Herbert stands up and heads for the front room shaking his  
head in disbelief. Cassandra reluctantly follows. Oren and  
Polly continue their banter in the kitchen.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUED

Herbert quickly finds the front doorknob and opens the door.

HERBERT

Your only son is leaving.

CASSANDRA

Goodnight, sweetie. Thanks for dinner. I'll tell you about the ring some other time when Herbert doesn't so rudely make me leave in the middle of our conversation.

POLLY (O.S.)

(Yelling from the kitchen)

Goodnight, kids. Drive safe now, ya hear?

OREN (O.S.)

Tomorrow, I try my hand at making some beef soup. Maybe put some a them tiny onions in it. You like them onions, Polly Anne?

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. HERBERT'S CAR - EVENING

Herbert and Cassandra remain silent. The sound of the Detroit streets bump under the car's tires. Cassandra sits in the front passenger seat, pulls her coat against her neck and shoulders. She fumbles around with the heater control. Herbert stares straight-ahead at the lines in the street as they roll under the moving car. He glances at the clock on the dash: 9:48pm.

CASSANDRA

(Finally feeling warm enough to talk)

Your mother's a sweetie.

HERBERT

Yeah...

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT AND CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT - THE SAME NIGHT

Herbert is in his boxer's and a T-shirt. He stands in front of the south window looking out at the lights of Downtown. Cassandra is already fast asleep in the bed.

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CONTINUED:

She takes up most of the bed surface. Herbert sighs deeply and turns around. He walks in the bedroom and stops for a second to look at Cassandra as she sleeps. He scratches his buttocks while yawning. After flipping off a lamp he gets into the remaining small surface of bed available and pulls the covers over his head.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL OFFICE - MORNING

Raoul occupies the front desk area. He fidgets with a small space heater on the floor by the desk. He clangs a pen on the heater's metallic side and curses under his breath. We hear the sound of drilling from one of the exam rooms.

RAOUL  
(To himself)  
Oh, how horrendous. We need new heaters desperately.

He strikes the small heater again with his pen, but more forcefully this time.

RAOUL (CONT'D)  
Take that, you awful piece of scrap metal. You failed me again. You must go.

He picks up the heater unit and walks it over to the garbage can. He ceremoniously drops it into the trash while kicking one foot up as if just scoring goal.

RAOUL (CONT'D)  
Raoul one. Heater zero.

The telephone rings. Raoul shuffles back to the desk and presses a button. He places the headset on his scalp, so he still can use hand gestures while speaking.

RAOUL (CONT'D)  
This is the dental office of Doctor Herbert Wallace. May I help you?

He sits down in the desk chair and leans back.

RAOUL (CONT'D)  
Oh hello, Mrs. Wallace. Oh, I'm just peachy. And how might you be doing on this fine day? Oh, is that so. Beef with onion, eh. Oh, those small cute little onions. I see. Well, good for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Raoul picks up a fingernail file from a desk drawer and starts on his nails.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

Today? That'd be great to finally meet you guys. What a pleasant surprise that'll be for your son. And for me too. Ok then. Tootaloo.

Raoul presses a button and sets down the file. The phone rings again.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

This is the dental office of Doctor Herbert Wallace. May I help you? Uh Huh. You do? Let me see here...

Raoul flips open an appointment book and marks a date with his pen.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

Fine. When may we reschedule? Let's see here. How about Thursday, the 25th? Oh, super then. You're a doll. See you then. Buh bye.

Raoul strikes the button again. The phone rings again right away. A frown comes upon his face.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

My goodness. What a day.

He pushes the button again and leans back in the chair.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

This is the dental office of Doctor Herbert Wallace. May I help you? Yes. Ma'am, I'm having some trouble understanding ...Espanol? Yes, I do speak some Spanish. You see, my parents were from Puerto Rico. Oh, what a dreadful place it must have been. Si, Senorita. Si, Doctor Herberto Wallace. May I ask who is calling? Calling! Umm. Que nombre? Your name?

Raoul is becoming visibly upset. At the same time, however, one can tell he is enjoying himself in trying to speak Spanish.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RAOUL (CONT'D)

Lethi? Oh what a delicious name.  
Si, mucho gusto. Si. Do you know  
the Doctor? I see. Oh, his amiga?  
His friend? Oh, he'll be so happy  
to see you. And from where does  
Herberto know you? Really? Oh how  
utterly devilish. Did you come all  
the way from Costa Rica? No?  
Nicaragua?

Raoul nearly falls out of his chair. The headset just about  
flips off his head in the process.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

(Regaining his composure)

Do you mean to tell me that you  
came all the way from Nicaragua to  
see Doctor Wallace? Interasante.  
Mui interasante. Si. Just come down  
Mack Avenue and stop at ten-mile  
road. Ten mile. Cien. Correcto. And  
Lethi?

Raoul turns his head around and peers down the hall toward  
the exam room. He turns back and leans in the chair again.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

When can we expect you? This  
morning? Splendid, darling. I look  
forward to meeting you, honey. Si,  
Senorita. Hasta pronto. Goodbye.

Raoul is nearly hyperventilating from excitement. He lets out  
short bursts of squeaky sounds as he disconnects the headset  
wire and stands. He claps his hands together and rubs them  
for a second. He then walks back to the exam room.

CUT TO:

INT. EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Herbert is performing a procedure in the mouth of a middle-  
aged woman as Brenda, the hygienist, stands close by admiring  
his work.

BRENDA

Oh, yes. That's the little bad  
tooth. Go get it, Doctor Wallace.  
That was a bad bad tooth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herbert looks out of the corner of his eyes at Brenda for a second. She quiets down as he resumes working in the woman's mouth.

The door creaks open and Raoul looks at Herbert without saying a word. He has a grin on his face.

HERBERT  
(Stopping his work)  
Well? What's up?

RAOUL  
I have two messages for you,  
Herberto.

HERBERT  
Yes?

RAOUL  
Numero uno. Your mother called.  
They're coming by today to visit. I  
just love that old kook.

HERBERT  
(Slightly annoyed)  
And?

RAOUL  
And a strange thing happened. A  
Latino girl named Lethi called.

HERBERT  
Who?

RAOUL  
Lethi. You might remember her from  
a trip you made to that dreadful  
Costa Rica a couple years ago.  
Rather a sweet voice, I must say.

Herbert freezes.

HERBERT  
Hm.

RAOUL  
Anyway, just thought I'd let you  
know. She'll be here sometime this  
morning too. Oh what a day this is  
turning out to be. Simply  
delicious, I'd say. Wouldn't you  
say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRENDA

Doctor Wallace's parents'll be here  
and an old friend? How exciting.  
You must be so excited, Sir.

HERBERT

(Expressionless)

I couldn't be more excited. Thanks  
for the news, Raoul. Umm, could you  
do a favour for me?

RAOUL

A favour?

HERBERT

Could you tell my parents that I'm  
too busy today for them to visit.  
They can come some other time.

RAOUL

As you wish, Herberto.

Raoul pulls the door shut as Herbert stares straight ahead.  
The door opens again.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

Oh, and your 1:30 appointment  
cancelled. Hasta-

He pulls the door closed. Herbert picks up his instruments  
and dives right back in the patient's mouth.

HERBERT

This shouldn't hurt one bit, ma'am.

BRENDA

Oh, Doctor.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LOBBY OF MOTEL 6 - MORNING

A tall, thin gentleman stands behind the counter. He is  
dressed in a mustard-colored suit. His Adam's apple sticks  
out prominently and moves up and down as he speaks on the  
phone.

Approaching the desk from the lobby is a uniquely gorgeous  
girl. She is Hispanic. She has a long wavy head of dark and  
full hair. She wears a foxy little sundress that drops to  
just above the knee. Her face is naturally beautiful. This is  
LETHI MARIA MENESES, 19 year old from Nicaragua.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Every eye in the lobby is directed at her. People stop what they are doing to get a look at her as she moves. She walks up to the reception desk as the tall, thin clerk slowly puts down the phone.

CLERK  
(Timidly)  
Uh. May- May I help you, ma'am.

LETHI  
(Thick Spanish accent)  
Jess Sir. Taxicab, pleese?

CLERK  
A taxi? Do you need a taxi?

LETHI  
Jess Sir. I am need a taxi.

CLERK  
Did you stay here at the hotel last night?

LETHI  
Si. Jess.

CLERK  
Did you enjoy your stay? Was everything alright?

LETHI  
No prol'em, Senior. Mucho gusto.

The clerk nervously looks on the computer screen.

CLERK  
And will you be returning to stay tonight?

LETHI  
Si. But, now I am need a taxicab.

CLERK  
Great. Just let me take care of that for you.

He leans toward her and puts his hand beside his mouth and whispers.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
You get a taxi discount for staying with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LETHI

Oh, zank you zo much. What I am owe  
you for the room?

CLERK

Don't worry about that now. Just  
wait over there for the taxicab.  
There should be one here in a  
couple minutes.

LETHI

Zank you, Sir.

He picks up the phone and dials. As Lethi walks away, the clerk rubs his eyes and stares at her. Her every move is accentuated in almost slow motion. As she walks into the lobby toward the front door, one sees the bellman and doorman transfixed on her as well.

She walks over to a couch by the entrance, leans over and lifts up a heavy baby carrier. As she turns toward the front entrance, we see the baby resting comfortably in soft cloths. He appears to be about 8 months old. As soon as the gentlemen notice her with a child, their facial expressions change to a look of mild disappointment.

DOORMAN

Ma'am? May we be of some  
assistance?

LETHI

Si. You are help me? Gracias.

The doorman and bellman help carry the baby carrier out to the cab.

INT./EXT. TAXICAB - SECONDS LATER

TAXI DRIVER

Where ya going, young lady?

LETHI

Doctor Wallace, the denteest. On  
the Mack Avenue.

TAXI DRIVER

Sure thing. Hold on to that child  
of yours...

The cab speeds off down the street.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. OREN AND POLLY'S CAR - DAY

Oren drives while Polly looks at herself in the visor mirror. She's trying to apply her lipstick.

POLLY

Help! Caint you slow down a bit? I caint steady my hand. I'm bound to paint my whole face with this darn lipstick.

OREN

It's these damn Detroit streets. Potholes all over the place. Not like the good ole South where we from. It's like we drivin' through a full-on minefield. Who knows where our tax-dollars end up. It sure aint these damn streets.

POLLY

Oh well, I guess I just put on this lip-paint later. You ok with me going 'round in public like this, babe?

Oren glances at Polly between swerving around potholes.

OREN

Yo' alright for me. My god! What was that? A hole the size of Toledo? These shocks never gonna make it. Where does your son work anyway? In the slums?

POLLY

Hey now, Pa. He just finished his schooling. A man gotta start somewhere, right? That's what I'm always telling people who ask. They gotta start somewhere. Babe? You missed the turn. What are you doing? And to think, my life is in your hands.

OREN

Don't get your boobs all in a twirl, Momma. Ten Mile Road aint even passed us yet. Sit back and relax a spell. Put on some more a that face paint.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POLLY

Ok, ok. Just get us there in one piece. That's all I ask a you.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL OFFICE - DAY

Herbert walks a patient out to the front desk area.

HERBERT

Ok then. We'll see you in a couple weeks for a recheck of that tooth.

PATIENT

Okay.

The patient leaves.

PATIENT (CONT'D)

See you next time.

HERBERT

Take care.

RAOUL

Buh bye.

Raoul opens the appointment book and scans a page with his finger. Herbert stands next to the desk and removes the surgical mask.

RAOUL

Well, big guy. That's it for the day.

HERBERT

What? No more patients this afternoon?

RAOUL

Nope. That's it. Sorry, boss. Unless, of course, you don't count the visitors who should be here shortly. And, Sir, you may have forgotten Mrs. Theilsen back in exam room 3. I'm sure Brenda is taking good care of her as we speak.

HERBERT

Oh god.

Herbert turns around and runs back down the hall. He grabs a surgical mask and stretches it around his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He opens the door and is lost within the room as the door shuts. Raoul hums a light and fanciful melody to himself as he reorganizes his desktop.

RAOUL

(Singing to himself)

When will our eyes meet? When can I  
touch you? When will this strong  
yearnin' end?

The front doorbell rattles and the door forcefully opens. Polly enters in all her regalia: colorful skirt, frosted hair, sizeable earrings that bob around when she moves, but no lipstick. She sees Raoul and makes her way to the front desk where he sits.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

You must be Herbert's Mother. You  
look smashing. Really, you do.

Raoul stands up and gives her a quick hug so as to not disturb her carefully selected apparel.

POLLY

(Looking down at herself)

What? This old thing? Honey, you  
gotta be kidding.

RAOUL

I've waited to meet you for so  
long. It's just been too long.  
Where's your husband run off to?

POLLY

(Laughing)

Oren's parking the car. Can you  
believe a man like that dropping a  
good girl like me off at the door?

RAOUL

(Uninterestedly)

So very charming of him. I must  
say. You must have taken out the  
whip again.

POLLY

Oh stop. Aint got no whip.

(She pauses for effect)

It done broke down the other day.

Raoul and Polly erupt with laughter as Oren walks through the door. He disapprovingly looks toward the two laughing and finds a seat in the small waiting room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

POLLY (CONT'D)

Ah honey, don't be that way. Come on. Say hello to Raoul. He's the - what do you call 'em these days - office manager.

OREN

I see. Well, Mr. Raoul. It's a pleasure for you to meet me.

RAOUL

Oh, he's a real card. So big. So funny.

