

FILM FACTORY

**"SAVAGE TALES"**

By  
Damián Szifron

## Table of Contents

Pasternak.....	2
The Rats.....	9
Road to Hell.....	18
'Til Death Do Us Part.....	26
The Deal.....	47
Firecracker.....	68
Bonus Track.....	83

On a white background, the title of the first story appears in block letters:

# PASTERNAK

## INT. AIRPORT CHECK-IN. DAY.

ISABEL, an attractive woman of around 30, runs with a small suitcase up to the counter of one of the airlines.

ISABEL  
Will I make it?

AIRLINE ATTENDANT  
ID and e-ticket, please.

ISABEL  
(handing them over)  
A company paid for the ticket—do you know if I can get the miles on my account?

AIRLINE ATTENDANT  
This fare doesn't give you any miles.

ISABEL  
Oh, forget it then.

The attendant prints out and stamps the boarding pass.

AIRLINE ATTENDANT  
The flight is already boarding—it's gate three.

CUT TO:

## INT. AIRPLANE. DAY.

Isabel reaches up to put her suitcase inside the luggage compartment and notices that SALGADO, the 60-year-old man with a grey beard sitting next to her, is checking out her cleavage.

Salgado realizes that Isabel has noticed and he pretends to want to help instead.

SALGADO  
Can you manage?

ISABEL  
Yes, I've got it. Thanks.

Salgado turns his attention back to the book he is reading.

CUT TO:

**EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY. DAY.**

The airplane pauses on the airstrip, taxis down the runway and takes off.

**INT. AIRPLANE. DAY.**

Once the plane has reached its flying altitude, Salgado strikes up a conversation with Isabel.

SALGADO  
Work or pleasure?

ISABEL  
Both I hope.

SALGADO  
What do you do?

ISABEL  
I'm a model.

SALGADO  
Sorry, I should have guessed.

ISABEL  
(smiling)  
Thanks.

SALGADO  
Runway or advertising?

ISABEL  
Runway, runway.

After a moment of silence, Isabel, to be polite, asks:

ISABEL  
What about you, sir?

SALGADO  
Sir? Oh my God!

ISABEL  
(laughing)  
What's wrong?

SALGADO  
With that "sir", you've sunk me  
to a whole new low.  
(touching his bald spot)  
I urgently need an implant.

Isabel laughs again.

SALGADO  
I'm a music critic. It sounds  
terrible, I know.

ISABEL

Rock?

SALGADO

Now you want to make me feel younger. No, classical.

ISABEL

My first boyfriend was a classical musician. I mean, he studied classical music.

SALGADO

What was his name?

ISABEL

You wouldn't know him. He sent out a few pieces but I don't think his work was ever published. Is that how you say it? Or is it "edited"?

SALGADO

You choose whatever term you like and I'll make sure everyone in the music world starts using it.

ISABEL

(laughing again)

His name was Pasternak, Gabriel Pasternak.

Salgado furrows his brow, trying to remember. Suddenly it comes to him.

SALGADO

Gabriel Pasternak... If I had known you knew him, I would have introduced myself as a gravedigger. He presented his thesis at the conservatory when I was heading the panel of judges. I ripped him apart.

ISABEL

I was with him! That was awful. After he read the review, he spent a week in bed.

SALGADO

That's the way it goes sometimes: I have to destroy some poor guy's self-esteem to protect the ears of the audience. I may make a mistake from time to time, but what he presented was really abominable.

An aberration. Are you still in touch with him?

ISABEL

No, not at all. Our relationship didn't end very well. I still think of him fondly, though: he's not a bad person.

SALGADO

He may not be a bad person, but there must be a few bats in that belfry for him to present a piece like that in a competition... That's right, Pasternak. We were laughing about it for months afterwards.

ESTELA, a woman sitting in the row in front of them, turns around.

ESTELA

Excuse me for interrupting but I couldn't help overhearing what you were saying. I simply can't believe the coincidence. I agree with your theory, sir: I taught Gabriel Pasternak in high school and was given the daunting task of telling him that he was going to be held back. In thirty years of teaching, I never saw anything like his reaction: he screamed and cried like a baby.

IGNACIO, a young man sitting across the aisle, gestures to Estela.

IGNACIO

Professor Simonetti?

ESTELA

Yes...

IGNACIO

It's me, Ignacio Ávalos, do you remember?

ESTELA

Oh my goodness. This is incredible! Some sort of cosmic connection. Wasn't Pasternak a classmate of yours?

IGNACIO

(respectfully)

That's right. Are you friends of his?

SALGADO  
No, no, not at all.

IGNACIO  
(laughing)  
Poor guy. We really let him have  
it...

Another man, SILVATICI, sitting behind Ignacio, joins the conversation.

SILVATICI  
This is unbelievable. I'm a  
manager at the supermarket where  
that psycho worked for a while.

Isabel is simply stunned. Salgado, however, starts to look around at the other passengers, concerned.

SILVATICI  
...He was always arguing with  
the clients so I had to fire  
him. And then--

SALGADO  
(interrupting)  
Excuse me, does anyone else here  
know Gabriel Pasternak?

All the PASSENGERS on the plane turn around.

MAN #1  
(surprised)  
Yes, why?

MAN #2  
He was my neighbor.

SALGADO  
What are you doing on this  
plane? Did you buy your own  
tickets?

SILVATICI  
No. I work for a real estate  
firm and the client sent me a  
ticket to go see a property that  
is going on the auction block.

IGNACIO  
I was called to a meeting at the  
Ministry of Tourism. They got  
the ticket for me.

ESTELA  
I won the ticket at a raffle.  
(starting to realize  
what's happening)  
I couldn't change the ticket.

Today was the only day I could fly.

Salgado notices that the FLIGHT ATTENDANT is trembling, with horror in her eyes.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Gabriel Pasternak is a steward on this flight. We were friends, then he asked me out and when I said no, he started to get-- Well, that doesn't matter now. As soon as we took off, he went into the cockpit to take the pilots some coffee and he hasn't come back. The door is locked and the pilots aren't responding. I don't know what to do.

The passengers begin to panic.

Music begins playing over the loudspeakers and both Salgado and Isabel recognize it: it is the piece Pasternak presented at the competition.

ISABEL

(crying, to Salgado)  
I left him for his only friend.

Isabel turns and looks around the plane. In one of the last rows, she recognizes the ONLY FRIEND she left Gabriel for.

He is about 35 and overweight--time has not been kind to him. He takes off his earphones and waves to Isabel, smiling. He clearly has no idea what's going on.

CARLOS, a husky man, runs up to the cockpit door.

CARLOS

(banging on the door)  
Gabriel, are you in there?!  
Gabriel! It's me, Carlos, Carlos Olivé, talk to me, please!

SILVATICI

(coming over)  
Where do you know him from?

CARLOS

I was his psychiatrist. At some point, I raised my rates and he got mad and never came back.

(banging on the door again)  
Open up, Gabriel! Listen to me, none of this is your fault! You're the victim here! Let me spell it out for you: your

parents are the ones to blame!  
Since you were born, they asked  
too much of you, putting all  
their frustrations on you.  
They're the ones responsible for  
your suffering, not us!

Isabel looks out the window and sees that the plane is  
coming down quickly towards a place she recognizes.

ISABEL  
(to Salgado, terrified)  
San Justo... That's Gabriel's  
hometown.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - PATIO. DAY.**

PASTERNAK'S PARENTS, a couple in their sixties looking none  
too good for their age, are drinking mate on a patio that  
has also seen better days.

The sound of the birds is suddenly obliterated by the sound  
of the airplane engines.

When they look up to the sky, they see the Boeing 747  
coming down towards them.

The image freezes and turns into a sketch.

As if this were a storybook, the page turns and we continue  
with our next tale.

# THE RATS

## EXT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

It is pouring rain.

An expensive-looking 4x4 parks outside a roadside restaurant in the middle of nowhere.

## INT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

The WAITRESS—age 25, medium height, a little on the plump side, with a sweet face—sees MINICHELO (age 50) enter.

WAITRESS  
(standing up)  
Hi. Just one tonight?

MINICHELO  
(friendly)  
Well, you seem to be good at math.

The waitress forces a smile.

MINICHELO  
Yes, just one.

When she looks Minichelo in the eyes, the waitress recognizes him from somewhere but she doesn't let on.

WAITRESS  
(handing him the menu)  
Whenever you're ready. Today's special is pork ribs.

Minichelo sits down. He places an envelope with papers on the table and puts on his glasses to read through the menu.

The waitress heads into the kitchen, visibly upset.

We hear the sound of a toilet flushing from the employee bathroom.

A few seconds later, the COOK appears: a thin 45-year-old woman with circles under her eyes and teeth stained from a lifetime of smoking. She notices that someone has come in to the restaurant.

COOK  
Did he order?

The waitress doesn't answer. It's as if she were in a trance.

COOK  
(snapping her fingers)  
Hey.

WAITRESS  
That guy is from my hometown. A loan shark, a small-time crook. He put our house on the auction block and my father committed suicide over it. Two weeks after the funeral, he made a move on my mother. He wouldn't take no for an answer so we ended up moving out here.  
(shedding a tear)  
You know how many times I dreamed of having him right in front of me? I'm going to give him a piece of my mind.

COOK  
Your dad committed suicide because of that man and all you can think of is insulting him? Why don't we put some rat poison in his food?

The waitress shakes her head, thinking that she would love to do something like that.

But when she looks at the cook, she realizes that she is dead serious.

COOK  
There is some back in the storage room. A few spoonfuls in the food and his heart'll stop ticking in five minutes.

From the dining room, Minichelo gestures to the waitress.

The waitress heads over with a placemat, silverware and a basket with bread.

MINICHELO  
Lots of work?

WAITRESS  
Not with this rain--

MINICHELO  
That's funny, because I've been trying to catch your eye for the last five minutes. You've got to look out at your tables a little more often, baby.

WAITRESS  
Sorry.

MINICHELO  
(glancing at her legs)  
You're forgiven.

WAITRESS  
Are you ready to order?

MINICHELO  
(closing the menu)  
For right now, bring me some  
French fries with a fried egg on  
top.

WAITRESS  
Something to drink?

MINICHELO  
Diet Coke.

The waitress nods and heads back into the kitchen.

WAITRESS  
(to the cook, as she  
takes the soda out of  
the fridge)  
I hate that bastard. Make him  
some French fries with a fried  
egg on top.

The cook doesn't answer.

The waitress glances at her and sees that she is holding an  
old tin can with rat poison.

WAITRESS  
Are you nuts? Do you want to go  
to prison?

COOK  
Prison? Do you think they'll  
send the FBI to do an autopsy on  
this sleazebag? He must be a big  
eater with that belly, and  
ordering French fries with a  
fried egg? They'll blame it on  
cholesterol.

WAITRESS  
Just make him the French fries,  
OK?

The waitress pulls the tin can out of the cook's hands,  
puts it in a cupboard, and carries the drink out into the  
dining room.

MINICHELO

(going through his  
papers)

Let me ask you for your opinion.  
You seem like a smart girl.  
Which do you like better?