POLLY

Oren, babe. Behave yerself. This is one of the last truly nice boys you'll ever meet. They don't make 'em like this anymore. He sure fine grade A good ole boy. That what he is. Umm hmm.

RAOUL

Well isn't that a treat to hear. Girl, you got a way with words. May I slip that last comment on my resume? Who knows? It might just land me that job of a lifetime.

POLLY

Is our boy out back, or what?

RAOUL

Actually, I'm sure he's got his fingers buried in someone's mouth as we speak. He should be done shortly. Would you care to have a seat back with me? There's coffee, juice, Pringles.

POLLY

With you? There an extra seat back there? Oh goody.

Polly walks behind the desk and sits down next to Raoul. She bounces gleefully in her chair several times. Raoul let's her try on his telephone headgear. Oren, in the meantime, has picked up a magazine. He opens it while trying to ignore the antics of the two in front of him. Several seconds pass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A quiet knock comes at the front door. The three raise their heads and look toward the door. A grin forms on Raoul's face while he stands up and walks to the door.

RAOUL

Hello. Welcome. Come right in,  
honey.

Raoul steps aside and Lethi, alone, walks into the waiting room. She looks as gorgeous as before.

Polly seems to be mesmerized by Lethi. Soon after Lethi enters the room, the taxicab driver brings in the baby carrier and places it on a chair. This is FREDERICO, the baby. Polly, Oren and Raoul look suddenly confused.

TAXI DRIVER

Well, it was nice meetin' you,  
ma'am. Hope you have a pleasant  
stay in our fair city.

LETHI

(Handing him some dollars)  
Zank you zo much, Senior.

TAXI DRIVER

(Stepping out the door as  
Raoul closes it)  
Take it easy.

RAOUL

Bye now.

The baby begins to coo and babble.

LETHI

(Rocking the carrier while  
sitting)  
No no, nino. No habla, por favor.  
Shhh.

Polly stands up and walks over to Lethi and Frederico. Oren watches everything from over his magazine.

RAOUL

Welcome to Detroit. I'm Raoul. I  
spoke with you on the phone this  
morning.

LETHI

Hola, Raoul. Nice for to meet you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

RAOUL

And who, may I ask, is this little unexpected bundle of joy?

LETHI

Thees is Frederico.

POLLY

Oh, precious. Look at that little angel. He's just a little angel. That's all.

RAOUL

Polly and Oren? This is Lethi - I'm sorry I didn't get your last name.

LETHI

Lethi Maria Meneses.

RAOUL

Of course. And Lethi? This is Oren and Polly Wallace. Doctor Wallace's parents.

LETHI

(Emotionally)  
Parents?

POLLY

Yes dear. I'm his momma. And that there's his pa.

Lethi stands up out of her chair and lunges toward Polly. She grabs Polly and gives her a healthy hug while squinting. Polly has a look of surprise on her face.

LETHI

(With a tear in her eye)  
Eet is nice for to meet you,  
Seniora. Very nice for me.

POLLY

Well, thank you, you sweet thing. Where on earth did you come from to end up in this office in Detroit, Michigan?

OREN

Don't be giving her the third degree, Polly Anne.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

OREN (CONT'D)

She just got here. Give the kid  
some time to adjust.

Lethi walks over to Oren.

LETHI

It is nice for to meet you too,  
Senior.

OREN

(Entranced)

Well, thank you, young lady. Uh,  
what's yer name again?

LETHI

Lethi. Le-ay-th-ee.

OREN

Oh, I see. Well, that's a down  
right perty name.

Lethi hugs Oren.

POLLY

(To the baby)

He's a dear. I really mean it.

RAOUL

He's alright. I'm sure he's a  
dreadful mess to clean at times.  
Oh, how awful.

POLLY

Hey now, that's what babies do.  
They mess. It's not they fault.  
That's why God made 'em cute, so we  
keep cleanin' 'em up, ya know?

RAOUL

Lethi's from Nicaragua. And I'm  
sure she's relieved to finally be  
in a place with latrines and  
showers.

POLLY

Nic-ura-gua? What?

RAOUL

Yep. And she's come all this way to  
visit your son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

OREN

(Pointing his index finger  
upward)

Ah ha!

POLLY

You don't say? To visit Herbert?  
But why, dear? I don't know why a  
darling little girl would travel  
all that way for that? I can't  
figure why she'd do it.

RAOUL

(Looking at Lethi's sexy  
body)

Well, I could probably venture an  
educated guess.

OREN

So could I. Polly Anne, get yer  
head out of the mud for a second's  
time just once. You too close to  
the woods to see nothing.

POLLY

What? Why everybody talkin' in  
rhymes and riddles all's a sudden?

Frederico cries. Lethi and Polly instantly go to his aide.

RAOUL

Oh no. That strong female intuition  
cannot be denied. That little  
fella's going to get the best of  
everyone.

Herbert steps out of the exam room into the hall. He walks  
forward while removing his mask with a SNAP.

POLLY

Boy! What takin' you so long in  
there?

OREN

Hey, at least we know he's really  
workin' and not juss flippin' them  
burgers.

HERBERT

(Whispering to Raoul and  
motioning to his parents)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Why are they here? What's going on out here, Raoul?

The scene in the waiting room is approaching chaos. Polly and Lethi try to console the crying Frederico. Oren swats flies with the magazine. Raoul smiles.

RAOUL

(Sheepish grin)

Well, it seems that you have some visitors. Isn't that nice?

Lethi hands the child to Polly and turns toward Herbert. As soon as Herbert sees her, he chokes nervously.

CUT TO:

EXT. COSTA RICA - SAN JOSE - NIGHT

INT. CROWDED DISCO - NIGHT

Herbert scopes out a discotheque, a beer in hand. The salsa dancing is fast. The disco is packed full of people, mostly young Latinos. Herbert is talking with his schoolmates, GABRIEL and DAN.

A group of four beautiful Latino women walk by.

GABRIEL

This isn't bad.

HERBERT

Not bad at all.

DAN

Damn guys, look at that. Would you just look at that?

GABRIEL

Settle down, hot stuff. If you fell into a bowl of tits you'd come out sucking your thumb.

DAN

Shut up, Gabe. I don't see you picking up any of these girls either.

GABRIEL

(Sure of himself)

Ah, not yet. Just gimme some time though. You'll see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Shit.

HERBERT

I wonder if we could open a dental clinic down here?

DAN

Yeah! That's a sweet idea.

GABRIEL

What? Don't get ahead of yourself. We're not even out of dental school yet.

Another flock of young Latino women walk by.

DAN

Well, at least we can dream. Right?

GABRIEL

Just keep me out of your dreams, please. That's the last thing I need.

The guys swig their beers. Herbert is stuck by a very attractive young Latino girl look directly at him from across the disco. We recognize her as Lethi Maria Meneses. She stands by a wall with some other girls slowly moving to the fast salsa music. A thin veil of dew from the humidity covers her smooth olive skin.

HERBERT

(Setting down his beer)

Oh my-

DAN

What? What's 'Oh my'?

HERBERT

Get a load a that stuff?

DAN

(Seeing Lethi)

Holy crap! What a total fox.

GABRIEL

'Total fox'? Where are you from? The eighties? Jesus.

Herbert no longer hears Dan and Gabriel as they go on arguing in the background.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lethi has completely captured his attention. Her sexy Latino salsa moves slow down as the scene fades.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Lethi walks toward Herbert. He is dumbfounded. He can't talk or move as she approaches. Oren and Raoul watch. Oblivious, Polly tries to quiet and console Frederico.

LETHI

Hola, 'Erberto. Como estas?

She comes to within millimeters of him. They look at each other for a moment. She leans forward and gives him a European hug with quick kisses on both of his cheeks.

CUT TO:

INT. DISCO - NIGHT

Herbert walks to where Lethi stands with her friends. As he moves closer, she giggles and looks at him coyly. The crowd is so dense that he can barely make it over to her without bumping into several people. He finally gets to her and she looks at him.

HERBERT

(Bad Spanish accent)

Hola.

Lethi looks at her friends and giggles.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Como estas?

More giggling.

LETHI'S FRIEND

Don't try so hard, Tico. She speaks some aynglish. No problem.

HERBERT

Oh, great. My name's Herbert.

LETHI

(Giggling)

'Erberto. Si. Lethi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HERBERT  
 (Trying to hear over the  
 noise)  
 What?

LETHI  
 (Pointing to herself)  
 Lethi. Me nombre.

HERBERT  
 Oh. Nice to meet you, -um- Lethi.

The crowd moves and Herbert is pushed STRAIGHT INTO Lethi and against the wall. Their bodies bump together gracefully. They look at each other as their bodies touch. Soon, Lethi begins to dance again to the music. The scene fades away as she tries to show Herbert how to move like a salsa dancer, her hands forcing his rhythm-less hips side to side to the beat.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTAL OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

HERBERT  
 But how?-

LETHI  
 (Her hand to his mouth)  
 Shhh. Don't talk.

HERBERT  
 But I-

LETHI  
 Shhh. I am understand.

RAOUL  
 Great. Isn't this just peachy?  
 Everyone having such a splendid  
 reunion. Oh, I just adore a good  
 reunion. I assume you too have  
 already met or I'd introduce you.  
 However, Herberto, permit me to  
 introduce you to our newest little  
 companion: Fred.

Herbert looks at his mother, who is doing a poor job at quieting the child. Oddly, she seems to have placed the pacifier in her OWN mouth instead of Frederico's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POLLY

(Removing the pacifier)  
See, Freddy. This is how it's done.  
It goes in the mouth. Do it just  
like Polly now. Shhh, little boy.  
Shhh.

LETHI

(Taking the child back)  
Me corazon, me Frederico.

He finally quiets down.

OREN

Son? You never told us you had a  
friend from Nicaragua?

HERBERT

Nicaragua? I thought you were from  
Costa Rica.

LETHI

I was a visit la Costa Rica por la  
holiday.

HERBERT

From Nicaragua?

LETHI

Si, a la Nicaragua. Me Patria.

RAOUL

(Under his breath)  
Devilish-

HERBERT

Raoul, don't you have a phone to  
answer or an appointment to break  
or something?

RAOUL

(Walking over to his desk)  
Oh, sure. I'll be over here if  
anybody needs me.

POLLY

Son, isn't this little bundle of  
joy a blessin'? Isn't he a charmer?  
A precious angel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OREN

Polly Anne, get a hold a yerself,  
woman. Haven't y'all ever seen a  
baby before? Good gracious.

POLLY

I just caint seem to help it, Pa.  
That's what I'm always tellin'  
people about me an' children. I  
caint seem to help myself.

OREN

It's because yer big an' soft. Like  
a mother bear.

POLLY

Oren! You old kook. Leave it alone  
now. There's children present.

HERBERT

(Uncomfortably)

Mom? Did you properly meet - uh -

OREN

Yeah, boy. Her name is Lethi. Le-ay-  
th-ee.

HERBERT

Oh yeah. Right. Um. She's a friend  
of mine from my trip to Costa Rica.

POLLY

And how'd you guys meet? I mean,  
friend of a friend? What?

HERBERT

Well-

LETHI

Jess. Friend a la friend.

HERBERT

Right. Friend of a friend.

Herbert begins to perspire. His face becomes red. Lethi turns  
toward Herbert with Frederico.

LETHI

'Erberto? Thees is our son,  
Frederico.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HERBERT

(Angrily)

What?

POLLY

(Almost fainting)

Ahhh. Son? Am I a grammaw?

OREN

I knew it! Gimmee that lottery money. I called it.

POLLY

Herbie? You a daddy without you even knowing it? How old is that child? Ten, eleven months?

LETHI

Ocho. Eight months.

POLLY

Only eight months old? And you travelin' all this way alone. Honey, you must be tired. And so skinny. And where you stayin', sweetie? You need a place to stay?

HERBERT

Mom?

POLLY

Now shut yer trap, boy. Don't you wanna be hospitable to this poor young thing and your own child?

HERBERT

(Desperate)

Sure, but I'm engaged to Cassandra. Remember? What's she gonna say when-

Lethi looks at Herbert.

LETHI

(Shocked)

You es engaged?

POLLY

Herbie, you just gonna hafta tell her the truth. That's all you can do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OREN

In the meantime, why don't she stay with us at our house for a while? The poor thing's prolly needin' a good meal. Soup's already on the crockpot.

RAOUL

(From his desk)

Oh, how deliciously scandalous.

HERBERT

Dad?

POLLY

Now, son. Keep it shut for a minute. You got no one to blame but your own self. How's about it, sweetie? You wanna stay with us at our house? We good people and all. We really from the south. Alabama area. So we unnerstand about all that hospitable stuff. What d'you say?

LETHI

(Looking at Herbert and Frederico)

Si, mucho gusto. I am would like to stay with you very much.

OREN

Then it's settled. We got that exter room over the garage. We'll fix 'er up for ya.

HERBERT

(Under his breath)

Good god-

POLLY

Isn't this exciting? A young lady in our house. And little Freddy. He'll be so happy. Oh, I can hardly think, I'm so excited.

OREN

Le-ay-thee?

LETHI

Jess, senior?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

OREN

Oh, I love it when she calls me Senior. I am a Senior. I's just wonderin'. How long you fixin' on staying in Detroit?

LETHI

(Thinking)

No se. Prolly a day or two, maybe la more. It depends.

HERBERT

Depends? Depends on what?

Lethi turns her head around and looks at Herbert suspiciously. Herbert becomes visibly ill as even more perspiration forms on his forehead.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. HERBERT'S CAR - EVENING

Herbert drives while Cassandra fumes in the passenger seat. She is visibly angry, but more self-righteous than sad. He tries to avoid potholes in the street.

CASSANDRA

Whatever! I just don't want to hear it anymore. You've managed to screw up your life and I don't want to be a part of it any longer.

HERBERT

But Cassandra-

CASSANDRA

No buts! Just drive me home in silence. I have nothing more to discuss with you. Isn't it ironic that those thugs at the Jewelry store finally got it right just at the time of all this? Hmm, won't Dee Dee be surprised? Actually, she may not be surprised at all. She had her opinions about you all along. I must have been blind to it. But not anymore.

HERBERT

Oh well, she's nuts anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA

What? Now you're attacking my dearest of friends? I see what a life with you would have been like. Finally your true colors are revealed. You're a sicko. Really, you are, Herbert. You should get some help. You really should.

HERBERT

(Swerving around a pothole)

Oops-

CASSANDRA

My god. I gotta get out of this car. You're a madman. To think I might have been stuck with this. Help!

HERBERT

Don't you want to at least talk about it first? Don't you think you might be acting too hastily? Too emotionally?

CASSANDRA

Oh, I see. I'm just a poor little emotional woman now. I'm supposed to pine away while you're out screwing every bitch in Central America. You've got some nerve, you know that?

HERBERT

It was just a drunken night on vacation. I'd completely forgotten about it. That's all. Come on, relax.

CASSANDRA

Relax? Is that what you did after you pleased yourself with that poor girl. You make me sick. All this time and you've been a father to someone else's child. And she herself is only a child. How old is she anyway? I heard 19. That's chilling.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

And you're probably so spineless that you'll accept the kid as your own when there's technology out there that could tell either way.

HERBERT

Huh?

CASSANDRA

Huh? Is that all you can think to say? Get one of those DNA tests or something. Or not. I don't care. Just leave me out of it. But I'll keep this engagement ring that I worked so hard on designing.

Smiling, Cassandra takes the ring out of a small Jewelry box and holds it up to the fading evening light. The car bounces over another hole in the road as she nearly drops it.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

(Putting the ring back in the box)

Dammit, Herbert. Watch it, please. I just ate. I'd rather not LOOSE it all over your new Beamer, though the thought has crossed my mind.

They stop in the apartment's parking lot and get out of the car without saying a word.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S PARENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Polly is trying to comfort Frederico in the living room. Oren is in the loft above the garage. Lethi is in the bathroom combing her long, sexy hair. She suddenly looks like a regular teenager.

POLLY

(Bouncing Frederico on her lap)

Grammaw loves you. Doggonit if I don't juss love this little creature. Oh look! He's smiling. Oh the little charmer. What a big smile. Here, let me kiss yer little round cheeks.

Lethi looks at herself one more time in the bathroom mirror before shutting off the light. She walks out into the living room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LETHI  
Ma'am? Senorita?

POLLY  
Ah hell, why don't you juss call me  
Ma? We all family here.

LETHI  
(Uncomfortably at first)  
Si. Ma.

POLLY  
That's better. That Oren's not so  
young anymore. He'll be done with  
yer room before you know it though.

LETHI  
Oh, that's no prolem por me. But I  
am a wondering-

POLLY  
Wondering? What about, sweetheart?

LETHI  
I a wondering if I can telephone  
por a me padre, me -how you say-  
fatha?

POLLY  
Now, of course, you need to let  
your parents know where you are.  
They muss be worried sick 'bout  
you. Oh lord, I don't know what I  
would do if my 19 year old child  
gone like this.

Polly points over to the phone in the living room.

POLLY (CONT'D)  
There's the phone, sweetie. You  
know how to dial Guat-ah-mala from  
here? You sure smarter than me. You  
kids know so much about 'lectric  
things these days. Amazing.

LETHI  
Me fath-err give me a card to using  
with the phone call. Mira?

Lethi holds up a plastic card.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

POLLY

That was smart of him. He sounds like a real nice man, your father. Go ahead and use the phone. It's one of them cordless doodads, so you can go to any room.

LETHI

Gracias, Senorita. I am won't be long.

She picks up the phone and walks toward the kitchen.

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lethi looks at the plastic calling card while pressing the phone's buttons. She goes through a rather lengthy series of beeps while finally hearing the phone ring on the other end. She sits down at the kitchen table and places the phone to her ear. Her smooth, olive-skinned legs nervously rub together.

CUT TO:

INT. NICARAGUA - ROOM - DAY

The room is beautifully done in Mexican tile, Guatemalan tapestries, bright and colorful rugs, and ancient artefacts from Mayan ruins. Shelves are lined with books. On a dark mahogany desk sits a small black cordless phone. The room is vacant otherwise.

This is the house of the Nicaraguan drug lord NORWIN MENESES. Suddenly the phone comes alive, ringing in short bursts. After about 5 rings, we see a man's hand pick up the phone, press a button and place it to his ear. We get the first glimpse of Norwin Meneses.

NOTE: This scene is done in English subtitles as Mr. Meneses and his daughter talk together in Spanish on the phone. The scene also goes back and forth from Lethi to Norwin as they talk.

NORWIN

Hello.

LETHI

Poppa?

NORWIN

Hey, how's my little girl?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LETHI

Fine. These people are so nice up here.

NORWIN

So you found the guy, eh?

LETHI

Yeah, but just give me some time before you do anything crazy, Poppa.

NORWIN

Okay, okay. But you got 2 days, sweetie. 2 days to bring that lousy sonofa

(coughs)

down here. I can't wait 'till I get my hands on him.

LETHI

Poppa, please. You promised you'd be good.

NORWIN

Yeah, I guess I did. Too bad. But, anybody who gets my little girl pregnant either marries her or keeps the kid. That's the deal.

LETHI

(Fighting back tears)

I know.

NORWIN

How are you going to go through Law school with a kid hanging on your leg? You're my only child, Lethi. I only want what's ultimately best for you.

LETHI

(Starting to cry)

I know, Poppa. Don't worry.

NORWIN

Okay, honey. You have two days to bring down your new husband. Okay? Two days and then we go to plan B.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LETHI  
Okay, Poppa. Bye.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cassandra busily packs her bags. Herbert slouches on the couch with a beer in one hand and the TV remote control in the other. The TV is on, but the volume is way down.

CASSANDRA  
(Facetiously)  
If I would have married a pig, then I might have had a bunch of little piglets running around. I couldn't have that now, could I? What do they even call a group of young pigs? I don't even know. How can I have piglets if I don't even know what to call them? A group of fish is a school. A bunch of geese, a gaggle. But pigs? Who the fuck knows?

HERBERT  
(Quietly)  
Who the fuck cares?

CASSANDRA  
What? Is that the way you're going to leave a relationship of 4 and a half years? Well, fine. If you want it like that. I can play that game too.

HERBERT  
You've been playing games since day one.

CASSANDRA  
Day one what? Day one when we first met? Day one our first date? Day one our engagement?

HERBERT  
(Louder)  
Day one the day you could talk!

CASSANDRA  
Well. I never.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HERBERT

No? Well maybe you should've.

CASSANDRA

Back to your old self. Try to make some sense when you talk, please. You get bothersome.

He Gets up and moves some of her bags to the door.

HERBERT

Well let me just 'bother' you right out the door.

CASSANDRA

I don't need your help, Herbert. I don't need you and I don't need your help. Really, I don't-

HERBERT

(Sensing her sadness)  
Cassandra.

CASSANDRA

(Stopping and looking down at the floor)  
What?

HERBERT

Come here.

She stays a few feet away and looks down. Herbert comes closer and looks toward her.

CASSANDRA

(Crying)  
I just thought this one was it.  
That's all.

HERBERT

I know. Me too, sweetie. Me too.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S PARENT'S HOUSE - MORNING

Daylight has barely broken. The house is still, except for the sound of metal clanging on metal. As we move through the house, we finally notice that the clanging is coming from the basement. We follow the sound down the basement stairs. There is a single light shining in the basement. Turning a corner, we see that Oren is busy at his workbench.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He wears a protective shield over his face. As he works, his tongue jets out of the corner of his mouth. He appears to be making something. He's got a piece of metal in a vice.

OREN

(Whispering to himself)

It's off to work we go. Yo ho, yo ho. It's off to work we go.

He whistles while banging on the metal, which is secured in the vice. He quickly becomes frustrated.

OREN (CONT'D)

Doggonit. Aint this piece a scrap gonna give way? Sonofabob's butt.

Suddenly, the whole metal piece cracks and breaks thereby sending Oren to the ground in a heap.

OREN (CONT'D)

Aaahh! For the love a all that's sacred. That smarts.

He attempts to sit up.

OREN (CONT'D)

My back. What the hell did I do? I gots ta be the dumbest cluts this side a Kalamazoo.

Looking up, he sees a part of metal that is still stuck in the vice. As if getting even with the piece of scrap metal, he picks up a metal pipe and swings it at the scrap metal. There is a loud clanging sound, which spreads instantly throughout the house.

INT. THE ROOM ABOVE THE GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Frederico awakens and begins to wail. Lethi turns over in bed and tries to shut out the sound of the baby crying by shoving a pillow over her head.

LETHI

Shh, por favor.

Frederico continues crying as she rolls over, each time stuffing more blankets and pillows over her head.

LETHI (CONT'D)

Mui loco bambino. Alto!

Soon, Polly bursts through the door in a thinly veiled nightgown. Her hair is up in curlers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POLLY

Oh, baby. What's a matter? That big oaf down in the basement scare you? Oh, poor Freddy. Pa juss trying to make one a his invention. That's all.

She reaches down to pick up Frederico out of an old crib. The crying continues.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Oh, my. Such a big boy. Don't you like that old crib I kept from when Herbert was a baby? It fit you real nice. Oh, there there. Shhh. Now everythin' ok. Now everything juss fine.

Looking over at Lethi, who is still tangled up under blankets and pillows.

LETHI

Lethi, sweetheart? Your baby ok now. He juss needed some a that good ole country lovin'. That's all. I tell ya. Juss like all other men. Always wantin' some a that good ole fashion lovin'.

A moaning sound drifts upstairs from the basement.

POLLY

Oh my god. What's that? Is my big man-child injured? I better check on him. Oh lord. Help! Lethi? Get on up outta that bed now. I might need some help.

LETHI

(From under the covers)

Ok, ok. Una momento. I am need a second, pleeeze.

POLLY

Juss come on down to the basement when you can. Who knows what my man been doing down there? I'll take Freddy, okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LETHI

(Finally popping her head  
out of the covers)

Si.

Polly leaves the room with Freddy. Lethi looks around at her surroundings for a second, and then pulls the covers back over her head.

INT. THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Oren rests on the floor. He grabs his lower back with one hand as his face grimaces in pain. He tries to move, which causes pain each time. Polly, holding Freddy, comes rushing down the old wooden basement stairs.

POLLY

Oh my god! Oren, babe! Where you  
at? I caint see my Oren.

OREN

Quit bein' so darn dramatic all the  
time, ma. Here I is. Right down  
here. Hellooo.

Polly sees him sitting in pain on the floor.

POLLY

Whoa! My man's fallen like a big  
tree. Caint ya get up, honey? Is  
somethin' hurtin' ya? Oh no, you  
gonna be cripple for the rest of  
yer life. Oh lord. How'm I gonna  
support myself now?

OREN

Snap out of it, woman! I aint no  
cripple. Good god. I think I juss  
strain my back muscle. Nothin' more  
than a simple strain. That's all.  
Now, put that little baby down and  
an help me up, momma.

POLLY

(Looking around the room)  
I don't wanna leave this little  
precious angel alone in this dump.  
You got too much hazardous material  
everywhere. I'm afraid he may  
ingest somethin' toxic. But don't  
you worry. That sweet Lethi gonna  
be down momentary like.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Oren tries to get up on his own again and moans.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Oh no! I think you may be a cripple now. Surely you musta broke a few rib or somethin'. Don't tell me I'm gonna hafta carry you like this little Freddy for the rest a yo' life. But, you know what, babe? I'd do it fer ya. You my firss baby. That's all. That's what I always telling people. That you my firss baby.

OREN

Christ Sakes, momma! Juss put that boy down somewhere an help me up outta this mess. I aint broke nothin'. I'm fine.

Finally, Lethi slowly tiptoes down the stairs. She looks around totally amazed at the divine clutter of the room.

POLLY

See! I told ya she would be down. At last, help is here. Oren, babe? You juss lay there like a big log an let poor momma help you, ok.

Polly hands Frederic to Lethi.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Here's yer boy, honey. Now please stand by if we get into trouble.

LETHI

Gracias.

Polly bends down to grab Oren's large arm, but she is completely unable to move him. Even his arm is almost too big to move.

OREN

I knew you shouldn't a lost all that weight. Now you as weak and frail as a bird. That damn soup sucked the strength right outta ya. Look at you? You sweatin' like a farmer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

POLLY

Hush up, you log. Aint me who's got the problem. I think it gonna take a whole football team to get you up and outta here. Lethi, dear? Go on upstairs and get that neat cordless phone and bring it on down here. Go on.

Lethi goes bounding upstairs with Frederico in her arms. He seems to be enjoying the commotion because he is cooing and babbling.

OREN

Now what you want with that damn phone, momma?