Minichelo points to two poster mock-ups for his campaign for mayor. One has a red backdrop and the other a white one. Both of them read: "MINICHELO IS PROTECTION".

WAITRESS

Both look good, but I like the  
red one better.

MINICHELO

(nodding)  
What about the picture? Do I  
look too serious?

WAITRESS

No, it's fine.

MINICHELO

Thanks for your help.

The waitress smiles and heads back into the kitchen.

The cook is chopping the potatoes and puffing on a  
cigarette.

COOK

Plus, jail ain't so bad. It gets  
a bad rap, but they feed you,  
they don't charge you no rent,  
you've got nothing to worry  
about... And if you find  
yourself a nice group of girls,  
you can even enjoy yourself. You  
play cards--

WAITRESS

(surprised)  
Have you been to prison?

COOK

(blowing the cigarette  
smoke up the extractor)  
Once. And let me tell you, I  
felt a lot freer in there than I  
do out here. The outside sucks.

WAITRESS

What did you do?

COOK

Nothing I wouldn't do again.

The cook drops the potatoes into the hot oil, putting an end to the conversation.

WAITRESS

And on top of that, he's running for mayor! That son of a bitch! Can you believe it?

COOK

Sons of bitches rule the whole world. Wake up.

From the dining room, we can hear Minichelo's voice as he talks on his cell phone.

MINICHELO

Let's go with the red one, but tell them to Photoshop that wart.

The cook serves up the French fries on a plate, drops the egg in the frying pan and opens up the cupboard where the WAITRESS has left the poison.

COOK

What do you say? Should we do this community a favor?

The waitress closes the cupboard again.

The cook smiles, tipping the frying pan with the egg over the French fries so the egg slides on top.

The waitress takes the dish to Minichelo, who is thrilled.

MINICHELO

Great--

Then she goes back into the kitchen and starts washing the dishes, still a little on edge.

Suddenly, she notices that there is something sticky at the bottom of the frying pan that was used for the French fries.

When she meets the cook's eyes, she sees her smiling a diabolical smile.

WAITRESS

Did you add--

In the dining room, Minichelo eats the French fries and egg.

COOK

Oh sure, play Goodie Two Shoes now, but you knew exactly what was going to happen.

WAITRESS

What?

COOK

(imitating her)

"What?" The whole country wants these assholes to get what they deserve but no one is willing to lift a finger. Feel proud of yourself, sweetie, for once in your miserable life, you're doing something to make a difference.

WAITRESS

I'm not doing anything.

COOK

Oh sure, you're not doing anything! Instead of running out there and pulling away the plate, you're in here arguing with me.

In response, the waitress heads for the dining room, but the cook grabs her by the wrist and holds her back.

COOK

Calm down. You've got nothing to worry about. If they investigate, I'll say that I used the poison in the kitchen this morning because I saw a few rats—which is the God's honest truth— and that a little bit of powder must have fallen into the frying pan. What are they going to say?

The waitress, not knowing what to do, glances out into the dining room.

Minichelo stabs the fries with his fork, dips them in the egg yolk and eats them up; he shows no sign of distress for the time being.

WAITRESS

This is insane.

COOK

(looking at the tin can)

Hey, you don't think this has expired, do you?

(turning it over)

There's no expiration date... How does that work, anyway? When poison expires, does it get more dangerous or less dangerous?

Suddenly, a bus stops by the road.

ALEXIS, a 14-year-old BOY, gets off the bus with a large backpack and enters the restaurant.

Minichelo embraces the young man—who is clearly his son—and waves to get the waitress's attention.

The waitress, anxious, walks out into the dining room.

WAITRESS

Yes?

MINICHELO

What would you like to drink,  
Alexis?

The boy, who has a birthmark on his forehead, seems like a nice kid.

ALEXIS

I don't know... Fanta.

The waitress sees Alexis eat one of the French fries.

She takes hold of the dish to take it back to the kitchen.

WAITRESS

Let me warm that up for you.

MINICHEPELO

(grabbing onto the dish)  
If I need it heated up, I'll let  
you know. Now bring us the soda,  
please.

Alexis takes another few French fries and eats them.

The waitress comes back into the kitchen. She is desperate.

WAITRESS

We have to do something—both of  
them are eating now!

COOK

Add some more poison?

WAITRESS

He's just a boy!

COOK

(taking her wrist again)  
But he'll grow up and, you know  
the saying, "like father, like  
son." Let's wipe out the whole  
family tree.

(glancing at Minichelo  
with anger)  
That's one strong son of a  
bitch--

The waitress pulls away, goes back out into the dining room and tries to take the dish of French fries away again.

WAITRESS

Excuse me, but that must be freezing cold by now.

MINICHELO

(annoyed)

Who the hell taught you to wait tables? Can you go away and let us finish?

Minichelo pulls the dish of French fries away from her and puts it back on the table so Alexis can keep eating.

The waitress sees that Alexis, who is about to eat another French fry, looks pale and weak. Feigning annoyance with Minichelo's reaction, she takes the plate and dumps the rest of the food onto his lap.

MINICHELO

You fucking bitch, now you've really ticked me off.

Minichelo grabs the waitress by the hair.

WAITRESS

(shouting to the cook)  
Call an ambulance!

MINICHELO

(forcing the waitress  
down to her knees)  
You're going to pick those up  
one by one and beg me for  
forgiveness!

Seeing what is happening in the dining room, the cook seems to be reminded of a traumatic event in her own life. She enters a dream-like state and takes a sharp knife, runs out and starts stabbing Minichelo in the back.

COOK

Take that, scumbag!! I'm going  
to yank out your liver, you  
chicken shit!!

Terrified, Alexis looks on as blood pours out in all directions.

The scene is so disgusting that Alexis begins to vomit, throwing up all of the poison he has swallowed.

The waitress, crushed beneath Minichelo's lifeless body, calms down when she sees Alexis's color return. He is now breathing normally.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ROADSIDE RESTAURANT - PARKING LOT. DAWN.**

Two police cars, an ambulance and a truck from the local TV station are all parked outside.

PARAMEDICS are examining Alexis and the waitress.

Alexis, trembling and upset, watches a POLICEMAN taking pictures of Minichelo's body.

The waitress looks on while two POLICEMEN cuff the cook and put her into a police car.

Before the door shuts, the cook looks over at the waitress and cracks a weird smile.

FADE TO  
BLACK.

A TEXT OVERLAY READS: "15 YEARS LATER."

**INT. WOMEN'S PRISON - CELL. DAY.**

The scene opens on a picture taped to the wall. It shows the waitress with her husband and a kid at the Iguazú Falls. There is something sad in her eyes, but at least she went on with her life.

In the jail cell, four PRISONERS are playing cards.

The cook—who looks older—plays a card and the prisoner sitting to her left takes the pot.

COOK

Fuck me!  
(to her girlfriend)  
Give me a smoke.

PRISON GUARD

(her voice rings out  
from across the  
pavilion)  
Time to eat, ladies!

COOK

Let's go before the food gets  
cold. We'll replay that hand  
later.

The cook throws her cards on the table to end the game; her girlfriend starts laughing and the women they are playing against curse, but all in an atmosphere of warmth and camaraderie.

The camera exits the cell through a window and we move away from the prison.

The outer wall of the pavilion is covered with posters from a political campaign. Below an image of a young man with a birthmark on his forehead the sign reads:

"MINICHELO IS PROTECTION. ALEXIS MINICHELO, GOVERNOR".

FADE TO  
BLACK.

A text overlay presents the title of the next tale:

FILM FACTORY

## ROAD TO HELL

INT. AUDI DRIVING DOWN A COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.

We are driving at high speed in the fast lane of an empty country road as the third track from the Flashdance album plays on the stereo.

We see a sign that reads: "BUENOS AIRES: 270 MILES."

DIEGO—a tall blond man of about forty—is calmly driving his Audi A5.

An old Peugeot 504 sputtering smoke from its muffler is going about 50 mph in the fast lane.

Diego flashes his lights but the driver of the Peugeot doesn't budge.

DIEGO  
(murmuring)  
Come on, asshole, get moving.

Diego, in a cocky move, drives up close to the other car and flashes his lights again; the driver of the Peugeot stubbornly refuses to budge.

Diego swears under his breath and tries to pass him on the right, but the Peugeot veers to the right and blocks him.

When Diego veers back to pass him on the left, the Peugeot veers to the left as well.

Diego slows down, putting about a hundred feet between himself and the Peugeot, and then steps on the gas, speeding up to 120 mph and passing the other driver on the right.

This time, the Peugeot doesn't have enough time to get in his way.

When we pass alongside the Peugeot, we see the driver, MARIO, an overweight, dark-skinned man with a sinister smile.

DIEGO  
(yelling)  
You dumb wetback!

He leaves the Peugeot in the dust, driving off at high speed.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUDI DRIVING DOWN THE COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.**

The Flashdance CD has reached track six and we pass another sign the reads "BUENOS AIRES: 205 MILES."

Suddenly Diego notices that the steering wheel is twitching. He lets go of it for a moment and the car swerves to the right.

DIEGO

I don't believe this.

CUT TO:

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.**

The Audi comes to a stop on the shoulder of the road, which is elevated above the surrounding land. The shoulder ends with a drop-off that leads down to a small stream.

Diego gets out and sees that he's got a flat tire.

Annoyed, he opens the trunk.

The jack is in the nylon pouch it came in. It's clear that it has never been touched before.

Diego opens the pouch and studies the jack.

He crouches down alongside the car and tries to put the jack in the right position but finds that it doesn't fit. He turns it over and it seems to be in place, though he is not entirely sure.

Before continuing, he takes out his insurance card and dials the number of the road assistance on his Blackberry.

After Diego has typed a series of numbers on the keyboard, an agent picks up.

DIEGO

Hi. I'm at mile 205 on Route 3 and—oh yeah, my license plate is U-I-A 719. Diego Iturralde. So I was saying... I'm at mile 205 on Route 3, on the side towards Buenos Aires, and I've got a flat. How long will it take you to get here? It's a new car and I can't figure out how to use the jack. OK, so please send someone out and if I can work this out on my own, I'll call back. Thanks.

Diego hangs up and checks out his surroundings.

The road is deserted and it doesn't seem likely that anyone will show up to help. He crouches down again, puts the jack in place and manages to crank up the car. Suddenly things aren't looking quite so bad.

He loosens the screw with the cross wrench, removes the flat tire, takes the spare out of the trunk, puts it on and starts screwing in the first screw.

Hard at work, he notices that the Peugeot 504 is approaching.

Diego finishes with the first screw and hurries to screw on the other three.

Closer now, the Peugeot's flashers come on and the vehicle slows down.

Diego is on the third screw but since the Peugeot has almost reached him now—and the flat tire and all of his tools are still on the ground—he leaves everything and jumps into the Audi.

Mario comes to a stop right next to him and rolls down the window.

MARIO

What's a matter? Did I scare you?

DIEGO

(cocky)  
Just drive on by, man--

Mario sees the tools lying on the ground. He smiles and parks in front of the Audi.

Then he backs up until his car is almost touching the Audi.