POLLY

I'm fixin' to call them 911 people. I think you need medical attention. I really do-

OREN

(Frantic)

What! I'm not letting any so-called medical people touch me. This is virgin skin. It's never been poked or prodded by any quack before. I'd rather not start now.

POLLY

Settle down, big thing. You got yerself in it now. Juss let me take it from here. You need a 'valuation. That's all. Juss a physical 'valuation.

Lethi comes back with the phone. Polly grabs it from her and presses buttons.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Hello. Oh thank god. My husban' in real bad shape. Oh, ok. I'll slow down. Sorry, ma'am.

OREN

Hang up. They all a bunch a money grabbers anyway.

POLLY

3434 Collinswood Court. Um hm. That's right. Yep, Roseville.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

POLLY (CONT'D)

Just past Gratiot Street and Nine Mile. Um hm. Oh ok. Well, he fell in the basement while workin' on one a his inventions. What's that dear? Oh. Inventions. You know. He a inventor and all. That's right. Anyway, he caint seem to get up on account a his back be hurtin' somethin' awful.

OREN

They crooks. All them medical peoples.

POLLY

(Momentarily holding the phone away from her head)  
Shhh. Shut it up, babe.

OREN

Ah-

POLLY

(Putting the phone back to her ear)  
Yes ma'am. Oh yes. I sure tried to get him up, but he as big as a log and I been losin' weight on the soup diet. Yeah, that good soup diet. Never heard of it? A course you haven't. My husban' invented it. I told you before, he a inventor and all. Oh, ok. Five minutes. Ok. Thank you, lovey. You been sweet as sugar pie. Thank you. Bye now.

She gives the phone back to Lethi.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Well, you in for it now, babe. They be here in five minutes.

OREN

This is it. This is the end. I gonna be scarred forever. This virgin skin gonna be violated.

POLLY

Poor big man. Momma gonna fix you up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OREN

That's juss what I'm worried about.

POLLY

I'm gonna call Herbert and see if he can watch the baby. Maybe that sweet Cassandra can show Lethi around the town while we're at the hospital. Lethi? Would you like to see the town?

LETHI

Si. I like to see the town. But, I am like to see 'Erberto today?

POLLY

Oh, aint that sweet? She wanna get Freddy's Poppa to get to know his son. Sure, honey. It's Saturday. They aint no work for Herbert today. I'm sure he got all day to be with Freddy. Gimmee that phone again, love.

Polly grabs the phone and dials again.

OREN

Now why would Cassandra want to show Lethi the town? They natural enemies. Got the same man, they do.

POLLY

Shhh! It's ringing.

OREN

Momma!

POLLY

Hello? Boy? You there? Pick up, boy. Your Poppa going to the hospital. He hurt himself real bad.

CUT TO:

INT. LAKESIDE MALL - DETROIT SUBURBS - DAY

Busy shopping mall. It's fancy with marble floors and modern artwork in the halls. The camera stops at Neiman Marcus department store, and then rolls through the large glass entryway into the store. It stops at the makeup and perfume counter. Behind the counter, some women employees are talking rather dramatically while others help customers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the employees that is talking is Cassandra. She is dressed in a smart suit. Her hair is done up in a tight twirl on her head. She is talking to DEE DEE ROMANO, a co-worker at the store. Her best friend.

CASSANDRA

(Holding up her left hand)  
So I figured what the hell! I put in all the effort in designing the ring, so why not wear it for a while? I mean, look at it?

DEE DEE

Oh you're so right. I've never seen anything shine like that. The way the light scatters is just gorgeous. It fits you so well, Cassandra. You're so gorgeous.

CASSANDRA

(Flipping her head back)  
You're so sweet, Dee Dee.

DEE DEE

A classy girl like you? You're not going to have any problem finding another guy. You're a fox. Period.

CASSANDRA

(Laughing)  
Oh go on. Seriously, go on. You're too nice to me, honey. I love you.

DEE DEE

I love you too.

Cassandra and Dee Dee close in on each other rapidly for a very quick hug. Customers are forming a line at their counter.

CUSTOMER

Um. Excuse me.

DEE DEE

(Glancing at the customer)  
How depressing, Cassandra. Look at them. They're like cattle. Line 'em up. We'll milk 'em for every penny they got.

CASSANDRA

(Laughing)  
You kill me, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CUSTOMER

Ma'am? Can I get some service here?

CASSANDRA

(Turning to the customer)

Of course, Sir. How may I help you?

CUSTOMER

Well, my wife's birthday is coming up and I need to get her something special.

CASSANDRA

Is that so?

CUSTOMER

Yes, ma'am.

CASSANDRA

And what did you have in mind? Would you consider yourself a big spender? How much do you love your wife?

CUSTOMER

What?

DEE DEE

Oh she's right, Sir. First thing's first. You need to tell us just how much you love your wife-

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S CAR - SAME DAY

Herbert drives while Lethi sits in the passenger seat. She is impressed with the BMW. She presses her hands on the leather and bounces playfully on the seats. Frederico is seat-belted in the back in his carrier. He looks around the car quietly.

LETHI

'Erberto. I am like thees car too much. In Nicaragua, only the richness peoples get thees cars. Poor peoples get nawtheen.

HERBERT

Is that so?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LETHI

Jess. But you like Nicaragua. It very nice place for you.

HERBERT

(Glancing at Lethi)  
It is? I do?

LETHI

Si. Very nice for you. My Padre gets thees cars no prolem. You like to come visit with me La Nicaragua?

HERBERT

What?

LETHI

Jess You like to come to Nicaragua with me. Nicaragua very nice people.

HERBERT

(Looking disinterested)  
Maybe someday.

LETHI

No, now! My Poppa say you are to be my hus-a-band. We are leave tomorrow. Mira?

She reaches into her purse and holds up two plane tickets for him to see. Herbert looks at them waving in her hand. The car hits a pothole.

HERBERT

Oops! What are you talking about? I can't leave. I'm a dentist. I've got patients. I don't even want to leave. What the hell are you talking about?

LETHI

(In tears)  
You don't love a me. You don't love a Frederico either. We es supposed to be family. But you a mean man.

HERBERT

Mean man? I haven't even done anything. And how could I be in love with you?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HERBERT (CONT'D)

We only knew each other one night?  
Almost two years ago?

LETHI

(Still crying)  
No matter. My Padre say you should  
love a me. Me an Frederico, and  
you. La family.

HERBERT

Oh god-

Herbert looks out the window as they are coincidentally  
driving by Lakeside Mall.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Hey. I know what would cheer you  
up?

LETHI

(Sniffling)  
What?

HERBERT

(Looking out the window)  
How about a nice day at the mall.  
You haven't been to a mall until  
you've been to a mall in America.

LETHI

(Perking up)  
Really? Jess, I am like a the mall.  
Would you really take a me the  
mall. Oh, 'Erberto.

HERBERT

Sure. It's right there. See it.  
Look over there. Across the street.

LETHI

Pura vida! Es grandiose. Mui  
bonita!

HERBERT

I'll drop you off.

LETHI

What?

HERBERT

Sure. Drop you off. I'll pick you  
up in a couple hours, ok.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HERBERT (CONT'D)

But whatever you do, stay out of that store Neiman Marcus. Some of us call it Needless Mark-up. They charge far too much.

LETHI

No 'Erberto?

HERBERT

No, I don't like malls so much. But I'll watch Frederico for you. Just me and him. Like father and son.

LETHI

Really? Like a la fath-err and la son?

HERBERT

(Handing her some money)

Sure. Now, you get going ok. Say bye to Fred. Here's twenty dollars for you to spend any way you choose.

Lethi, still somewhat dazed by Herbert's presumed change of heart, exits the car. She opens the back door and kisses the now sleeping Frederico on the forehead. Herbert rolls down the front passenger window as she shuts the back door and steps onto the sidewalk outside of the store.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

A couple hours, ok? Right here.

LETHI

(Waving)

Ok, I am to see you later. Bye boys.

HERBERT

Bye.

Herbert drives off, leaving Lethi standing on the sidewalk. He enters traffic and picks up a compact cell-phone from the center area in the front of the car. After turning it on, he presses some buttons and waits.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Oh hello. Is this information? Great, thanks. Um, I wondering if you can tell me where one of those DNA labs is in the Detroit area.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Yeah, one of those. For DNA typing.  
Yes. Oh great. Thanks a lot...

CUT TO:

INT. LAKESIDE MALL - DAY

Lethi turns to go in, but she sees a public telephone in the foyer of the store. She reaches into her purse and pulls out the plastic calling card and heads over to the phone. Shoppers shuffle by carrying bags and holding the hands of their children. She finally gets to the phone and picks up the receiver. Looking down at the plastic card, she presses the phone's buttons and waits.

CUT TO:

INT. NORWIN MENESES' HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Norwin Meneses rests on a plush lounge-chair in his backyard. One can now see the house behind where he is resting. It is a grand mansion, like a medieval castle set in the dense jungle of Nicaragua. There is an elaborate pool in the backyard and Norwin's lounge-chair sits on its edge. One can see the reflection of he and the chair in the glass-like pool's water. There is a small table next to his chair. The cordless phone is resting on the table. A servant approaches with a platter full of fruit.

NOTE: This scene is again done in English subtitles as Spanish is spoken throughout.

NORWIN

(Picking up a piece of  
fruit)

Oh thank you, Carlos. You may bring  
me my lunch as well.

CARLOS

(Bowling honorably)

Of course. Right away, Sir.

NORWIN

Oh, and by the way.

CARLOS

Yes?

NORWIN

You're fired.

CARLOS

Sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORWIN

I'm sure a man like you can find better work than this. I'm doing you a favor, Carlos.

CARLOS

I see.

NORWIN

It's settled then. Bring me my lunch first. And then you may leave your uniform with the laundress. Have a good day.

CARLOS

(Trying to hide his frustration)

Thank you, Sir.

Carlos sets the plate of fruit on the table. He hesitates, and then continues on toward the house. Just then the phone rings.

NOTE: The phone conversation between Norwin and Lethi goes back and forth between both countries.

NORWIN

Hello?

LETHI

Poppa?

NORWIN

Sweetheart. I've missed you. How's my little girl?

LETHI

I'm sad.

NORWIN

What's wrong? Do you need Poppa to take care of someone for you? Is it that lousy sonofa-

LETHI

No! I'm just lonely. It's cold up here. I'm bored. And now I think all these people up here are crazy. I want to come home, Poppa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NORWIN

What? I go to great lengths to get you immunity from the American government so you can be up there without getting hassled and all you can say is that you're bored?

LETHI

But all my friends are down there. I'm missing a big fiesta tonight at Juliana's house.

NORWIN

Noriega's daughter? Is she your friend? That damn Noriega almost got us all arrested a few years ago. We're lucky to be still in operation.

LETHI

But, Poppa-

NORWIN

Young lady? I can call my contacts up there and have that Herbert guy taken down here forcefully.

LETHI

(Hastily)

No! No, Poppa. That won't be necessary. I showed him the plane tickets today already. I just need more time. That's all.

NORWIN

(Settling down)

Ok, sweetheart. You're my baby, you know that? My only child. My heart.

LETHI

Yes, Poppa.

NORWIN

Ok, then. You call me tomorrow and tell me about your progress.

LETHI

Ok, talk to you then.

NORWIN

Bye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LETHI

Bye.

Norwin sets the phone down as Carlos brings his lunch. When Carlos reaches Norwin, he sets the platter down on the table next to the fruit. Norwin looks straight ahead, under the shade of dark sunglasses. As Carlos turns to leave, Norwin puts his hand up in the air indicating for Carlos to stay for a moment.

NORWIN

Carlos?

CARLOS

Yes, Sir.

NORWIN

I changed my mind.

CARLOS

What?

NORWIN

You may stay. I rather enjoy your company.

CARLOS

(Looking elated)

Thank you, Sir. You will not regret it.

NORWIN

No? I hope not. But, you're on a short rope, Carlos. Just watch yourself.

CARLOS

Thank you, Sir.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S CAR - LATER THAT SAME DAY

Herbert pulls away from a building's parking lot. The sign says, Human Genetics Typing Lab. Herbert swerves to miss potholes. A rock and roll station plays on the radio. He doesn't seem to notice or care too much about Frederico in the back seat. Suddenly, Frederico get a sour look on his face. His facial expression soon turns to one of contentedness and relief. As Herbert drives, he begins to sniff the air in the car. A look of horror comes over his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HERBERT  
(Looking around the car)  
What the hell?

Herbert then presses the button to roll down the driver's side window.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
(Looking at Frederico through a mirror)  
You've got something terribly wrong with your insides, buddy. I mean, that's worse than some of the guys I know. Even after eating those White Castle burgers.

Frederico yawns and smiles. He then begins to look a bit uncomfortable.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
What's up, buddy? Don't you like the music?

Frederico then begins to cry. The car hits a pothole which causes him to cry even louder.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
Shhh. It's ok. Everything's fine.

Herbert turns off the radio.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
See, I turned off the radio for you. Hmm, that's not it.

Herbert realizes what Frederico's problem is.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
Ah ha! Of course. I better pull in somewhere.

Herbert stops right in front of a store, leaves the car running and quickly races in. The screen changes and he comes running back out with a bag of diapers. He speeds off again. Right down the street he sees a McDonald's restaurant and quickly pulls into the parking lot.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
Come on, buddy. We'll figure this thing out together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Herbert jumps out of the car.

CUT TO:

INT. LAKESIDE MALL - THE SAME DAY

Lethi walks in the mall and passes by Neiman Marcus looking aghast at all the items for sale. She stops and looks at the front doors and thinks. Looking at each display in amazement, she finally decides to enter the store. She wanders around in the midst of the clothes racks and displays. She is like a lost child in a huge candy store.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra and Dee Dee stand behind the makeup counter talking. The line of people generally ends up at the next counter space, as they do not tend to help much at theirs.

DEE DEE

Oh my god. Look at that guy. What's he wearing?

CASSANDRA

Obviously, he's from Mars. Or he's going there shortly. No one wears a jump suit unless they've travelled to Mars.

DEE DEE

(Laughing)

Maybe he's going to jump somewhere. I mean, it is a jump suit.

CASSANDRA

Right you are.

DEE DEE

Oh, look. He's checking out the lingerie. My god. He's touching those lace panties. That frickin' perv.

CASSANDRA

Aaah! I can't take it any more. Dee Dee, there's a crisis on our hands, and we have got to put an end to it.

DEE DEE

Right! What do we do about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSANDRA

I don't know. Maybe we should call security or something.

DEE DEE

Yeah, good idea. Here's the phone. You do it-

CASSANDRA

(Putting up her hands in protest)

Me? Why me? You're better at this sort of thing than me.

DEE DEE

What? This kind of thing? I've never even seen this kind of thing before.

CASSANDRA

Well neither have I. Oh no, look. He's leaving the store. We're missing our chance to catch a real live serial killer.

DEE DEE

Oh well. He's gone now. Freak.

CASSANDRA

A total freak. Oh no. What about that guy?

DEE DEE

(Pointing)

Which one? Over there?

CASSANDRA

No. Not that one. Look over there, by the perfume counter.

DEE DEE

The cute one? Right there?

CASSANDRA

Yeah. I wonder who he's buying that perfume for? Oh no! Don't pick that one, you moron. That stuff smells like kitty litter.

DEE DEE

Please tell me he didn't just pick what I think he did. Too bad.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEE DEE (CONT'D)

He was kinda cute. But cute wears out real quick when you're a cheap bastard.

CASSANDRA

(Giving Dee Dee a high five)

It sure does. Like Herbert-

DEE DEE

Oh no. You said you weren't going to talk about it, Cassy.

CASSANDRA

Right. You're absolutely right. It isn't any of my concern anymore. We're one hundred percent finished. No little piglets for me. Moving on. That's what I'm doing.

DEE DEE

Right. Good girl.

Lethi walks into view. She looks physically stunning. Her gorgeous Latino features stand out in the suburban mall. She moves slowly, with natural grace. She looks at the makeup display, sniffing various lotions and scents. Dee Dee and Cassandra cease talking for a minute when they see Lethi. Her beauty speaks for itself.

CASSANDRA

Who is that?

DEE DEE

(Staring at Lethi)

Huh?

CASSANDRA

That girl! Right there. Oh my god. She's walking toward us. Look at her, will ya? No makeup. No nothing.

DEE DEE

(Snapping out of it)

Yeah. There's got to be something bad about her. I don't know what it is, but there has to be.

CASSANDRA

Maybe she's an idiot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DEE DEE

Shhh. Here she comes. Shut up.

Lethi walks right in front of Cassandra and Dee Dee. She looks into the glass display. As she stoops down, she looks at the two girls and smiles warmly.

CASSANDRA

Hello. How are you today?

LETHI

(standing back upright)

Fine. Zank you.

Cassandra and Dee Dee look at each other when they hear Lethi's Hispanic accent. They look back at Lethi in almost perfect unison.

DEE DEE

Can we help you find anything?

LETHI

No. I don need nawtheen. Perro Zank you anyway.

DEE DEE

Umm. Where are you from? I mean, we don't see girls like you here very often.

CASSANDRA

Yeah, you've got that kind of unique thing going on. Kind of an exotic mysteriousness, you know.

LETHI

Well, gracias, Senoritas.

Cassandra and Dee Dee giggle.

CASSANDRA AND DEE DEE

Senoritas?

LETHI

(Also giggling)

Si. Young pretty ladies es Senoritas.

DEE DEE

Well, thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CASSANDRA

Where was it that you are from  
again?

LETHI

I es from Nicaragua. En la Centra  
America.

Cassandra grabs Dee Dee's hand forcefully and lets out a  
yelp.

DEE DEE

(Stiffening from the pain)  
Owe! What are you doing? Sorry,  
cutey. My friend must have  
swallowed lint or something.

CASSANDRA

(Still holding Dee Dee's  
hand)  
How long have you been in Detroit,  
exactly?

LETHI

Jess-terday. Why?

CASSANDRA

Do you happen to know anyone who  
lives here? Are you visiting anyone  
in particular?

DEE DEE

What are you talkin-?

CASSANDRA

(Squeezing Dee Dee's hand  
again)  
Shhh.

LETHI

Jess, I am to visit a boy here.

DEE DEE

I demand to know-

CASSANDRA

(Squeezing harder and  
saying under her breath  
to Dee Dee)  
Shut up, sister.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

LETHI

He the fath-err of me baby.

CASSANDRA

Is that right? Isn't that interesting? And what might this father's name be?

DEE DEE

(Under her breath to  
Cassandra)

Oh no.

CASSANDRA

(Under her breath)

Oh yes.

LETHI

(With pride)

His name es 'Erberto Wallace. La Dentista.

Dee Dee just about faints and Cassandra has to break her fall.

CASSANDRA

Well, it sure is nice to meet you. Just what did you say your name was again?

LETHI

Lethi. Le-ay-thee.

CASSANDRA

(Devilish grin)

How charming. Lethi. Hm. Well, maybe we can take a break and show you around the mall, or something.

DEE DEE

Yeah, sure. I think our break is up about now.

LETHI

(Excitedly)

Really? Mucho gusto, Senioritas.

CASSANDRA

Charming.

CUT TO:

INT. MCDONALD'S BATHROOM - SAME AFTERNOON.

Herbert has pulled down the baby-changing shelf and is busily opening the bag of diapers. Frederico is visibly uncomfortable as he sits in the baby carrier. A man hastily rinses off his hands in the sink.

MAN

Jesus! What do you feed that thing?  
It smells like spoiled seafood.

Herbert says nothing as the man bolts out of the bathroom door. A second man comes from the stall and looks at Herbert and the child. He suddenly grabs his nose and appears to be suffocating.

SECOND MAN

That there's as bad a diapa eva I  
smell one. Y'all catch a disease  
changing them thangs. Lordy lordy  
lord. I's outta here-

The second man bursts out through the door as well. Herbert looks at Frederico in horror.

HERBERT

What are you! How can one little  
thing smell this bad?

He places the child on the pullout-changing shelf. Frederico begins to kick his legs back and forth happily.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Alright. Let's just get this over  
with. Here's a button. And here's  
one. Let's get your arms out of  
this thing. Ok, now your legs.  
Good. Now, let's get that dirty  
diaper off of you and the hell out  
of here.

Herbert tries to take off the diaper, but he can't seem to get the child to settle down. His legs kick. His body twists.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Stay still, you little acrobat.  
Please, so we can all leave in  
peace. How do people do this?

Just then an elderly black gentleman walks into the bathroom. He turns to look at Herbert and Frederico. Laughing, he shakes his head in disgust.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN

No, no, no. Y'all got it all wrong, ya hear. Who eva heard a puttin' chirren on they belly to change a diapa. What you doin'?

HERBERT

Umm, well. I'm not so good at this. Sorry.

MAN

Oooweee! That smell almost gettin' to me. Shoot. I change so many diapa in my day it'd blow yo mind, young man.

HERBERT

Is that so?

MAN

Sho'nuff. Damn straight. Sho' as I be Zanzibar Nelson Lewis I can change a diapa betta than any man aroun' these parts.

HERBERT

That so?

ZANZIBAR

Y'all know it is. I be a great grampaw now. I even changin' my great granchirren diapa. Whoa!

HERBERT

Then you came into the right bathroom, Sir. Mr. Lewis, Sir.

ZANZIBAR

Nobody be callin' me all formal like Mr. Lewis and all. Everyone call me Zanzi. Fo' short.

HERBERT

Zanzi it is. It's a pleasure to meet you. Do you mind giving me a hand at this. I mean, since you know the technique in depth. Maybe you can impart a few tricks to me. What do you say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZANZIBAR

(Walking over to them)

Sho'nuff. Firss things firss, y'all got the child all wrong on the table. He look like a pretzel all curl up and shee.

Zanzibar turns the child over on his back and removes the diaper with ease.

ZANZIBAR (CONT'D)

See, look how it done. Real simpa. Now, all that crap gotta be whipe up. That part aint even too bad after thousan' times.

HERBERT

I bet.

ZANZIBAR

(Noticing a small Band-Aid on the child's arm)

Hey, what this Band-Aid doin' here?

HERBERT

What? Oh, that's from his shots. Um, we're just coming from the doctor's.

ZANZIBAR

(Continuing with the diaper task)

It kinda look like they take a blood test or somethin'.

HERBERT

No, no. Just his shots. You know.

ZANZIBAR

Awright. Ok, kid. Now we puttin' on da new diapa. You go 'head. Try it?

HERBERT

What?

ZANZIBAR

It real simpa. Juss put that down firss. Right. Then put that lil' boy down. Right. Hey man, you aint da worse I seen at this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HERBERT

Thanks a lot.

ZANZIBAR

Now finish it off with them there.  
Right. And yo' done. Sho'nuff.  
Whoa!

Herbert and Zanzibar pause for a few seconds admiring the newly diapered Frederico.

HERBERT

Hmm, he looks satisfied.

ZANZIBAR

(Walking to the urinal)  
Sho'. Ya'll outta be proud a  
yo'self. But if you'll excuse me, I  
gotta attend to the reason I comes  
in here in da firss place.

HERBERT

Of course. Let me give you some  
privacy. Thank you so much, Zanzi.  
I really appreciate your help. Take  
care.

ZANZIBAR

Ok. Whoa!

Herbert loads Frederico in the carrier and picks up the bag of diapers.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S CAR - DRIVING - MINUTES LATER

Inside the car, Herbert has the radio turned on again as Frederico sleeps in the back. Herbert takes the usual pothole-ridden street now with seeming ease. He begins to whistle. Suddenly, his cell-phone rings. He turns down the volume on the stereo and plugs a wire from the phone into a small speaker on the dash. We can hear the ensuing conversation through the speakerphone.

HERBERT

Hello?

MAN'S VOICE

Hey, buddy. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Introduce the voice of Herbert's dental colleague and friend GABRIEL.

HERBERT  
Gabe! You have no idea.

GABRIEL  
I don't? What d'ya mean? What's going on?

HERBERT  
Well, for one thing. Cassandra left me.

GABRIEL  
Well, sorry about that. But that might be a blessing in disguise. She had some growing up to do. so... she's single now, eh?

HERBERT  
What?

GABRIEL  
Ha! Just kiddin'.

HERBERT  
Well, that's not very funny.

GABRIEL  
Ok, sorry. I just never really thought she was right for you. That's all.

The reception from the cell-phone becomes poor for a second. Herbert taps on the speaker several times with his finger.

HERBERT  
Gabe! Ya there? Hey?

The reception improves.

GABRIEL  
Yeah, yeah. I'm on my cell-phone too.

HERBERT  
Right. Anyway, the craziest thing happened yesterday. You'll never even frickin' believe it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GABRIEL

I won't? Hmm, how about your dad's going to run for State Senate? Ha! Now that would be crazy.

HERBERT

Shut up, man. Leave my parents out of it. Do you remember that chick I picked up when we were in Costa Rica?

GABRIEL

On the coast or in San Jose?

HERBERT

Dammit! I didn't pick up anybody on the coast.

GABRIEL

Oh yeah, that was me. Sorry.

HERBERT

Will you be serious for a minute? Anyway, apparently she was younger than I thought.

GABRIEL

So what.

HERBERT

And, she wasn't from Costa Rica at all. She was just visiting on some sort of Latino holiday or something.

GABRIEL

It's called spring break. We have a similar thing up here in the States. We call it spring break. But why does it matter where she's from?

HERBERT

Because she was from Nicaragua and now she's here.

GABRIEL

Here? What do you mean?

HERBERT

Here! In Detroit. Right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GABRIEL

Cool. Is she still hot?

HERBERT

Well, that all depends on whether you would be attracted to her... and her kid!

A scream bursts from the speaker. Herbert steadies the car. We see Lakeside Mall in the near distance.

GABRIEL

Kid? Her kid? Your kid?

HERBERT

Yeah, and now she wants me to visit Nicaragua with her or something. I don't know what the hell is going on anymore. My fiance leaves me and all hell breaks loose.

GABRIEL

Relax, buddy. Now let's think about this rationally. First thing is? Is that Latino chick still hot?

HERBERT

What? What does that have to do with it?

GABRIEL

It just does! Now answer the question. Is she hot?

HERBERT

(Difficult to say)  
Yes. Totally hot.

GABRIEL

Well, then there's your answer.

HERBERT

What answer?

GABRIEL

Think about it. You broke up with Cassandra. You're single now. A hot Hispanic chick travelled four thousand miles to see you. Put two and two together, dude.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HERBERT

You're an idiot. I gotta go. I'm picking her up from the mall.

GABRIEL

Call me later to tell me how it's going, ok?

HERBERT

Right. Later.

Herbert presses a button on the phone and hangs up.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

(Under his breath)

What an idiot.

He turns into the parking lot of the mall.