Diego locks the doors.

Mario gets out of the Peugeot, rests his hands on the hood of the Audi and looks Diego straight in the eye.

DIEGO

Seriously man, let it go. I'm not looking for trouble. Sorry if I offended you.

Mario gives him a provocative look and spits on his window.

DIEGO

(feigning a smile)  
OK, then. You done?

Mario smiles back and then takes hold of one of his windshield wipers and rips it off the car.

DIEGO

What are you doing?? Calm down,  
I didn't do anything to you--

MARIO

Why don't you yell at me the way  
you yelled before? What was it  
that you said back there?

Diego sees a truck driving by and honks his horn several times. But Mario waves to the TRUCK DRIVER and gestures for him to continue on his way.

The truck driver flashes his lights and continues down the country road.

Once the truck is out of sight, Mario walks around the Audi, picks the cross wrench up off the ground and holds it pensively.

DIEGO

I already told you I was sorry.  
I don't know what else you want  
me to do... If I have to get out  
of the car, I'll get out, but I  
think we can just let the whole  
thing go.

Mario bursts out laughing.

Seconds later, he brings the wrench crashing down against the front window, which cracks.

Diego, who is now truly frightened, dials 911 on his Blackberry but a recording picks up letting him know that all of the operators are busy.

He pretends to be talking to the police anyway.

DIEGO

Listen, I'm at mile 205 on Route  
3 and this guy is attacking me--

Mario hits the window again.

DIEGO

(to Mario)  
It's reinforced glass, you're  
not going to break it!

MARIO

Chicken.

DIEGO

(on the phone)  
The license plate number is--

Mario smiles. Mario's car is parked so close that Diego can't see the license plate.

DIEGO

I can't make it out, can you  
send a car as quickly as  
possible, please? That's fine.  
Please hurry, he's out of  
control.

Mario looks at his watch, sarcastically.

MARIO

I'm sure they'll be right over.

Diego nods and pretends to hang up but leaves the phone  
open in the hope that someone will actually answer.

Mario, still not satisfied, thinks about what else he can  
do to him.

DIEGO

Look, you've ruined my car.  
That's enough. Just get out of  
here.

Looking pleased with himself, Mario climbs up on the hood  
of the Audi and undoes his belt.

Diego has no idea what Mario has in mind until he turns  
around, lowers his pants, crouches down and defecates on  
his front window.

Diego can't believe it.

When he's done, Mario climbs off the car, takes the tool  
pouch and uses it to wipe his ass.

Finally he glances at Diego through the window and smiles  
sadistically.

MARIO

See ya, chicken shit.

He turns around and gets into the Peugeot, ready to drive  
off.

But Diego can't take the humiliation anymore and, in a fit  
of rage, he turns on the Audi, hits the gas, and rams into  
the Peugeot, pushing it to the edge of the shoulder.

Mario, desperate, steps on the brakes as hard as he can,  
pulls up the hand brake and tries to turn but the Audi is  
so heavy that it pushes the Peugeot over the edge and down  
into the gully. Mario's car goes head first into the  
stream.

Diego then backs up, gets out of the Audi, adjusts the last  
screw on the spare and tosses the tools and the flat into  
the back seat.

Mario, furious, climbs out of the window of the Peugeot. He makes his way up the gully, but when he gets back to the road, he sees Diego inside his Audi, driving off.

MARIO

(running after him)  
I've got your license plate  
number, you son of a bitch!  
You're dead! Did you hear me, U-  
I-A? I'm going to kill you! No  
one can protect you! When I find  
you, I'll crack your head open!!

Diego continues to drive, hitting the windshield-wiper button. But then he thinks about Mario's threats: after what he just did, this psycho might actually come try to kill him.

So he makes a U-turn and drives the wrong way along the shoulder to run Mario over.

Mario can't believe it. He jumps off to the side and just barely avoids getting hit by the Audi.

Like a bull in a rodeo, Diego makes another U-turn and speeds up again to hit Mario with the car.

But the Audi is heavy and when Diego drives over a less firm section of the shoulder, the ground caves out from under the car, which slips down the gully and comes crashing against the Peugeot.

The Audi airbag opens in the crash and Diego is trapped in the car; he can barely see.

The chaotic scene contrasts with the music from Flashdance, which continues playing on the stereo.

After a second of quiet, a noise is heard: crack, crack, crack.

Diego looks in the rearview mirror and sees that Mario is atop the trunk of the Audi, wedging a metal bar under it.

Diego's phone, which has fallen onto the floor of the car, begins to ring.

Diego can see that it's 911 calling, but he is trapped by the airbag and can't reach the phone.

Mario works the metal bar in and manages to open the trunk. He climbs in and starts kicking the backseat of the car to get inside the vehicle.

Diego reclines his seat and pushes back with his legs to keep Mario from getting in but Mario is kicking hard and Diego can't stop him.

Desperate, Diego starts honking the horn and doesn't let up. A car or two drive down the road but since the ditch is so far below the road and both cars are down there, no one can see them.

Mario is almost in the car and a brawl now appears inevitable.

Diego grabs the fire extinguisher and readies himself to hit Mario with it. With his free hand, he hits the lever to lower the backseat.

Mario comes crashing into the vehicle and Diego begins striking him on the head with the fire extinguisher over and over again.

But Mario won't give up. Using the metal bar, he bursts the airbag and both men fall forward.

Diego's face hits the dashboard and Mario starts hitting him on the back and neck with the metal bar.

Diego manages to pull the pin from the fire extinguisher and empties the gas into Mario's face. The shouts of both men merge in a sort of macabre ritual.

Diego takes advantage of Mario's temporary blindness to open the door. He tries to climb out but Mario manages to get the seatbelt around his neck and Diego hangs from the belt.

Diego tries to kick himself free but he can't. Little by little, he runs out of air and begins to lose consciousness.

Mario takes a few deep breaths, lowers the back window and looks outside, where all that can be heard is the sound of the birds singing.

To do away with any incriminating evidence, Mario rips a sleeve off his shirt, opens the gas tank and dips the sleeve inside.

He then takes his lighter, gets ready to get out of the car and, before he jumps, he lights the sleeve.

But the smell of gas revives Diego. When he sees the flames and understands what is happening, he locks Mario in a tight embrace.

Mario struggles to jump from the car into the stream, with or without Diego, but he can't get the seatbelt to move.

Desperate, Mario tries to blow out the flame, which advances fatefully towards the gas tank.

CUT TO:

**INT. TOW TRUCK ON THE ROAD. DAY.**

The TOW TRUCK DRIVER drives leisurely, drinking mate and listening to folk music on the radio.

When he reaches mile 205, he doesn't see any car on the shoulder so he picks up the handheld:

TOW TRUCK DRIVER  
Attention, station, this is unit  
29, confirm mile number please.

Right then, a tremendous explosion from the gully below blows a cloud of smoke up onto the road.

TOW TRUCK DRIVER  
Whoa!

The tow truck driver slams on the brakes and gets out to see what has happened.

CUT TO:

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DUSK.**

Several cop cars are parked alongside the road and FIREMEN are putting out what is left of the fire.

The POLICE CAPTAIN, astonished, walks around what remains of the cars.

A YOUNG DETECTIVE takes a picture.

YOUNG DETECTIVE  
What do you think, Chief? A  
crime of passion?

Mario and Diego's skeletons are there, locked in an embrace.

Since there is almost no skin or muscle left on the skulls, they even appear to be smiling.

The detective takes another picture and the image freezes.

This time, when the page turns to lead us into the next tale, volume is added to the skeletons and they become almost three-dimensional, as if they were part of a pop-up book.

## 'TIL DEATH DO US PART

INT. HOTEL - WEDDING RECEPTION. DAY.

We are in a reception room on the 20th floor of a fancy hotel. Music plays in the background, guests are sitting at tables, and a screen shows photos of Romina and Ariel, the bride and groom, who have yet to arrive at the party.

The GUESTS smile and talk about the different phases of the bride and groom's relationship. The photos show scenes like:

The couple as teenagers at the country club where they met.

Their first vacation together at the beach in Punta del Este, Uruguay. They are posing with the famous statue of a hand.

With their arms around each other next to Bocha and Marga (Romina's parents) at a barbeque at a campsite.

With their arms around each other next to Isidoro and Cuca (Ariel's parents) at Disneyland.

Lastly, we see an image of Romina and Ariel from just a few moments ago, showing their rings off to the camera.

A smoke machine fills the party with smoke and we hear the DISC JOCKEY announce:

DISC JOCKEY

*Everyone stand up and give a  
round of applause for our  
beloved Romina and Ariel!*

LUIS MIGUEL'S SONG "SUAVE" BLASTS

Holding hands, the radiant ROMINA and ARIEL descend on the party, triumphant.

Romina is strikingly thinner than in the early photos.

Ariel has a tan, clearly from a tanning salon.

The bride and groom's PARENTS and RELATIVES, all of whom are dressed to the nines, are the first to greet them with an embrace.

A KLEZMER BAND starts playing traditional Jewish songs.

The FRIENDS OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM quickly whisk them to the middle of the dance floor.

CUT TO:

**INT. WEDDING RECEPTION. DAY.**

The bride and groom and the guests are still dancing euphorically, but now to another kind of music; the end of the song "Call me" by Blondie marks the close of the set and the lights go on.

The guests applaud and return to their tables.

ARIEL'S AUNT AND UNCLE, who have come from Israel to attend the wedding, walk up to Romina and hand her an envelope with money in it.

ROMINA

Thank you... You shouldn't have. Your being here is such a wonderful gift. Are you having a good time?

ARIEL'S AUNT

(she speaks a little Spanish, but her husband, who just smiles, does not)

Lovely. You very pretty and family kind. Too bad country so unsafe. Last night, Roni's wallet stolen in restaurant. He didn't realize.

Her husband nods.

ROMINA

That's too bad. It's true, the situation is awful, but little by little--

ARIEL'S AUNT

(pointing to the tables of young people)

Nice people, all friends?

Romina looks around and, to be polite, keeps talking to them.

ROMINA

Yes... That's the table of friends from the country club. We hadn't seen each other since we were like 13, but what with Facebook and all, we have gotten back in touch. Those are my friends from college and their boyfriends...the ones that have boyfriends, that is. And those are Ariel's coworkers--

Romina is referring to one of the tables farthest away, where Ariel is seen talking happily with his COWORKERS.

Suddenly, Romina sees Ariel patting LOURDES's hand as if to say "that's just the way it is"; Lourdes (age 27) has short hair and considerable cleavage.

Romina keeps talking to Ariel's aunt and uncle, who do not seem to notice that she is clearly distracted by what she has just seen at the table of Ariel's coworkers.

A WAITER walks by with a tray with champagne glasses.

Romina picks one up and drinks from it.

ARIEL'S AUNT

You know place to learn the tango?

ROMINA

I don't, but I'm sure my cousin does. I'll introduce you.

Romina walks away from Ariel's aunt and uncle and goes to the head table. She opens her tiny purse and takes out her cell phone.

She scrolls down her contact list looking for a number that she had once saved under the name "?????" (that is, a series of question marks). Tense and unsure of what she is doing, yet determined to test her suspicion, she calls the number.