EXT. THE MALL - CONTINUOUS

Busy sidewalk. People walk around everywhere with bags and children. The large glass doors of The Mall are opening and closing as people pass through not acknowledging each other. We then see Lethi walk out of the store looking dejected and forlorn. Her hair is spiked straight up in sections. It is colored in three or four different colours. Her face is covered in bright makeup. Her clothes have changed to a very homely dress which does not compliment her at all. Herbert's BMW pulls up to the curb right next to where she is standing. He rolls down the passenger window and turns his head to look at her. When she sees Herbert she begins to cry.

HERBERT

Oh my god.

LETHI

(Stamping her foot on the ground)

I am hate la America. And I am hate Detroit! You people's loco. Mira, look at me? I look mui malo.

HERBERT

What happened?

LETHI

(Opening the passenger door)

I thought they are nice. They are look like nice Senoritas.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LETHI (CONT'D)

I am wanna go home. I no like it here no more.

HERBERT

You want to go back to Nicaragua? Really?

LETHI

Si! I am wanna go home!

INT./EXT. CAR - CONTINUED

Lethi pulls the passenger door shut and slumps down in the chair as if trying to hide.

HERBERT

Where are the clothes you were wearing?

LETHI

(Crying even harder)

I don' know- I juss leeve. The people they are mean here. Mira, I know nawtheen. Nawtheen.

Lethi then turns her head around to the backseat and looks at Frederico. He is still sleeping comfortably. Herbert drives out of the parking lot back into traffic.

HERBERT

I changed his diapers.

LETHI

(Sniffling)

Como? La diaper? He will juss do it again. Otra ves. Mucho poopoo that boy.

HERBERT

So, you want to go home, eh?

LETHI

Si.

HERBERT

(Picking up his cell phone)

Let's see when the next flight takes off back to Nicaragua.

Pressing some buttons, Herbert takes his eye off the road for an instant. The car hits a major pothole which causes them to sink and come to a complete stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The car sits half in a large hole and half on the street. He is unable to get it to move. Frederico begins to wail in the backseat. Lethi begins to wail in the front seat. Herbert looks at his face in the rear-view mirror for a moment. He bows his head in complete disbelief.

HERBERT (CONT'D)  
 (Saying to himself)  
 Mui Malo-

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S PARENT'S HOUSE - EVENING

Oren lays on the living room coach watching TV. He rests on his stomach with a large warm compress on his low back. Jeopardy is on the TV.

OREN  
 Daft! That's juss what they are,  
 Ma. Daft!

POLLY'S VOICE  
 (From the kitchen)  
 Huh? I caint here ya talkin' so  
 low. Juss hold yo' horses. I be  
 there in a jiff.

OREN  
 (Talking in a calmer tone)  
 Hey, this southen' joe juss may  
 have a chance at this game. Hmmm.  
 All he need is get this one right.  
 Good. Oh, he pretty darn good.

He presses a button on the remote and the screen pauses.

OREN (CONT'D)  
 I'm so glad this here VCR timer set  
 while them doctor pokin' n'  
 proddin' at me. But the suspense  
 getting' to much fer me.

Polly walks into the living room with an ice pack.

POLLY  
 Them smart doctor say to alt'nate  
 warm with the ice every half-hour.  
 Yo' back gonna be good as new real  
 soon, babe. Here, let me put this  
 on. Be a good boy now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OREN

What? You gonna assault me too? I thought I already put in my time with them quacks? Now you gotta carry on they voodoo torture?

POLLY

(Placing down the pack)  
Juss lay still, babe. Momma gonna fix you up.

OREN

Help! Don't molest me. Next thing you gonna be pokin' them needles in me like them hospital peoples.

POLLY

You was in pain, honey. That was juss the pain killer medicine they give you. Don't be silly.

OREN

Oh ok. I'll take some a that good bean and barley soup we got stewin' away on the stove. Um, that smell good, eh?

Polly turns around to go back to the kitchen.

POLLY

I'll get you your pain pill too. And a vitamin. You know how people always sayin' take yo' vitamins. Now you got reason, babe. Now you sickly.

Oren presses a button on the remote control and Jeopardy resumes playing on the TV.

OREN

(Agreeable)  
Good, Southen' man. Y'all getting' it. Oh no! Not that! Don't pick New York streets for 400. Oh well, let's see how y'all do with it.

Oren watches intently.

OREN (CONT'D)

Oh my god! What is Bleeker Street? No Southen' boy know nothin' about no New York. Gracious.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OREN (CONT'D)

We southeners smart peoples. He muss been one a them California transplants or somethin'.

As Polly walks back into the living room with a bowl of bean and barley soup in her hands, the front door opens and Lethi walks in carrying Frederico. We see a taxicab drive off from the curbside. She's dressed as before. She has a look of sadness on her face.

POLLY

(Setting the soup down)  
Sweetheart! What happen'?

Lethi sets the carrier down on the floor and bursts into tears. Polly quickly runs over and hugs her.

POLLY (CONT'D)

Now dear, you juss come on in and let me take care a you. Poor little thing. Did our boy treat you bad? Huh, did he? That boy don' know how ta treat a lady. That's what I'm always tellin' his Pa. I says, that boy don' know how ta treat a lady. Right Pa? Don't I always say that?

OREN

(Craning his neck from the couch)  
My god! You been ransackled. Call the Detroit police squad. Poor girl been ransackled.

POLLY

(Taking Lethi by the hand)  
Let's juss get you a nice showa' and a change a clothes. Aint no police needin' ta waste time on this. She juss be treated poorly. That's all. Oh, poor little thing.

OREN

(As Polly leads Lethi upstairs by the hand)  
What about my soup? Where'd you put it? My soup!

POLLY

(Continuing upstairs)  
Oren, you gotta wait. We got a 'mergency on our hands here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

POLLY (CONT'D)

Yo' soup safe on the hall table for  
a spell.

With that, Polly and Lethi disappear upstairs. Oren, resting upon his belly on the couch, lifts his head and sniffs the air. The aroma of the soup sifts joyfully through his nostrils.

He presses pause on the remote control again and tries to hoist himself off of the couch with his large hands. A look of shear pain comes over his face, and yet he continues to get off the couch.

With great effort, he rises to his feet and grips his low back with one of his paws. He begins to walk, hunched over like a very old man. After a few steps he sees the soup on the table in the hall.

His face perks up as his tongue begins to slide over his lips in preparation for a well-deserved and delicious meal. The soup almost within arm's length, he suddenly trips on an uneven edge of the carpet and falls down again. He strikes the floor with an awful thud and lets out a gasping volume of stale breath.

OREN

Aaah! Help! My back!

He manages to roll over onto his side. Tears stream down his face. He is in a position where he can look up the stairs at where Polly had left moments ago with Lethi. The shower is so loud she presumably cannot hear his screams.

He turns his head to see Frederico who sits in his carrier looking at him at eye-level. He can also see the soup bowl on the table so close but so far away. His eyes dart back and forth between the stairs, Frederico, and the soup bowl.

CUT TO:

INT. NICARAGUA - NORWIN MENESES' HOUSE - EVENING

The screen is totally white. There is a HISSING sound in the background. Soon, we see that the whiteness is steam which has filled up a steam room, specifically it is a eucalyptus steam room in Norwin's marble covered master bathroom. Through the mist we can see the outline of Norwin Meneses stretched out on his back on a marble bench. A white towel covers his groin area and another one rests over his face. The sound of classical music seeps out of hidden speakers. Norwin is snoring. The steam room door opens. Carlos looks through the mist for Norwin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOTE: Once again, this scene is Spanish speaking with English subtitles.

CARLOS  
Senior? Mister Meneses? Are you there?

NORWIN  
(Waking from a deep sleep)  
Huh? Who's there?

CARLOS  
It's me. Carlos.

NORWIN  
You're fired!

CARLOS  
(Shocked)  
What?

NORWIN  
I was sleeping. I was dreaming about overtaking Manuel Noriega's operation. I was just getting to the part where he bows to clean my shoes when you barged in!

CARLOS  
But your daughter is on the phone. She's calling from America. And she's crying.

NORWIN  
(Sitting up right away)  
Well, why didn't you say that in the first place? You can keep your despicable job this time. But watch yourself, Carlos. Where's the phone?

CARLOS  
(Handing over the phone)  
Here you go.

NORWIN  
Thanks. Now shut that door before all the steam gets out.

Carlos quickly shuts the door and we hear his footsteps speed away on the marble floor. Norwin places the phone to his ear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NOTE: The scene goes back and forth between Norwin and Lethi. Lethi is wrapped in a small towel, probably just out from the shower. Her long hair and her body are dripping wet. She sits restlessly on the bed in the room above the Wallace's garage.

NORWIN (CONT'D)

My little girl? What's wrong?

LETHI

Poppa? I wanna come home. I hate this place. These people up here are crazy.

NORWIN

What happened? Are you ok?

LETHI

(Whining)

Just get me home, Poppa. Now!

NORWIN

Is that lousy sonofa- coming with you?

LETHI

No. I don't think so. I don't know.

NORWIN

(Standing up, his towels  
fall to the ground)

Alright then. It's on to plan B. Honey, you just stay there. Don't worry about a thing. Poppa's going to take care of everything. I'll have some men come get you and bring you home in the morning.

LETHI

No. Tonight.

NORWIN

Why don't you get a good night's sleep. Take a taxi in the morning before anyone wakes up. My men will meet you at the airport. Got it?

LETHI

(Sniffling)

Yeah, I guess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NORWIN

You guess? I need better confirmation from you than that. Repeat it to me.

LETHI

(Rubbing her legs together under the towel)

Ok. I get a good sleep tonight. In the morning before anyone get's up, I take a taxi to the airport. But how are they going to know where I'll be?

NORWIN

Oh, don't worry about that, sweetheart. They'll know.

LETHI

Ok, Poppa. Thank you. See you tomorrow, right?

NORWIN

See you tomorrow.

Norwin presses a button on the phone. He looks upset as he pushes open the steam room door. He walks through the bathroom into the master bedroom. He then presses some buttons on the phone. While awaiting a response he begins to put on some clothes.

NOTE: This conversation is between Norwin Meneses and the director of the U.S. Central Intelligence, GEORGE J. TENET. Mr. Meneses speaks excellent English. The scene flips between Mr. Meneses in his bedroom and Mr. Tenet. Since it is evening, Mr. Tenet is at his home watching TV with his children.

MR. TENET

(Picking up a cordless phone)

Hello. George Tenet here.

NORWIN

George, old boy. Sorry to bother you so late.

MR. TENET

(Whispering into the phone)

Norwin! You're not supposed to call me here. What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Mr. Tenet's children look at him while he talks. Mr. Tenet then leaves the TV room and walks toward the back of the house to his office. He flips on the light and sits down behind his desk.

NORWIN

I need a favor.

MR. TENET

Dammit, Norwin! I just gave you one a few days ago. Didn't your daughter get through the border as I promised?

NORWIN

Yes, yes. That all went as planned. No problem.

MR. TENET

(Sounding desperate)

Than what else could possibly be going on?

NORWIN

(Putting on pants)

I need to send up some of my men.

MR. TENET

Oh no! I can't grant them immunity to pass the border. Houston can't turn their heads while a group of Nicaraguan thugs pass customs! It just isn't feasible.

NORWIN

George, slow down. Remember now. Who was there when you needed money to fund the Contras? I was. Who was there when you wanted to oust the Sandanistas? I was. Who was there when you needed a scapegoat for the press? I gave you Mr. Blandon. Now, Georgey. We have history. You scratch my back, I scratch yours. Isn't that how it goes?

MR. TENET

(Sweating)

Yeah, I guess that's how it goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

NORWIN

Alright then. George, you're a good man. You're a good father to your kids and husband to your wife. I know you are.

MR. TENET

Sure I am.

NORWIN

Well then you know how much a father can love his daughter. I only want the best for her. Let's work together on this. You and I. Okay?

MR. TENET

Okay. What do you need me to do?

NORWIN

Just a few phone calls. That's all.

CUT TO:

INT. DETROIT - THE SOUP KITCHEN TAVERN - EVENING

The Soup Kitchen is an old town Detroit tavern. It's a smokey dimly-lit local's bar. Although it is Saturday night, it is rather sparsely populated with tavern-goers. Herbert sits at a wooden booth with his dental colleague and friend GABRIEL. They sit across from each other on either side of a table. Each guy occasionally takes a drink from frosty pints of dark beer.

HERBERT

Hey, thanks for picking me up from the auto shop.

GABRIEL

No problem. There's no way you would have been able to drive that thing. I hope you got some good insurance, buddy.

HERBERT

What the hell am I going to do for a week without a car? I can't rely on you to get me everywhere.

GABRIEL

Rent a car. Get one of those hummers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

That'll handle these roads.  
Especially the way you drive.

HERBERT

Thanks.

GABRIEL

(Laughing)

Oh hey, I got a better idea. Why don't you have your mother drive you around. Or your father for that matter. Does he even drive?

HERBERT

Shut up, man. My dad's been in the emergency room twice already today. They decided to keep him the second time. So he and my mom are staying there tonight.

GABRIEL

(Chugging the beer)

I bet those doctors have rarely seen a specimen like him. Man, your dad's hilarious. He totally cracks me up.

HERBERT

Thanks a lot.

GABRIEL

But what really pisses me off is that you sent that Latin chick off in a taxi, of all things, before I could even check her out. Damn you, Herb. You're a real pal. Ya know that?

HERBERT

(Setting down his mug)

Well, sorry. But I couldn't take her constant whining any longer.

GABRIEL

Hey, buddy. I can take a fair amount of whining if it's got a nice ass.

HERBERT

Hmm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GABRIEL

Seriously. Damn, you gotta check your head sometimes. I don't know where the hell you're coming from.

A waitress approaches the table. She has a general air of nonchalance about her. She bends at the hip, slaps her hands down on the edge of the table and looks right at them.

WAITRESS

(Chewing gum)

I'm gonna cut you guys off. You're makin' a real scene over here.

GABRIEL AND HERBERT

(Looking at each other)

Huh?

WAITRESS

(Standing up, chuckling)

Just kidding. I'm actually concerned that you guys aren't drinking enough. So what'll it be?

GABRIEL

(Holding his nose)

You mean, other than a breath mint? We'll have a couple more beers I guess.

WAITRESS

(Looking at Gabriel intensely)

Very funny. I'm watching you.

The waitress leaves the table. Gabriel laughs.

HERBERT

You're going to get yourself killed someday. What a smartass.

GABRIEL

Oh well. Better to be a smartass than a dumbass.

HERBERT

That's profound. You never cease to impress me with your intellect, Gabe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GABRIEL

It's just my nature. Naturally profound. Speaking of profundity? What profound thoughts do you have on the Latino dilemma? I mean, where do you go from here? The way I see it, you have to sleep with her and then put her on a plane. If you're in a real jam you can just put her on the plane, but it sure would be a shame to miss the sleeping with her part.

HERBERT

Is that all you think about?

Gabriel pauses. The waitress sets down two more beers while looking at Gabriel out of the corner of her eye. As she leaves the table, Gabriel takes a long swig of beer and puts the mug back down. Still considering the question, he rubs his chin in thought for a few seconds. Finally, he looks directly at Herbert.

GABRIEL

(Gravely)

Yes. That's all I think about.

HERBERT

Lord-

GABRIEL

Seriously though. You should feel sorry for me. Can you imagine how hard it was for me to get through dental school? Virtually impossible.

HERBERT

(Looking at his  
wristwatch)

Hmm. Let's drink these up and get outta here. I need to get some rest tonight so I can deal with the Latino dilemma in the morning.

GABRIEL

Gladly.

They take long drinks from their mugs and set them down empty. Herbert lays a 20-dollar bill on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HERBERT

I owe you one for driving me around tonight.

GABRIEL

Thanks.

Standing up to go, Gabriel spots the waitress in the distance. They walk out of the tavern door.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I think that waitress kinda liked me.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Herbert enters the loft apartment. Through the east window Gabriel's car pulls away. Herbert goes directly to the bedroom appearing very tired. He flops down on his bed, clothes and all, and grunts. He falls fast asleep.

INT. APARTMENT - ABOUT 2 HOURS LATER

As Herbert rests on the bed sleeping, we see a close-up of the front door's inside doorknob. The doorknob begins to jiggle and twist as if someone is tinkering with it from the other side.

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A group of three men stand in the dark. Each man carries a holster with a couple guns around their shoulders. They are huddled around the door. One man is trying to pick the lock with a metallic instrument. He is not having any luck with the technique. They are the Nicaraguan thugs referred to earlier by Mr. George J. Tenet.

THUG 1

(Whispering)

Mira, What's wrong?

THUG 2

(Whispering)

No se. It's not right.

THUG 1

(Still whispering)

Gimnee that thing, Alberto!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Thug 1 reaches over and grabs the metallic instrument from Thug 2(Alberto). Thug 1 inserts it into the lock and twists.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

We see Herbert laying on the bed as the sound becomes louder. He begins to move and then he awakens in the dark. He sits up and rubs his eyes. As before, he is still dressed in his street clothes. He finally realizes that the sound is for real and he cocks his head to the side as if to listen more effectively.

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Thug 1 doesn't seem to be having much luck either at picking the lock. Thug 3 elbows 1 in the side and takes the instrument.

THUG 3  
(Whispering)  
Francisco? Tu es stupido. Watch a  
me try.

He places the instrument in the lock.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Herbert stands up in the dark and tiptoes over to the door. It is obvious to him at that point that someone is trying to break in to his apartment.

He softly walks to the hall table to presumably get his car keys. But his keys are with his car at the shop.

HERBERT  
(Very low whisper.  
Clenching his fist.)  
Damn-

As the door handle jiggles and twists, Herbert softly runs over to the south window. Downtown Detroit looms in the distance.

He very quietly opens the window. And looks down one story to the ground: grass.

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Thug 3 is finally successful at picking the lock. He looks at Francisco and Alberto and grins. His teeth are god-awful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Looking back at the door, he ceremoniously twists the doorknob and the door opens slightly.

Francisco takes a spray bottle from his pack and gives a quick spritz to each door hinge.

Thug 3 slowly opens the squeakless door as the inside of Herbert's apartment comes into view.

The three men arm themselves with guns and slowly creep inside.

The camera shows the south window, which is now closed. Herbert is nowhere to be seen. The apartment is empty.

The three thugs look around the one bedroom loft apartment in silence. Alberto stands next to the south window, his rifle pointing upward.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SOUTH WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Herbert stands on a small ledge by the wall next to the window. We hear the sound of his quick breathing.

He looks into the apartment via the window and Alberto is right there. Luckily, their eyes don't meet. Herbert moves back from the window right away and hugs the wall even more frantically.

He looks at the walls for a possible way down. There is none. He looks at the ground, which is only a one-story drop.

He sits down on the ledge and twists his buttocks off while holding onto the ledge with his fingers. His body hangs like that for a few seconds.

He lets go and drops to the grass below rolling over onto his back. This makes a "thud".

INT. INSIDE THE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

As the three thugs look around the apartment, they hear a "thud". Alberto looks out the south window and sees Herbert who has just jumped.

ALBERTO  
(Motioning with his rifle)  
Hey! Aqui! Aqui!

The other two thugs run over to the south window to look for themselves.

EXT. ON THE GRASS - CONTINUOUS

Herbert hears Alberto yelling and, while laying on his back, looks up one floor to the south window. He sees all three men look directly at him. They are all pointing excitedly.

Suddenly, they are gone from the window.

Herbert grunts and gets to his feet.

HERBERT  
(Frantic)  
Holy shit!

He takes off running toward the city lights. The Detroit river is on his left side as he runs.

The streets are empty. He decides to run down a path next to the river toward the downtown area.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The three thugs burst out of the main apartment door onto the sidewalk. Francisco takes off running after Herbert. The other two thugs jump in a van nearby. The engine rumbles to life and the headlights come on.

The tires screech as the van pulls out.

EXT. PATH NEXT TO RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Close-up of Herbert's face perspiring and grimacing as he runs for dear life.

EXT. PATH NEXT TO RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Herbert runs toward a dog which is resting on the path ahead. The dog awakens as Herbert runs past. The dog's ears stand up and its tail happily wags.

The dog playfully begins to run by Herbert's side.

Herbert looks at the dog with a very frightened look.

HERBERT  
(Out of breath)  
No! Get the hell outta here! What'r  
you doin'?

The dog begins to bark playfully.

EXT. ON THE GRASS - CONTINUOUS

Alberto runs over the grass toward the river path. He carries his rifle in his hands next to his body.

We hear the sound of a dog barking in the distance.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The van speeds through a turn and straightens its course. The velocity picks up.

EXT. PATH - CONTINUOUS

Herbert reaches the beginning of downtown. The buildings rise in front of him. The path ends but continues on as a sidewalk, which is flanked by an empty street to the right and a huge office building to the left.

The dog stops its barking and turns back around. It walks back to the path from where it had come.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The van turns several times but eventually ends up on the same street that Herbert was on moments earlier. It slows down it's speed as if to scour the area.

EXT. PATH - CONTINUOUS

Alberto runs toward the end of the path. The dog stands in the way wagging its tail wildly.

Alberto runs to where the dog is standing and the dog playfully jumps onto him with its front paws pressing against his torso.

ALBERTO  
Dammit! Loco Perro!

Alberto violently kicks the dog asunder with a booted foot. The dog lands about 10 feet away.

As the dog gets back up, Alberto points his rifle at it and pops off three rounds straight into the canine. The force of the bullets knock the dog back several feet as it comes to rest in a heap of fur.

Alberto takes a breath. We see his awful teeth again as he smiles wickedly.

He turns around and continues running toward town.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Herbert sees the van coming and ducks through an alleyway between two buildings. As he runs down the alley, suddenly bullets rip through concrete next to his feet.

He darts to the right where there is another path between the buildings. He escapes down the path.

He pulls out his cell phone from a pocket and turns it on. He presses buttons while continuing running.

HERBERT  
(Out of breath and  
whispering)  
Gabe! Wake up!

INT. GABRIEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gabriel is in bed holding the telephone to his ear. There is a woman in bed with him. She is moaning with pleasure.

GABRIEL  
(Perspiring)  
Herb? What the hell?

EXT. HERBERT - CONTINUOUS

HERBERT  
Thank god you're there!

INT. GABRIEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GABRIEL  
(Panting)  
Bad timing, dude.

EXT. HERBERT - CONTINUOUS

HERBERT  
What're you doing?

INT. GABRIEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GABRIEL  
(More relaxed)  
Getting' laid, dude. I went back to  
that bar and picked up on the  
waitress. She's so hot. Yahooo!  
What're you doing?

EXT. HERBERT - CONTINUOUS

HERBERT  
I'm being chased by the Nicaraguan  
militia! Help!

INT. GABRIEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GABRIEL  
(Squeezing breasts.  
Preoccupied)  
Don't be silly. Hey, I gotta go.  
I'll call ya tomorrow, okay?

EXT. NEW PATH BETWEEN BUILDINGS - CONTINUOUS

Herbert hears a "click" as the phone disconnects. He continues running. We see a sign that says "Tunnel to Canada".

HERBERT  
Yes!

EXT. OPENING TO TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

This is a view of the opening of the tunnel, which dives down along the bottom of the Detroit river.

Herbert comes into view as he runs toward the opening. He runs down the street which courses into the tunnel.

He runs into the tunnel and is lost into its dimly lighted vault.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Alberto stops running as he sees the van pull up to him. The van's side door opens and he hops inside.

INT. INSIDE THE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Francisco is at the wheel. A lighted cigarette hangs loosely in his lips.

Thug 3 sits in the passenger seat.

THUG 3  
(Turning to the backseat)  
Well? Where eez he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBERTO

I don' know. We es lost him, I zink.

THUG 3

Damn! Meneses will be veddy mad!

FRANCISCO

(Pointing straight ahead)  
Hey! Mira, Look!

INT. VIEW OUT THE VAN'S WINDSHIELD - CONTINUOUS

We see a sign from the street that says "Tunnel to Canada".

INT. INSIDE THE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Francisco takes a forceful drag from his cigarette as smoke drifts around his face.

THUG 3

(Motioning toward the tunnel)  
Do you think?

ALBERTO

No se.

FRANCISCO

Si! He's in there! I can sense eet!

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The van screeches to life as it heads toward the tunnel.

INT. INSIDE THE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

We hear the sound of the van's tires squealing. Herbert tries to run even faster. The expression on his face becomes one of utter urgency.

His eyes widen as we see the opening of the tunnel on the Canadian side. He runs toward the opening.

EXT. VIEW BACK INTO THE TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The van speeds through the tunnel toward Herbert, who is almost out on the other side.

A window opens on the front passenger side and a rifle pokes out. Thug 3 pops off a few shots in Herbert's general vicinity.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bullets rip into the tunnel's tiled walls on either side of Herbert as he runs along.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TUNNEL - CANADIAN SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Herbert comes bounding out and runs toward the border patrol stations.

The van does not follow to the border patrol. Instead, it sits waiting just inside the tunnel.

Herbert pants and perspires heavily as the border patrol window opens. A heavysset gentleman in uniform leans out of the window and looks at Herbert for a few seconds. He is chewing on something and sniffing frequently as if fighting a head cold.

MAN

Where ya from?

HERBERT

(Out of breath)

U.S.

MAN

Where ya going?

HERBERT

Windsor.

MAN

(looking at Herbert more seriously)

How long ya staying?

HERBERT

Couple days.

MAN

Where's yer car, eh?

HERBERT

(beat)

Don't own one.

MAN

Why ya sweating?

HERBERT

(Finally catching his breath)

I jogged here from the city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN

(Biting off a piece of  
candybar)

Hmmm. Why?

HERBERT

Ya know. Trying to get into shape.  
Training for the Boston Marathon.

MAN

(Blowing his nose on  
tissue)

That comin' up already?

HERBERT

Sure it is. Gonna be tough, ya  
know.

MAN

Right. Well, have a nice stay in  
Canada. Got any perishables with  
ya?

HERBERT

No.

MAN

(Closing the window)

Ok. Take care.

Herbert quickly walks through the border gate and stops. He turns around and looks back in the tunnel. He can barely see the van as it swings around and heads away back into Detroit.

EXT. WINDSOR, ONTARIO, CANADA - MORNING

We see a crowded corner in the main business district of Windsor. We see a coffee shop called the Java Jungle. The shop window says "Java Jungle. Because it's a jungle out there."

We follow a customer through the door into the café. As the person walks up to the counter, we swings to the left where we see Herbert sitting by a wall with a cup of coffee in his hands.

Herbert looks tired. He sets the cup down onto the table and rubs his eyes. He then looks at his wristwatch for a second. He has a very short and unkempt early beard starting to grow on his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He reaches into his pocket and removes his cell phone. He presses some buttons and pauses as he brings it to his ear.