Just seconds later, Lourdes's phone rings.

Romina crumbles inside.

Lourdes glances at the screen on her cell phone, but since it is an unknown number she doesn't answer.

Upset, Romina hangs up.

Ariel is now at another table.

Romina reads Lourdes's lips as she says to one of her coworkers: "Who is this jerk that keeps calling but never leaves a message?" She then puts her phone away.

Romina gulps down the champagne and grabs another glass.

She calls again.

This time, Lourdes picks up.

LOURDES

Hello? Hello?

Romina doesn't say anything, but due to the background noise Lourdes can tell that the call is from someone at the party. When she looks around, she sees Romina at the far side of the dance floor, phone to her ear.

Lourdes hangs up and focuses her attention on her coworkers once again. She laughs nervously, as if everyone at the table knew that something had happened.

STAUSS'S *THE BLUE DANUBE* IS SUDDENLY HEARD

The wedding PHOTOGRAPHER and CAMERAMAN circle around Ariel as he gallantly walks towards Romina to dance the classic wedding waltz with her.

The guests applaud as they look on.

Romina, hiding how upset she is, dances in silence for a few measures, but finally gives in to her emotions and asks:

ROMINA

What's the name of that girl with the short hair?

ARIEL

Which one?

ROMINA

That one, from work.

ARIEL

Oh. Lourdes. Why?

ROMINA

No reason.

Though they dance and smile for the camera, Romina and Ariel are both tense.

ROMINA

And how does Lourdes know your guitar teacher?

ARIEL

My guitar teacher?

ROMINA

Yes, your guitar teacher. A few months ago I asked you who was calling that time that I answered your phone and they hung up. You told me it was your guitar teacher. Since that seemed strange, I saved the number. And I called it just now and that girl Lourdes picked up. Weird, right?

ARIEL

Honey, I don't know what you are talking about. I really don't.

ROMINA

Just seems strange. With all the cell phone companies and special deals out there, it seems pretty weird that that girl would have bought your guitar teacher's phone line, especially if you never introduced them. What a coincidence, huh?

Ariel doesn't say a thing. He thinks and thinks, but he can't come up with a response.

ROMINA

So?

ARIEL

What?

ROMINA

Say something. If you don't, I am going to ask her.

Ariel's coworkers look strikingly serious, as if they were hiding something they all knew about.

ARIEL

Romi, please--

ROMINA

Don't you "Romi" me! Answer my question. Does everyone at table 27 know that you screwed that girl? You invited all those assholes to our wedding?

At this moment Cuca, Ariel's mother, appears. She has no idea that there is an argument underway.

CUCA

(overjoyed, to Romina)  
Can I dance with my prince for a moment?

ROMINA

(ironically)  
But of course, queen. He's all yours--

Ariel dances with Cuca, and Romina with her father, Bocha, a tall, broad man.

Ariel, who is upset, looks on as Romina's eyes fill with tears. She rests her head on Bocha's hefty chest.

Afraid that Romina will tell her father something, Ariel apologizes to Marga, Romina's mother and his next dance partner, and returns to Romina, who is about to burst into tears.

The other guests think that she is overwhelmed with joy.

ARIEL

(turning to the rhythm  
of the waltz)  
Honey, let it go. Let's enjoy  
our wedding. Let's not ruin it  
for some stupid reason, not  
after all we put into organizing  
it--

ROMINA

Did you or did you not sleep  
with that girl, Ariel?

Ariel furrows his brow and shakes his head, but he doesn't  
say anything.

ROMINA

(sad as she looks him in  
the eye)  
Please tell me the truth. I need  
to know.

Despite enormous reservations, Ariel decides to tell the  
truth.

ARIEL

Yes, I did.

Romina looks extremely upset.

ARIEL

But it didn't mean anything, I  
swear.

Romina, about to pass out, stalks away from Ariel and walks  
out of the reception.

Confused, the guests who were hoping to dance with her look  
on, wondering if everything is all right.

With a series of awkward gestures, Ariel motions that  
everything is fine and he walks out behind Romina.

ARIEL

(whispering)  
Romi, let's not make a scene in  
front of everyone, OK? It was  
nothing, I swear that--

ROMINA

Don't touch me!

ARIEL

All right, sorry. I made a  
mistake. I admit it.

ROMINA  
(seriously)  
Get your hands off of me. I want  
to be alone!

Romina shakes Ariel off and walks out of the party.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL - 20<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR HALLWAY. DUSK.**

We can see the city through the large bay windows.

Romina rushes over to the elevators but, since Ariel's aunt and uncle are getting their coats from the checker near the elevator and the last thing she wants to do is talk to them, she goes the other way.

On the other side of the hallway is the door that opens to the backstairs.

Romina walks up to the building's rooftop terrace. No one sees her go.

Ariel walks out into the hall, looks around and, assuming that Romina has gone downstairs, pushes the button for the elevator.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HOTEL - ROOFTOP TERRACE. DUSK.**

Romina comes through the door to the terrace and walks towards the edge.

She rests her hands on the railing and looks down at the cars driving along the avenue far below.

Ashamed and extremely humiliated, Romina cries. She moves closer and closer to the edge. Suddenly she hears a voice.

VASALLO  
Everything all right over there?

Romina turns around and sees VASALLO (a tall and gawky man of 45). He is an assistant in the kitchen who has come up to have a smoke.

VASALLO  
Do you want me to call someone?

Romina shakes her head.

VASALLO  
But are you all right? I mean,  
obviously you aren't but--

Romina starts sobbing even harder.

VASALLO

(walks over and puts his  
hand on her shoulder)  
Calm down, what happened?

ROMINA

My boyfriend... I mean my  
husband... I just found out that  
he cheated on me with another  
guest.

VASALLO

Oh, that's awful.

ROMINA

(in a sea of tears)  
And now I don't know what to do,  
there are so many guests down  
there--

Romina cries inconsolably.

VASALLO

Hey, you'll be OK. These things  
happen; time heals all wounds.

Romina shakes her head.

Vasallo offers her a handkerchief.

VASALLO

If you love him, you will  
eventually forgive him. If he is  
really the man for you, you  
will--

ROMINA

(blowing her nose)  
I don't know if I love him, I  
don't know if he is the man for  
me... He's an asshole.

VASALLO

Well then, to hell with him, you  
get on with your life. End the  
party and send the guests  
packing. I'm sure you're not the  
first person down there who has  
been cheated on. Besides, you  
can't spend so much time  
worrying about what other people  
think.

Romina nods.

VASALLO

Feeling a little better?

Romina nods again as she calms down.

VASALLO

Listen, if I were you, I would go down there and try to put on a poker face for a few more hours and then, when you get home, tell him it's over. It's a shame, I'm not going to deny it, but you have to get on with your life.

Romina nods again.

Vasallo pats her on the back to cheer her up, but soon the friendly gesture of support turns into an embrace which Romina finds comforting.

When they move away from one another, Romina looks at Vasallo and finds him handsome, like a sort of prince charming whose figure stands out against the sky as dusk settles over the city and the first stars come out.

Vasallo smiles and winks at her.

Because what Vasallo has just done for her is so simple yet so valuable, Romina gives him a kiss on the lips.

Vasallo, for whom Romina is a stunningly beautiful woman beyond reach, doesn't move an inch.

Romina takes Vasallo in: he is shy and modest in his apron, the large city looming in the background. She finds his noble face moving. She kisses him a second time.

Vasallo, blushing yet full of passion, kisses her.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL - 20<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR HALLWAY. DUSK.**

The elevator doors open.

Ariel and his BEST FRIEND, who has been helping him on his fruitless search for Romina, return to the party.

Some friends and relatives who are also looking for her walk up to Ariel and his friend.

ROMINA'S FRIEND

So?

ARIEL

She's not downstairs. At least, no one saw her there.

ROMINA'S RELATIVE

But what happened?

ARIEL

Nothing, she had a headache...  
She must have gone to buy some  
aspirin. But don't worry, I'm  
sure she'll be right back.

Ariel's best friend looks around and finds the door to the  
backstairs ajar.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HOTEL - ROOFTOP TERRACE. DUSK.**

What Ariel and his best friend see as soon as they reach  
the terrace leaves them in a state of shock.

Romina and Vasallo are having sex against a wall.

Romina's dress is lifted up and Vasallo's pants are around  
his ankles.

ARIEL

Romina?

Startled, Vasallo jumps back and pulls up his pants.

ROMINA

(pointing to Ariel)  
You turn around and walk out of  
here. Don't say a fucking word.

Vasallo pulls up his fly and acknowledges Ariel with an  
awkward gesture.

ROMINA

You have no idea who you just  
fucked with. I'm going to get  
you for every last dime. Every  
property your dad put in your  
name to get around taxes will be  
mine too.

(showing him her ring)  
So now we're married, legally  
married. I am going to spend my  
days sleeping with every  
goddamned person who lays an eye  
on me, anyone who shows me the  
slightest sign of affection. And  
when you want to get a divorce,  
I am going to take acting  
classes so I can sit in front of  
the judge with a sweet little  
face and say, "Your honor, I'm  
doing everything I can to make  
this work." That way, our  
marriage will last forever. I'm  
going to post all your secrets  
on Facebook. I'm going to

torture you until you beg me to stop; you are going to be so humiliated that your only way out will be jumping off a bridge. And then when death does us part, when YOUR death does us part, I'll have it all.

Ariel turns around and vomits.

Vasallo stares at Romina. He is stunned. He never imagined how crazy she was.

Romina strides past Ariel and his best friend and goes back down to the reception.

Vasallo, who still has a visible hard on, leaves as well.

When he walks by Ariel, he lifts his fists to protect himself, as if he thought Ariel might hit him, but Ariel is too much of a wreck to do anything like that.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL - WEDDING RECEPTION. DUSK.**

The Disc Jockey—who is falling behind schedule—sees Romina come back in and starts the next set.

THE SONG "MASHIAJ" (MESSIAH) STARTS TO PLAY

Romina's friends, who couldn't find her anywhere, all cheer when they see her.

ROMINA'S FRIEND

Where the hell were you?

Romina gestures as if to say, "Tell you later" and starts dancing euphorically.

Ariel, pale, comes back into the reception and sees Romina flying up in the air. She is being tossed up and down by the guests.

Ignoring the look on his face, Ariel's friends pick him up and carry him to the middle of the dance floor.

ARIEL

Let me down, assholes!

The classic Hebrew song *Mashiaj* sparks euphoria among the young Jewish guests; Ariel's friends push him this way and that, grabbing at his genitals.

The cameramen, amused, get it all on tape.

The women sit Romina down in a chair and lift it up in the air to carry her around the room.

The men do the same with Ariel.

ARIEL  
(to his best friend)  
Tell them to let me down!

Ariel's best friend tries to persuade the others, but because of the alcohol and loud music, they totally ignore him.

Romina and Ariel, up on their chairs, are brought close together and then moved apart by their friends and relatives.

Romina smiles a huge smile at Ariel. She looks psychotic.

From his perch, Ariel sees Vasallo through the swinging door that leads into the kitchen as he tells the WAITERS and COOKS what happened.

Meanwhile, in yet another unbridled act, Ariel's friends start pulling off his clothes.

ARIEL  
No, please stop, this is  
serious!

The guys think that Ariel is trying to trick them into stopping and, laughing, they keep on removing his clothes.

Cuca, Ariel's mother, intervenes.

CUCA  
Boys, careful, please! David!  
Mariano!

Isidoro, Ariel's dad, stops her, gesturing as if to say, "They're just having fun."

While Ariel struggles to keep on his boxers, Romina's best friend takes her by the hand and they start twirling in the middle of a circle that forms around them.

When they stop spinning, it's Romina's turn to pick a new partner. She walks right over to Table 27 and picks Lourdes.

Lourdes and her coworkers have their jackets on and are all ready to leave.

ROMINA  
No, no, stay, everything is  
fine! Seriously, I want you to  
stay. Come on, *Lour*.

Ariel's coworkers are absolutely stunned at this turn of events.

Lourdes, blinded by the light of the camera that is following Romina around, can't say no.

Romina takes her by the hands and starts spinning her around the center of the dance floor.

Lourdes starts to feel ill.

LOURDES

Please stop! I'm getting dizzy.

ROMINA

(grabbing onto her wrists so she won't break free)

Relax. This is fun.

Keeping pace with Romina and Lourdes, the camera spins faster and faster.

Lourdes starts to panic.

LOURDES

Stop! For real!

ROMINA

(yelling)

Did you hear about the amusement park they closed because a rollercoaster flew off the tracks--

Suddenly Lourdes smashes into a mirror against the wall, which shatters into a million pieces.

The music stops.

All of the guests are stunned.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL - 20<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR HALLWAY. NIGHT.**

Lourdes is covered with blood and can't stop crying.

A NURSE disinfects and bandages her wounds.

Another NURSE comes out of the elevator with a STRETCHER.

The DOCTOR that is in charge—a 40-year-old man from Ecuador—talks to Lourdes's coworkers. Ariel is also there.

DOCTOR

The wounds appear to be superficial, but we are going to take her in just to make sure she hasn't torn any tendons.

Romina, who also has small cuts on her face and arms, struggles to get past Ariel's best friend—who has clearly been appointed to keep an eye on her—and then comes over to the group.

ROMINA

Listen, Lourdes, do you have a good health insurance policy? Otherwise I can talk to--

ARIEL'S BEST FRIEND

Let's go back to the reception, Romina, please.

Ariel's best friend speaks courteously but his body language is clear: he pulls her out of the room.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL - WEDDING RECEPTION. NIGHT.**

While two MAIDS sweep up the broken glass, Bocha and Marga, Romina's parents, are dancing to *New York, New York* in the middle of the dance floor along with a few other older couples; rumors have been spreading among the guests and no one looks very happy but a few try to keep up the party spirit.

Cuca and Isidoro—Ariel's parents—talk with a LAWYER FRIEND. All three look worried.

Romina breaks away from Ariel's best friend, takes another glass of champagne and walks over to her friends, making a gesture as if to say, "Let's keep the party going!"

ROMINA

Wasn't it hilarious when the mirror smashed to pieces? I can't believe it.

ROMINA'S FRIEND

I don't know if "hilarious" is the word, Romi. She's really hurt...

The WEDDING PLANNER comes over to Romina with the schedule.

WEDDING PLANNER

Romina, it's time for you to toss the bouquet, do the garters, cut the cake, I'm not sure what you want to do... Whether you want to go ahead with it or call it quits--

ARIEL

(decisively)  
Let's call it off.

ROMINA

But why? What a party pooper!

ARIEL

I've had enough, Romina. This ends here. Let the people finish eating and go home. I already told the disc jockey that this was the last set.

Romina sees Cuca-Ariel's mother-standing behind the groom. She seems to be aware of the situation and is supportive of her son's decision to end the reception.

ROMINA

Don't tell me this is mommy's idea.

Romina starts to laugh.

ARIEL

That's enough, Romina, for real. This is no joke. To give you an idea how serious this is, my family's lawyer has recommended that I go to the police station to report the threats you've made.

ROMINA

Wait a minute-she made a plan? I get it... your mom is a real (she exaggerates the phrase)  
"Wedding Planner!"

ARIEL

(exploding)  
That's enough! What did I do to you?!  
(he looks teary eyed)  
Nothing I did to you justifies this!!

Ariel falls to his knees and starts to sob.

The guests come over to listen in. They are wondering what has happened and want to help but they are not sure what to do.

ARIEL

Crazy bitch!! That's what you are!

Cuca leans over and embraces her son. They cry together.

ROMINA

Oh God...

(gesturing to the cameraman)  
Get this on tape, Nestor, please.

The cameraman makes a face.

ROMINA  
(nodding)  
Shoot this...  
(to the photographer)  
You too, come on.

The two cameramen, clearly uncomfortable with the task, get the moment on film.

ROMINA  
I am going to be watching this one...  
(to the guests)  
When I get married next time—when I find a guy who's really worth it—I'm going to put this blooper on the big screen. What a riot... I'm going to watch this one with my kids. Instead of *Dora the Explorer* and that other crap, I'll put this DVD on... Oh hold on! I'll slip this into one of those digital picture frames and have it on all day, and when--

Cuca explodes with anger. She jumps up and grabs Romina by the hair.

Bocha, Romina's father, grabs hold of Cuca's jaw and starts twisting her face to force her to let go.

Isidoro—Ariel's father and Cuca's husband—comes over to intercede on Cuca's behalf, but Bocha stops him in his tracks.

BOCHA  
Stay right where you are or there'll be hell to pay.

ISIDORO  
I was going to help you out, Bocha.

Bocha, Isidoro and other guests that come over to help, manage to get Cuca off of Romina and drag her out of the reception.

Ariel is surrounded by sympathetic friends and relatives. The WEDDING PLANNER brings Romina a glass of water.

ROMINA

Hold on, let's do the bouquet  
toss!

Romina goes running towards the dance floor, takes hold of the bouquet and tosses it in the air, but it hits the disco ball on the ceiling, which sways from side to side, and falls to the floor.

Romina's friends look horrified; they love her but at this point, she's like a stranger to them.

ROMINA

Come on, girls! Don't leave me  
alone on this one.

MILLIE, Romina's cousin (age 20, thin and still in braces) grabs the bouquet.

ROMINA

Oh, Millie, you got it!

Ariel's relatives walk into the reception along with the Ecuadorean doctor who has just been with Lourdes.

DOCTOR

Romina, I'd like to ask you to--

ROMINA

Wait a sec. A picture with  
Millie!

The photographer shoots a few pictures.

The doctor gestures at the photographer to stop.

DOCTOR

(to Romina)

I'm going to ask you to calm  
down so I can take your blood  
pressure, OK?

ROMINA

What a nice accent. What's your  
name?

DOCTOR

(putting the arm band on  
Romina)

Gastón.

Someone brings over a few chairs.

When she sits down, Romina looks down and sees the garters on her legs.

ROMINA

Oh the garters! Hey everyone,  
the garters!

(she starts taking them  
off)  
One for you--

Romina puts a garter on the doctor's head and he can't help but laugh.

Some of the guests laugh too.

ROMINA  
Hey Gastón, wouldn't you like to  
marry Millie?

Millie bursts out laughing.

ROMINA  
Come on, let's prove this  
bouquet thing is true!  
Everything else might be a lie,  
but not the bouquet thing!  
Wouldn't that be lovely?  
(taking Millie by the  
hand)  
Come on, Gastón, see how Millie  
looks at you... Get her now  
because when those braces come  
off, she's going to be fighting  
off the guys.  
(singing)  
*Kiss, kiss--*

DOCTOR  
(shaking his head but  
still laughing)  
Romina, your loved ones have  
told me that we need to end the  
party and that--

ROMINA  
My loved ones? No. My loved ones  
are you, Millie and anyone else  
who wants to stay and dance...  
(to her friends)  
Come on girls, I need your help.  
I had this really terrible thing  
happen but now I just want to  
relax and enjoy this wedding. I  
don't think I'll ever get  
married again... Do you know  
what the catering cost? And the  
hot pastrami hasn't even come  
out yet! Tell the truth, Ariel,  
we were arguing for weeks. No to  
the hot pastrami! Yes to the hot  
pastrami! We finally paid for  
it, and I want some!

ARIEL  
(screaming)  
You are out of your fucking  
mind!

DOCTOR  
Her blood pressure is normal.

The doctor takes the band off Romina and looks at Ariel's relatives as if to say, "There is nothing I can do."

ROMINA  
(to the waiters)  
Can you bring out the pastrami?

The waiters, who all know what happened between Romina and Vasallo and are very amused by the situation, start moving.

WAITER  
(heading into the  
kitchen)  
Hot pastrami and beer, boys!  
Let's go, the party's not over!

ROMINA  
(to the guests, while  
gesturing to the Disc  
Jockey for a new set of  
songs)  
Stay if you want, and if you  
don't, off you go!

Several of Romina's friends along with Ariel's uncle (who doesn't seem to understand what is going on) seem to be on Romina's side.

THE SONG "LUNA DE MIEL EN TU MANO" BY VIRUS, STARTS TO PLAY

Many guests leave, but many stay and dance.

Vasallo glances out at Romina through the swinging door that leads into the kitchen.

Romina gestures at him to come out and dance.

Vasallo smiles, shaking his head, but his fellow waiters push him out towards the dance floor.

Other waiters bring out the hot pastrami.

Ariel, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, runs towards the bay windows and tries to throw himself out, but he slams up against the glass and falls back onto the floor instead.

The only ones who seem to notice are his best friend and a distant relative, who come over to help him.

A few of the guests who are leaving come back to grab a pastrami sandwich for the road.

The music and lively chatter of the wedding reception shifts to a deathly, almost dramatic silence, that leads us into our next story.

FILM FACTORY

## THE DEAL

**EXT. STREETS OF AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD. DAWN.**

A black Volvo drives up a slope in a peaceful neighborhood.

It veers this way and that as if the driver were not in his right mind.

The driver clicks the remote control to open the gate to a mansion.

The Volvo runs into a trash can, which is dragged with it as it drives into the garage.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - MASTER BEDROOM. DAYBREAK.**

MAURICIO (55) is asleep next to his wife HELENA (50).

A tearful voice wakes them up.

SANTIAGO

Dad... Dad.

Mauricio wakes up with a start to find SANTIAGO (18), their son, extremely upset.

MAURICIO

What's the matter?

Helena wakes up as well.

HELENA

What's the matter, Santiago?  
Tell us.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - ENTRANCE AND LIVING ROOM. DAWN.**

An imported 4x4 parks in front of the house.

Devastated, Helena greets the family LAWYER (a robust man of 60) and takes him into the living room.

HELENA

Promise me he won't go to jail.  
I'm begging you.

LAWYER

We'll do everything we can for him.

On a television tuned into a news channel we see images of what has happened.

REPORTER (V.O.)

*Once again, on Libertador Avenue a runaway driver has hit a pregnant woman.*

Stern, Mauricio questions Santiago.