HERBERT

(In a tired, hoarse voice)

Raoul. Hey. I- I'm in Canada. Yeah, that's right. Canada... Well, you'd barely believe me if I told you. Suffice it to say, I'm safe... Yeah, there was some danger involved. Once again, you wouldn't believe me.

Herbert takes a sip of his coffee.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

I just wanted to let you know that I'm not going to be able to make it to the office today... I don't know. Why don't you just call the patients and reschedule them? Yeah, all the patients... I suppose they might not be enamoured with the inconvenience, you're right... But, would you do that for me? Thanks, Raoul. Hey? Come to think of it, I'm not sure when I'm going to be able to make it back there.

We hear Raoul's voice increase in volume from the cell phone receiver's little speaker. Herbert holds it away from his ear for a moment. He looks at the L.E.D. display on the phone.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Hey, this phone's batteries are almost out. I gotta go.

We hear Raoul continue as Herbert holds the phone from his ear again.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Sorry, buddy. I gotta go... I'll talk to you soon, ok? Ok then, bye.

Herbert presses a button and we hear Raoul's voice sharply get cut off.

Herbert looks at the display on the phone one more time.

INT. CELL PHONE DISPLAY - CONTINUOUS

The L.E.D. display shows two meters. One is for the reception, which is all the way up. The other side shows battery power, which is all the way down to the bottom and the word "batt" is blinking.

INT. CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

Herbert's phone, which rests in his hand, spontaneously rings. He gets an inquisitive look on his face and presses a button. He holds it up to his ear.

HERBERT

Hello? Mom? No, no. I'm fine.  
Really, I'm fine... The police?  
Well, they probably won't find me  
because I'm up in Canada.

We hear her voice through the receiver. The phone begins to beep continuously, as if running low on battery power.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

Make it quick mom, the batteries  
are running out... Oh, she is?  
Lethi's gone? A note? Back in  
Nicaragua for good? Won't bother us  
anymore? Good! She left Freddy? Oh  
well... Dinner tonight? Cream of  
what?

The phone makes one last beeping sound and completely cuts out. Herbert looks at the display and frowns. He places the phone back in his pocket and sips the last portion of his coffee.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

(Looking up to the  
ceiling)  
They're gone.  
(beat)  
I'm free!

People in the café try to ignore him. Herbert gets up out of the chair and heads for the door. While quickly walking through the café, he joyfully raises his hands in the air.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

I love Canada. I love you people.  
I'm free! Thank you all so much for  
simply being here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he pushes open the door to leave, an elderly man struggles through the door's threshold with a cane. Herbert removes the man's beret-hat revealing a mostly bald scalp. Herbert grasps the scalp with both hands and brings it to his lips. He kisses the scalp with a loud SMACK.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

(Jubilantly)

Thank you, old bald-headed Canadian fellow.

The elderly man has a totally confused look on his face. Herbert replaces the hat and leaves. We see the last of Herbert jogging down the street happily as people stop and stare.

As if nothing strange happened, the elderly man walks the rest of the way through the door. He struggles with the cane to the counter and orders coffee in French.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S LOFT APARTMENT - LATER THAT SAME MORNING

Herbert enters the apartment, the sound of a taxicab leaving in the distance. The front door is slightly ajar. He looks at the doorknob, which has scratch marks all over it.

He cautiously walks through the room to the answering machine. The light blinks indicating phone messages. Herbert reaches down by the floorboards and pulls the plug. The answering machine's blinking light turns off.

He walks to his room and begins to remove his clothes.

INT. APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

Herbert gets out of the bathroom after having taken a shower. A towel is wrapped around his waist. He shaves.

INT. APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

Herbert sits on the bed tying his shoelaces.

A knock comes at his door. Herbert suddenly stiffens up and looks toward the door. He looks around the room for a possible escape. He walks into the front room of the apartment and looks toward the south window.

The knock continues. He looks toward the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE BEHIND DOOR  
Doctor Wallace? Anyone home?  
Federal Express here. I have a  
confidential letter for a Doctor  
Wallace.

Herbert walks over to the door and looks through the small view window.

INT. VIEW WINDOW IN DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The distorted tunnel-view of the small glass opening shows a uniformed Federal Express man. He looks directly at the small view window as if trying to see inside the apartment. We see his nose hairs poking out.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Herbert steps back from the view window and the door.

HERBERT  
I'm here. Just a second, Sir.

He opens the door hesitantly. Sure enough, it is a Federal Express employee. The man has an envelope on a clipboard. He hands it to Herbert with a pen.

FED-EX MAN  
(Pointing to the envelope)  
Just sign here. Give me your John  
Hancock and I'll be on my way.

Herbert takes the clipboard and signs away.

HERBERT  
(Handing the board back)  
Thanks a lot.

The Fed-ex man removes the signed part, unclips the envelope and hands it to Herbert.

FED-EX MAN  
Thanks much. Have a good day. Oh,  
you might want to replace that  
doorknob of yours.

HERBERT  
Right. Hey, thanks again.

FED-EX MAN  
(Turning to leave)  
No problem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herbert closes the door and looks at the envelope.

INT. CLOSE-UP OF ENVELOPE - CONTINUOUS

The return label says:

*The Human Genetics Typing Lab  
3456 Woodward  
Detroit, MI 48224*

Herbert walks over to the couch and sits down. He tears open the envelope and takes out a folded piece of paper. After unfolding the paper, he begins to read.

INT. CLOSE-UP OF THE LETTER - CONTINUOUS

*Dear Dr. Wallace,*

*Thank you for choosing The Human Genetics Typing Lab for your genetic needs. We are a private company that performs Genetic typing using DNA markers for parentage determination. We have processed your request and have found that the two blood samples with which you provided our laboratory were NOT A MATCH. Thank you once again and feel free to contact us at any time for your future genetic typing needs.*

HERBERT (O.S.)  
(Incredulously)  
My god.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

He tosses the letter on the coffee table and sighs deeply.

Another knock comes at the door. This time the knock is louder and more fervent. Herbert immediately sits up on the couch, a look of fright in his eyes.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Detroit Police here! Herbert  
Wallace? Open up or we'll break the  
door in.

Herbert stands up and runs to the door and looks through the view-window again.

VOICE(O.S.)(CONT'D)  
You got five seconds before we  
break your door down!

HERBERT  
Wait! Wait a second. I'm here. Just  
a sec-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Herbert twists the doorknob and opens the door. Two older uniformed police officers stand in the door's threshold.

OFFICER 1  
Are you Herbert Wallace?

HERBERT  
Yes.

OFFICER 1  
Good. Your mother's been worried sick about you.

HERBERT  
What?

OFFICER 2  
(Removing sunglasses from his face)  
We're under direct orders to bring you to your mother's house if we find you. She's such a dear, that mother of yours.

HERBERT  
Well I-

OFFICER 1  
Now don't go resisting or anything. We got direct orders, ya hear? To treat your poor mother the way you've been treating her. It's a real shame.

OFFICER 2  
There's just no pride anymore for family. Young people forgetting where they come from. No respect for their roots. A damn shame, I say.

HERBERT  
Ok, but-

OFFICER 2  
Come on. Get yer things together. We're going to mommy's house.

The officers grab Herbert by the shoulder and lead him out the door. Herbert calmly follows them. He grabs the doorknob and pulls the door shut as they leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OFFICER 1

(as the door shuts)

That's a real lady, your momma. The sort of civilian we're trained to serve and protect. She's got a hard road, that woman. Umm, hmm-

The door shuts.

CUT TO:

INT. HERBERT'S PARENT'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Polly is busy tending to Oren and his back. Oren rests once again on the couch in the living room. He watches TV. This time the TV shows the news. Oren once again lays on his belly. A warm compress is draped over his low back area. This time he has a back brace wrapped tightly wrapped around his midsection, which grotesquely displaces his soft abdominal folds.

POLLY

(Carrying Frederico)

I hope them nice Detroit Poh'lice men gonna find our boy. Couldn't our boy a become one a them nice poh'lice men? He smart in school and all. But he always been so disrespectful, that boy.

OREN

Why they still lookin' for him, momma? I thought that boy say he in Canada or somethin'?

POLLY

(Walking around with the child)

You believe the boy? He coulda called from anywheres. I believe him when I sees him.

OREN

Woman! You sendin' them poor officers on a goose chase. Like they caint find better things to do with our tax dollars. Shhh! The news is on now, momma.

Oren turns up the volume on the remote control and stares intently at the TV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TV

(A newswoman speaks)

Good evening and welcome to the six o'clock news. Our top story: George J. Tenet, the current director of the CIA, has been deposed. He is being questioned regarding possible ongoing connections with a Nicaraguan drug lord.

OREN

Them goddam fat cats!

TV NEWS-WOMAN

-Mr. Tenet's phone apparently was tapped as part of an investigation by a top-secret sector of the pentagon-

POLLY

Turn that filth off, babe. Aint nothin' but filth, the news these days.

OREN

Shhh, momma! Hold yo' tongue for a minute, please. I think I smell that soup burnin' on the stove. Go away.

Polly and Frederico shuffle off to the kitchen. Frederico coos happily.

The front door opens. The two older police officers walk in with Herbert between them. They close the door. Polly runs into the front hall to greet them.

POLLY

My boy! You alive!

HERBERT

Of course I am.

OFFICER 1

Ma'am. I hope we haven't inconvenienced you at all by coming at this time. It looks like you're putting on supper.

POLLY

Oh, not at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Oren cranes his head around to look in the hall.

OREN

Son! You been disrespectin' yo'  
momma fo' bein' gone so long. What  
you gotta say?

HERBERT

I don't know.

OREN

A course you don't, boy. You don't  
know. I really think you don't.

Herbert mutters something under his breath.

OFFICER 2

Well, folks. We gotta be hitting  
the road now. Ma'am? You take care  
of your good family here, ok?  
Especially that darling little  
baby.

POLLY

You know I will, honey. You men  
been sweet as ever. You got such  
hard jobs. Runnin' 'round on them  
streets all the time. Such good  
men, you are.

OFFICER 1

Well, thank you ma'am. It's nice to  
hear someone appreciates us these  
days. Take care and have a pleasant  
evening.

OFFICER 2

(Opening the door)  
And have a safe evening.

POLLY

You know we will. Now that I know  
you men guarding the neighbo'hood.  
Take care now, y'hear?

OFFICERS

Bye now.

The door shuts. Herbert stands in the hallway looking at his  
mother and Frederico.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

POLLY

Here, son. Take yo' boy for a while. I'm getting' the soup on the table. Them poh'lice bring you juss in time for supper. We got that good cream a ghoulosh soup steepin' in the pot.

HERBERT

(Taking the child in his arms)  
Mom? He's not my son. I checked it out at the DNA lab and-

POLLY

(Angrily)  
Boy, you still trying to deny it? You already in trouble enough. Now bring yo' Pa his soup. Yo' poor Pa got himself a bum back and caint eat in the kitchen.

HERBERT

But seriously I-

POLLY

You already mess up poor Cassandra life. Then you mess up that sweet little girl from Nic-arua-gwa. I aint lettin' you mess up that precious little Freddy.

OREN

(Yelling from the TV room)  
Soup, please!

POLLY

(Rushing into the kitchen)  
Now bring yo' Pa a nice bowl.

She rushes back out of the kitchen and hands the bowl to Herbert. Herbert hoists Frederico to his left arms while accepting the soup in his right.

HERBERT

Ok, mom. Thanks.

POLLY

Now, that's a good boy.

Herbert walks into the TV room and sets the soup on the table in front of his father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

OREN

(Turning down the TV  
volume via remote  
control)

Thanks, boy. Sit right down there  
and listen to me. Yeah, right  
there. Now listen-

Herbert sits on a plush lounge chair. The baby pulls at his  
hair.

HERBERT

What?

OREN

(Turning painfully to his  
side)

I want you to think about yo' life,  
boy.

HERBERT

Ok.

OREN

Think about all that's been done  
fo' you. All you got.

HERBERT

Right.

OREN

We lucky people in this country a  
ours.

HERBERT

I know.

Slobber drips from Frederico's mouth onto Herbert's shirt.

OREN

No matter what happens. No matter  
there be good times or bad. Peace  
or war. Sadness, or there be  
happiness. We all got one thing.

HERBERT

One thing?

OREN

One thing y'all can count on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HERBERT

One thing.

OREN

(Oren points to the bowl  
on the table in front of  
him)

Right there, boy. Soup.

HERBERT

What?

Polly walks in the TV room.

OREN

(To Polly)

Not now, Ma! We havin' one a them  
man to man's. Come back in a minute  
when it's yo' turn.

POLLY

(Turning and walking out  
of the room)

You boys always gotta have yo' man  
to mans.

OREN

(Motioning back to the  
bowl)

Son?

HERBERT

What?

OREN

Soup is good food. Juss remember  
that.

Oren scoops up a thick spooning of chowder-like stuff and brings it to his large lips. The spoon goes deep in his mouth and comes back out clean. His mouth savors the delicacy, working it around its inner recesses.

OREN (CONT'D)

(Looking at Herbert)

Good food.

Herbert incredulously looking back and forth between Oren and Frederico.

HERBERT

Thanks, Dad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

The scene fades away as the camera follows the next spoonful of soup directly INTO OREN'S MOUTH.

We see his mouth close-up, and then his teeth, tongue, throat. Finally the camera dives down his throat INTO COMPLETE DARKNESS.

FADE OUT.

THE END.