MAURICIO

Tell me the truth, Santiago. Were you drunk? Had you smoked marijuana?

Overwhelmed, Santiago can't stop sobbing. When he sees the lawyer, Mauricio stands up and embraces him.

REPORTER (V.O.)

*Witnesses say that it was an expensive black car, though they were not able to identify the model or make out the license plate number. The police are currently examining the images taken by security cameras in the area in order to locate the owner of the car.*

LAWYER

Is the car registered under your name?

MAURICIO

Yes.

LAWYER

And this is the address on the registration?

Mauricio nods.

SANTIAGO

(stammering)  
What have I done? What have I done?

MAURICIO

(furious)  
What have you done?? You've ruined all our lives. That's what you've done!

HELENA  
(preventing Mauricio  
from hitting him)  
Help him, Mauricio. For God's  
sake, help him!

LAWYER  
Let's try to calm down and act  
swiftly, shall we?

Mauricio takes a tranquilizer.

LAWYER  
Santiago, I need you to answer  
some questions for me. Was there  
anyone else in the car?

Santiago shakes his head.

LAWYER  
Did you tell anyone what  
happened?

SANTIAGO  
No, no--

LAWYER  
Good.  
(to Mauricio)  
Shall we take a look at the car?

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - KITCHEN AND GARAGE.  
DAY.**

Mauricio, the lawyer and Santiago walk into the garage  
through the kitchen.

The hood of the car is dented and there are blood stains on  
the bumper.

LAWYER  
It has tinted glass windows. Do  
you remember whether or not the  
windows were rolled up?

SANTIAGO  
I think they were.

LAWYER  
Try to remember.

SANTIAGO  
Yes.

LAWYER

Did you get out of the car to see what had happened or did you just keep going?

SANTIAGO

(shaking his head  
guiltily)  
I kept going.

LAWYER

Where were you coming from?

SANTIAGO

From a bar downtown.

LAWYER

Did anyone see you arrive or leave in the car? Your friends? A girl?

SANTIAGO

No... I don't know. I can't remember.

We continue to hear the news broadcast from the television set in the kitchen. Mauricio walks over to hear better.

REPORTER(V.O.)

*We have just been informed that both the woman and her unborn baby died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.*

Overwhelmed, Helena starts sobbing even louder.

Furious, Mauricio throws his cup of coffee into the kitchen sink, breaking it in pieces.

Suddenly, through the window that opens onto the yard, the GROUNDSKEEPER (a 40-year-old man with Indian features) walks out of his quarters near the grill area and starts filtering the pool as he does every day.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - MAURICIO'S STUDY. DAY.**

Behind closed doors, Mauricio and his lawyer speak to the groundskeeper.

MAURICIO

I feel deeply ashamed by what I am about to propose. But we have known each other for years and I think I can trust you. You are a father. I know that you, like I, want what is best for your

children. An arrangement like the one I am about to propose might be good for you.

The groundskeeper nods.

MAURICIO

If you say that you took our car out for a drive while we were asleep, that you were the one driving it at the time of the accident, I will provide you with the best lawyer (gesturing towards his lawyer) so that you get the shortest sentence possible--

LAWYER

(butting in)  
With good conduct, you'll be out in less than a year and a half.

MAURICIO

...and for that enormous favor, I would give you five hundred thousand dollars.

The groundskeeper sighs.

MAURICIO

That's more than you could earn in a lifetime's work. It will ensure a home and education for your family for the rest of their lives. You know Santiago. There is no way he could survive in prison. He wouldn't be able to take it.

The groundskeeper nods, disgruntled.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - GARAGE. DAY.**

The lawyer, wearing a pair of kitchen gloves, takes out anything that might incriminate Santiago from the car: cigarettes, a plastic cup and so forth. He wipes the dashboard, the windows and the CDs to remove fingerprints.

LAWYER

(to the groundskeeper)  
Grab onto the wheel with both hands please.

Obedient yet hesitant, the groundskeeper grabs the steering wheel and the car keys to leave his fingerprints on them.

LAWYER

(instructing him)  
So you had had a little whisky,  
the owners of the house were  
asleep and when you went to put  
the car in the garage, as you do  
every night, you felt the urge  
to go out for a drive. If they  
asked, you were planning to tell  
them that you had gone to put  
air in the tires.

The groundskeeper nods.

Helena brings a glass of whisky in from the kitchen.

The lawyer gestures for him to drink it.

LAWYER

Out of nowhere something crossed  
your path. You felt the impact  
and that's all you remember  
until you woke up in the car.  
Got it?

The groundskeeper nods, though he appears unconvinced.

HELENA

(to the groundskeeper)  
Thank you, Jose. My gratitude is  
beyond words.

Helena is going to embrace the groundskeeper, but the  
lawyer intercepts her.

LAWYER

No physical contact please. It's  
not advisable.

GROUNDSKEEPER

(drinking the whisky)  
I think I'd like to discuss this  
with my wife.

LAWYER

She can't know a thing about  
this, Jose. At least not for the  
time being. We can't take the  
risk that she'll talk. And if  
she does, the deal will be off  
and you'll go to jail anyway for  
perjury.

The groundskeeper nods.

Santiago walks in from an upper floor of the house carrying  
a bag. He has just taken a shower, but he still looks a  
wreck.

LAWYER

(to Helena and Santiago)  
You two are going to take my 4x4  
and head to the estate. Look  
down every time you go through a  
toll, don't go inside any gas  
station, and if you buy anything  
along the way, pay cash. Don't  
use a credit card anywhere.

The lawyer hands Helena the key to his 4x4.

Helena nods.

The lawyer looks at Santiago again and notices that the  
groundskeeper is much shorter.

LAWYER

(to the groundskeeper)  
Let's see, Jose, please sit in  
the car for a minute.

The groundskeeper sits down in the driver's seat.

The lawyer moves the seat forward several notches.

Suddenly, we hear the sound of sirens approaching the  
property.

LAWYER

(to Helena and Santiago)  
There's no time. Go to your  
rooms and lie down. You know  
nothing about this. Get going.

Nervous and frightened, Helena and Santiago head upstairs.

Mauricio lets out a cry, unable to handle the stress.

LAWYER

Take it easy and don't say a  
thing. I'll take care of  
everything.

Mauricio nods and tries to pull himself together.

The lawyer nudges the groundskeeper to finish the glass of  
whisky and he takes the glass into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - SIDEWALK. DAWN.**

A number of police cars surround the house.

The lawyer opens the front door and greets the DETECTIVE,  
who arrives with the POLICE CAPTAIN.

DETECTIVE  
Mauricio Pereyra Hamilton?

LAWYER  
(offering him his hand  
gravely)  
His lawyer. How do you do? I was  
about to call the police  
station. Come right in. What a  
terrible tragedy.

The detective gestures to the police captain to wait  
outside and he walks in.

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - LIVING ROOM, KITCHEN  
AND GARAGE. DAY.**

The lawyer walks the detective into the garage.

LAWYER  
About one hour ago, my client  
heard noises coming from the  
ground floor and thought it was  
a burglar. When he reached the  
garage, he discovered the  
groundskeeper sitting in the car  
drunk and in a state of shock.  
He then turned on the news and  
he put it all together. That's  
when he called me.

The detective nods and walks into the garage, where he  
finds Mauricio and the groundskeeper.

LAWYER  
Mauricio Pereyra, this is the  
detective on duty.

Upset, Mauricio gives him his hand.

LAWYER  
And that gentleman is Jose, who  
has worked for the Pereyras  
for... fifteen years?

Mauricio nods.

Sitting on the ground and leaning against the garage door,  
the groundskeeper gestures a greeting without looking up.

From the television set in the kitchen, we see what is  
happening at the entrance to the police station.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
*The latest information indicates  
that the police have found the  
driver's whereabouts. We are  
going to ask the husband of the*

*victim for his reaction to this development.*

The groundskeeper catches a glimpse of the screen through the door, which is opened a crack.

The HUSBAND OF THE VICTIM—a bald man—is totally out of control.

HUSBAND OF THE VICTIM

*What's my reaction? What do you expect my reaction to be? All I can say is that whoever did this is going to pay. Can you hear me? No matter where you hide, I'm going to find you!*

The detective closes the door between the garage and the kitchen and stares at the groundskeeper.

DETECTIVE

What happened, Jose?

LAWYER

Pardon me, Jose, I want to remind you that you have the right to remain silent.

(to the detective)

At the request of my client, I will be representing Mr. Torres. He has no record, and he is the father of two children.

DETECTIVE

(to the groundskeeper)

Can you tell me about the accident?

The lawyer gestures for the groundskeeper to respond.

GROUNDSKEEPER

Well, I always park Mr. Mauricio's car, and yesterday... I had had a little to drink and I wanted to go for a drive. I have wanted to see how fast the new car could go and I didn't think there would be a problem.

DETECTIVE

Hmm.

GROUNDSKEEPER

When I was going down Libertador something crossed my path that I couldn't make out. I felt a thud, but I thought it was a dog.

Mauricio and the lawyer look at one another; the story is different from what they had agreed on, but it's not bad.

GROUNDSKEEPER

Since I was afraid that I had dented the car, I hurried back to try to fix it before Mr. Mauricio woke up.

Satisfied, the lawyer gestures at him to stop there.

The detective thinks for a few seconds. He looks at Mauricio, who is shaking his head, saddened; he looks at the lawyer who holds his gaze, and then at the car.

DETECTIVE

(to the groundskeeper)  
Jose, would you be kind enough to sit in the driver's seat?

The groundskeeper looks over at the lawyer, who gestures at him to go ahead and do it, and then sits down as instructed.

The detective takes note of where the groundskeeper's head hits the seat and he puts his own head at the same level.

The lawyer, aware that he has made a mistake, grows uncomfortable.

Mauricio notices, though he doesn't know what exactly has gone wrong.

DETECTIVE

Jose, do you use the rearview mirrors when you drive?

GROUNDSKEEPER

What do you mean?

DETECTIVE

In the positions they are in now, you would only be able to see the roof of the car. It's a miracle that you only ran over one person.

GROUNDSKEEPER

Well, maybe they shifted during the collision.

DETECTIVE

All of them at the same time? I don't think so. I would say that someone a good bit taller than you was driving.

The detective stands in front of Mauricio, who is as tall as Santiago.

DETECTIVE

Does anyone else live here?

MAURICO

My wife, my son...  
(smiling nervously)  
And my dog.

DETECTIVE

(flatly)  
Leave the dog out of this. I  
would like to meet your wife and  
your son, though.

LAWYER

Yes, of course. Come into the  
living room and I will ask them  
to come down.

The detective opens the door to the kitchen and walks back  
into the living room.

Mauricio, desperate, looks over at his lawyer.

LAWYER

(in hushed tones,  
gesturing at him to stay  
calm)  
If you agree, I am going to  
start negotiating.

CUT TO:

**INT - EXT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - LIVING ROOM.  
DAY.**

Nervous, Mauricio stirs his coffee.

Through the window at the front of the house, he sees a few  
more police cars arrive as well as some television crews.

Through the large window that opens onto the backyard, he  
sees the lawyer and the detective talking near the pool.

The detective has a serious look on his face. He thinks,  
shakes his head, says something and then shakes his head  
again.

Every so often he looks towards the upper levels of the  
house, where Helena and Santiago's bedrooms are.

After exchanging some final words with the detective, the  
lawyer asks him to wait. He walks back inside the house to  
talk to Mauricio. Judging from his expression, it doesn't  
look like good news.

MAURICIO

Trouble?

LAWYER

No. Everything's fine. He is willing to reach an agreement, but it's going to be expensive.

MAURICIO

(relieved yet worried)  
Expensive? How much?

LAWYER

A million. He has seen the house, your lifestyle, he won't go for less. The good thing is he can take care of everything. He knows the police captain, most of the judges, and he would help us find an alibi.

MAURICIO

For the groundskeeper? Can't we leave him out of this?

LAWYER

Well, someone's got to take the heat. Two people have been killed, Mauricio. It's been all over the news.

MAURICIO

(shaking his head)  
OK, but I'm not sure I have that much cash... That's a total of one and a half million dollars.

LAWYER

That's right, plus my part. We will talk about that later, of course, but--

MAURICIO

(lost in thought)  
Your part?

LAWYER

Of course. I am the one who is working this out.

MAURICIO

I pay your firm fortunes every year.

LAWYER

For other things. These are not fees, Mauricio, I am putting my reputation on the line here. I was about to lend my car to your wife and son to get away. I don't think you really understand what's going on here.

MAURICIO

(annoyed)

How much are we talking about?

LAWYER

I don't know. Another five hundred?

Stunned, Mauricio nods.

LAWYER

Of course, if you want to call someone else, tell me and I'll leave right now.

MAURICIO

(looking at the detective who is waiting in the yard)

OK, close the deal.

The lawyer nods and heads over to the detective to talk.

Mauricio, outraged, notices that the groundskeeper is looking at him from the threshold to the kitchen; it seems that he has heard the conversation.

MAURICIO

Everything OK, Jose?

GROUNDSKEEPER

Actually, no.

Mauricio looks at him inquisitively.

GROUNDSKEEPER

For spending two years in jail I'm going to get as much as your lawyer? I may be poor, but...

MAURICIO

You know that what you are trying to do is low, don't you?

GROUNDSKEEPER

(laughing)

Low? You go to jail then. Last night I watched a cowboy movie and had a cup of herbal tea. I was asleep by eleven, like every night.

MAURICIO

How much more do you want, Jose? Don't mince your words because there is no time.

JOSE

The amount we discussed plus an apartment on the beach, in Mar de Ajó.

The lawyer and the detective walk over.

LAWYER

Mauricio, Jose, can we talk for a moment?

Mauricio stares at Jose for a few seconds; Jose doesn't back down.

LAWYER

Mauricio.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - MAURICIO'S STUDY. DAY.**

The detective explains the next steps to Mauricio, the lawyer and the groundskeeper, who are all sitting around the desk.

DETECTIVE

Let's speak frankly, gentlemen, because time is running out and there's no room for misunderstandings. The story that you had come up with will be followed just as planned.

(to Mauricio)

I will ask you and the rest of your family to make statements shortly, so no one should go anywhere.

Tense, Mauricio nods.

DETECTIVE

(to the groundskeeper)

You will leave here hooded and in handcuffs. Outside, you will be met by the press and angry citizens who will ask you questions and insult you. Don't say a word. We can't get tied up in controversy—we need to make sure that the case moves forward without a hitch. You will be sentenced and everyone gets what they want.

From upstairs, we hear an argument between Helena and Santiago. After a struggle, Helena manages to force the door to the study open.

HELENA

Mauricio, Santiago says that he wants to confess, that he is going to go out there and say what he did. Please talk to him, he has no idea what he is doing.

Through the door we see Santiago on the stairs, crying.

GROUNDSKEEPER

(afraid that the deal will fall through)  
Santiago, calm down. Your mother is right, we can work this out some other way. Don't you worry.

MAURICIO

Could you please close the door and deal with Santiago?

Helena accepts the "challenge," closes the door and returns to her son to try to calm him down.

DETECTIVE

(to the lawyer, resuming the conversation)  
From now on, you will be nexus between us all. I will not exchange another word with Mr. Pereyra except for when he testifies. You, Jose, must avoid communication of any kind with anyone but your lawyer.

GROUNDSKEEPER

OK.

DETECTIVE

(to Mauricio)  
I'm going to need some cash to cover operating expenses. Something in the ballpark of thirty thousand dollars. You will have to get that to me first thing Monday morning.

MAURICIO

Pardon my asking, but what exactly are your "operating expenses"?

DETECTIVE

Well, there are over twenty policemen outside. And there is the captain... If anyone has seen or heard anything, they have to get a cut. There are also internal issues to attend

to... We have to be careful of  
any loose ends.

The lawyer looks at Mauricio and nods, indicating that this  
is how these things are handled.

DETECTIVE

So, if you agree, let's--

MAURICIO

(clearly tense,  
interrupting)

Look, I can get that money to  
you, but it's coming out of the  
amount we agreed on. I'm not  
putting out another cent.

LAWYER

Mauricio, come on.

MAURICIO

You come on. I know that I'm in  
a rough spot but I will not be  
ripped apart like this.

LAWYER

What the detective is explaining  
to you is perfectly reasonable.  
Let's not get distracted by  
thirty thousand dollars.

MAURICIO

Well then you put them up. Take  
them from your share.

DETECTIVE

(laughing)

Listen, there is no time for  
arguments like this. If you want  
to see this through, we must act  
now.

MAURICIO

Then take it out of your share.  
You are getting a million  
dollars and you want thirty  
thousand for contingencies?

DETECTIVE

(puzzled)

Who's getting a million dollars?

Mauricio gives his lawyer a penetrating looking.

LAWYER

(to the detective)

No, he's right. The million  
dollars covers contingencies.  
Your part plus contingencies  
comes to a million.

GRUNDSKEEPER

No one is getting a dime from my part.

MAURICIO

(fed up)  
You know what, fellows? This is over. No deal.

LAWYER

Hold on, hold on. What do you mean no deal?

MAURICIO

(standing up)  
It's off, that's it. There's nothing for anyone!  
(he opens the door and shouts inside)  
Santiago!! You want to confess? I think that's a great idea. Go out and do it. I gave you the best in life and you have never paid me any mind, so now go fuck yourself.

Mauricio walks out of the study. His lawyer follows him.

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - STAIRS AND HALLWAY. DAY.**

Helena walks out of Santiago's room and blocks the door with a piece of furniture to keep her son from escaping.

HELENA

What happened? What's going on?

MAURICIO

(going upstairs to his bedroom)  
They are a bunch of vultures, that's what's going on! But it's over. I'm not the one who killed someone!

LAWYER

Mauricio, calm down, let's be reasonable--

HELENA

For God's sake, Mauricio, this is our son! You saw him come into this world! You can't do this to him!

Mauricio walks into his bedroom, slams the door and locks it.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - MASTER BEDROOM. DAY.**

Through the window we see the PEOPLE on the sidewalk in front of the house demanding justice and the head of the killer.

The POLICE BLOCK holds back the crowd.

Mauricio closes the curtains and the blinds, and turns on the television.

There is live coverage from the front of his house. But Mauricio changes the station until he comes to a classical music concert on the *Film & Arts* channel.

The knocking on his door is constant.

To block out the sound, Mauricio turns up the volume on the TV, walks into the bathroom and fills up the bathtub.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - LIVING ROOM, STAIRS AND UPSTAIRS HALLWAY. DAY.**

In the living room, the lawyer, the detective, Helena and the groundskeeper seem to have worked out a deal.

At a pause between movements in the piece of music Mauricio is listening to, the lawyer hurries up the stairs and once again knocks on the bedroom door.

LAWYER

Mauricio, open up please. I have something important to tell you, something I think you will like. Can we talk in a civilized fashion for a minute?

Mauricio opens the door. He is wearing a bathrobe and his hair is wet.

MAURICIO

What?

LAWYER

All set. We agreed that the thirty thousand will be absorbed in equal parts.

MAURICIO

I don't want anything to do with any of this, end of story. Get out of my house.

HELENA

(walking over)

I remind you that two people were killed. If Santiago is found guilty, the cost will be much higher. Jose, on the other hand, is penniless.

MAURICIO

Exactly. Who is going to compensate the family of the victims? I would rather that the money go there, which is how it should be.

(looking over at the detective)

That guy gets paid from my tax dollars? He should investigate what happened.

(to the lawyer)

You want to defend my son? Talk to him and establish a fee. If he can pay it, great. I had nothing to do with this. Do what you have to do. Come on, get to work.

The shouting of the crowd in the street grows louder and louder.

CROWD

*Justice! Justice! Justice!*

LAWYER

We had reached an agreement, Mauricio. It's not very gentlemanly to pull out like this.

Mauricio lets out a laugh.

LAWYER

I'm sorry if you were offended in any way, but since the time I got here all I have done is defend your family's interests.

MAURICIO

And I thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are really a gem.

HELENA

(looking Mauricio in the eyes)

Can I talk to them to see if I can improve the terms?

The expression on Mauricio's face seems to say "Do whatever you want."

CUT TO:

**INT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - MASTER BEDROOM. DAY.**

Mauricio finishes shaving in front of the bathroom mirror.

Helena and the lawyer knock on the door and walk inside. They seem a little more calm.

HELENA

May we come in?

LAWYER

I think we have a better deal. Jose agrees to come down to the initial five hundred thousand, he says he can do without the apartment in Mar de Ajó. And the detective and I will share the million. That's it. Not another dime. But we have to act immediately. The press is outside and the detective says that he cannot stall with the police captain a second more.

MAURICIO

(thinking)

No. I will put up a total of a million, you guys divide it up as you see fit.

LAWYER

Hold on. What do you mean a million in tot--

MAURICIO

That's my final offer. If it's a go, fine, if not, go on your way. If you knock on the door with another deal I will personally go out there and turn you and the detective in for extortion.

The lawyer cannot believe it. Helena wants to intervene, but she understands that Mauricio is negotiating.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HOUSE IN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - SIDEWALK. DAY.**

All seen from the groundskeeper's perspective.

A police puts on the handcuffs and pulls a black shirt over his head.

We walk off the property in the custody of the detective and police captain.

As expected, the crowd insults and throws things.

The detective walks over to the cameras to make a statement.

JOURNALIST #1

Sir, could you reveal the identity of the accused?

DETECTIVE

For the time being that's not public information, but I can tell you that the case is virtually closed; we have a signed confession that I will be presenting to the judge in a few hours' time.

Through the black shirt, the groundskeeper looks up at the house.

Through the window, we see Mauricio. Feeling guilty for yelling at his son, he embraces him.

Helena watches the two men embrace.

Suddenly shouting is heard and people in the crowd begin to run every which way.

The groundskeeper doesn't know what is going on until he sees a bald man pushing his way past the police escort and coming straight for him.

We recognize him: he is the husband of the victim we saw on television and he is wielding a hammer.

Before the groundkeeper has a chance to say a word, the bald man brings the hammer crashing down on his head.

CUT TO  
BLACK.

The screen stays black for several moments so we can recoup. Then we hear tools clinking (pliers, screwdrivers), leading us into our last story.

# FIRECRACKER

## INT. ABANDONED FACTORY. DAY.

SIMON—an engineer, age 45—is supervising demolition work at the abandoned factory.

PECORA, the technician who is assisting him, finishes drilling a hole in one of the columns.

In the hole Pecora has drilled, Simon inserts a stick of nitroglycerin, which is connected to a wireless detonator.

SIMON  
(on the walky talky)  
Are you ready out there?

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
*Ready to go, Simon.*

Simon activates the detonator and its blue light begins blinking.

The camera pans out and we see that there are blue lights flashing on all the columns.

CUT TO:

## EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - SIDEWALK. DAY.

Simon and Pecora come out of the factory and stand behind the safety line along with other OPERATORS, FIREMEN, POLICE and JOURNALISTS who have come to cover the demolition.

Simon gets ready, gestures to the others that he's going to proceed and sets off the explosives. After a spectacular explosion, the entire factory comes crashing down.

CUT TO:

## INT. SIMON'S CAR. DAY.

Simon is stuck in traffic on a downtown street.

He is talking on the phone with his wife.

SIMON  
I just have to stop by the office and make a few calls and—yes, honey, at five o'clock, I'll be there with the cake, don't you worry.

CUT TO:

**INT. BAKERY. AFTERNOON.**

The BAKER finishes wrapping up a cake.

BAKER

That's a hundred and eighty pesos.

SIMON

What is it, imported?

The baker smiles.

Simon takes out the money and pays.

In the background, through the store window we see the tow truck taking away his car.

CUT TO:

**EXT. BAKERY - SIDEWALK. AFTERNOON.**

Simon comes out carrying the cake and sees that his car is gone.

First he thinks the car has been stolen but then he sees the tow notice on the sidewalk.

Because the curb is chipped, it is nearly impossible to see the yellow paint indicating the no-parking zone.

CUT TO:

**EXT - INT. MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT - BOOTH. AFTERNOON.**

Simon gets out of a taxi with the cake in hand and enters the booth, which is in the middle of the parking lot.

Another "OFFENDER" stalks away cursing with the receipt for the payment he's just made.

EMPLOYEE

(behind reinforced glass, talking through a speaker)

Next.

Simon approaches the booth.

SIMON

Yes, look, I left my car in--

EMPLOYEE

Car registration, please.

SIMON  
(handing it over)  
I don't like your tone.

EMPLOYEE  
I'm not sure what you mean, sir.  
(entering the license  
plate number in the  
computer)  
The tow cost is two hundred  
ninety pesos. You'll receive the  
actual ticket in the mail.

SIMON  
Yes, but you haven't let me say  
what I needed to say. The curb  
is not painted yellow where I  
was parked. I had no way of  
knowing that I wasn't supposed  
to park there.

EMPLOYEE  
I understand, but if you want to  
leave here in your car, you have  
to pay the towing fee. Then you  
can present your complaint from  
Monday through Friday, from 8AM  
to 2PM, at the Department of  
Motor Vehicles on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
of 211 Carlos Pellegrini Street.

SIMON  
Look, I'm going to ask you to  
talk to whomever you have to  
talk to so that I can get my car  
out of here without paying a  
dime. I would also like to be  
reimbursed for the thirty pesos  
I spent to take a taxi over  
here, and to receive an apology.

The employee laughs cynically.

SIMON  
Seriously, where is the office  
where they tell you they're  
sorry when a mistake has been  
made?

The PEOPLE in line start getting impatient.

WOMAN #1  
We're all in the same boat here,  
sir, please hurry it up.

Simon looks over at her tensely.

EMPLOYEE

The officer said that you've committed an infraction, and that's enough evidence for us. The only way for you to get your car back right now is to pay. Otherwise, please step aside and let me wait on the others.

SIMON

What if I don't have the cash?

EMPLOYEE

You can pay by credit card or debit card or come back another day, but let me clarify that there is a parking fee if you leave the vehicle.

Simon can't believe it.

SIMON

(taking out his wallet)  
You know that you're a thief, right?

EMPLOYEE

Just doing my job, sir.

SIMON

If you work for thieves, that makes you a thief, too. You're just a miserable little servant of a corrupt system.

Simon looks as if he could kill the employee right then and there, but he takes out the money and pays.

CUT TO:

**EXT - INT. SIMON'S HOUSE. DUSK.**

Simon parks in front of his house—a fancy property with gates in the suburbs—and hurries in, clearly late.

The few CHILDREN still at the party are singing happy birthday to his SON, who is blowing out a single candle stuck in a large cookie.

VICTORIA, Simon's wife, hugs her son tightly and gives Simon a dirty look.

SIMON

(coming up behind  
Victoria and whispering)  
I've got the cake. Do you want him to blow out the candles again?

VICTORIA

Oh, Simon: shove it up your ass.

The son turns to see Simon and greets him coldly, with an expression of both anger and sadness.

CUT TO:

**INT. SIMON'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM. NIGHT.**

Simon and Victoria argue.

VICTORIA

Couldn't you have taken a cab and picked up the car later? You missed your son's birthday party, Simon!

SIMON

Oh, it's all so easy for you, right? Telling someone else what they did wrong... Do you have any idea how much a taxi all the way out here would have cost? I'm sick of getting ripped off! The curb had no paint left on it! Do you have any idea how angry this makes me?

VICTORIA

And what about this? Do you know how annoying it is that you always have an excuse for everything and that you blame society for your inability to connect? Today it's the tow truck, yesterday it was the traffic and tomorrow it'll be protestors blocking the road, but the truth is that you could have left work early, been here to help get things organized and to open the door and welcome your son's friends. But no: everything is a priority for you except your family. The only time we get from you is what you've got left over from the rest of your commitments. And I've been stupid enough to think that some day you'd change. But you know what? Society isn't going to change and you're not going to change either. And frankly, I don't want to wait around for it anymore.

SIMON

What's that supposed to mean?

VICTORIA

You're an engineer. Figure it out.

Victoria goes into the bathroom.

Simon realizes that Victoria is serious.

CUT TO:

**INT. SERVICE DESKS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES. DAY.**

Simon waits in a long line to contest his ticket.

A CLASSY MAN in the line next to him tells Simon his story, which makes him even angrier.

CLASSY MAN

The worst part is that this is a private firm. Because if you tell me that all the money they take from us is being used for driver's ed or to improve the streets, that would be something at least. But no! They keep it for themselves. The city government hires a private firm to rake it in—in exchange for a nice "commission" for the officials we vote for. That's the way it is and you've got two choices: pay up and relax or give yourself a heart attack over it. And you know what? I've got plenty of reasons to want to live.

The light-up number sign changes to Simon's number.

Reinforced glass separates the PUBLIC from the TRAFFIC AGENTS in the booths.

SIMON

(going over to the booth)

How are you? I got this ticket and I already paid the tow fee, but there was a mistake. The curb wasn't painted.

TRAFFIC AGENT

(pointing to the ticket)  
Can I see that?

Simon slips the ticket through a slot in the window.

TRAFFIC AGENT

(taking just a moment to  
read it)

You owe 360 pesos.

Simon is silent for a moment. He looks left and right and sees dozens of people paying at the booths.

SIMON

Listen, I'm a little upset here, so please hear me out. The curb's paint was all chipped off. This is the address where the car was parked, so you'll have to send someone over to verify what I'm saying, then send me an official apology from the city government when you see I'm right. Then I expect to get back the money I paid for the towing along with compensation for the time I'm wasting on this.

TRAFFIC AGENT

The ticket says that your car was parked in a no-parking zone and that is considered evidence. The fine is 360 pesos and you have no choice but to pay it. If you refuse, interest starts to accumulate and after six months, you lose points on your license.

SIMON

Are you listening to me, you idiot? Evidence, my ass! I'm telling you that the curb was not painted yellow.

TRAFFIC AGENT

First of all, don't insult me, because I'm just doing my job. And second, you should find out more about how the law works. The fact that you aren't familiar with the laws doesn't mean that you are exempt from paying a fine when you break them. If you kill someone and then you say, "Oh, I didn't know murder was a crime," you still go to jail. Maybe it's true, maybe no one had explained it to you before, but you still go to jail. You get me?

SIMON

Sort of. What you're saying is that I need to memorize which streets I can park on and which ones I can't, regardless of whether there are no parking indications?

TRAFFIC AGENT

That's right. The information is available on the Department of Motor Vehicles website.

SIMON

I'm sorry, but can you call your superior?

TRAFFIC AGENT

There are no superiors to call.

SIMON

Oh there aren't? Who are you, the president of Argentina?

TRAFFIC AGENT

Sir, there are a lot of people waiting. If you don't want to pay, let me wait on someone else.

Simon punches the glass.

SIMON

How does it feel to be a thief?  
Huh?

TRAFFIC AGENT

(pushing the alarm button and speaking on a walky talky)  
Security, booth four.

Simon grabs a fire extinguisher and smashes it against the glass, which splinters.

SIMON

Robbers! Thieves!!

Some of the people waiting move away, horrified. Others applaud. Two POLICEMEN take Simon away.

CUT TO:

**INT - EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - ENTRANCE AND SIDEWALK  
OUTSIDE. DUSK.**

Simon comes out from the back of the station, accompanied by an OFFICER.

In the hallway, he sees Pecora, the operator who helped him during the demolition.

PECORA  
(embracing him, smiling)  
Here you are... you weren't  
raped, right?

SIMON  
(shaking his head)  
This is just unbelievable.

Simon and Pecora come out of the station and go down the steps onto the sidewalk.

PECORA  
Ibarra sent the company lawyer  
and authorized the bail payment.

SIMON  
Finally some good news. Because  
lately--

PECORA  
Well, it was sort of good.

Pecora hands him a newspaper article about the incident.

The photograph, which was taken with a security camera, shows Simon hitting the glass with the fire extinguisher.

PECORA  
Your name is in the article and  
it mentions that you're an  
engineer with the firm. Ibarra's  
partners were pretty upset--you  
know that the city government is  
one of our biggest clients.  
They're going to let you go,  
Simon. The decision is final.

Simon can't believe what he is hearing.

CUT TO:

**INT. MEDIATOR'S OFFICE. DAY.**

The LAWYERS are seated at the table between Simon and Victoria.

The MEDIATOR, at the head of the table, listens carefully.

VICTORIA'S LAWYER  
I understand that you are  
unemployed at the moment, Mr.  
Fisher.

SIMON

Yes, so? Is that a crime?

SIMON's lawyer gestures for him to calm down.

VICTORIA'S LAWYER

I didn't say it was a crime.

SIMON

Oh, OK, because that's what it sounded like you were implying.

VICTORIA'S LAWYER

It's not a crime, but it is an obstacle when it comes to paying child support and alimony.

SIMON

I have been supporting my wife since the time I met her, and my son will never want for anything. Rest assured that if I have a problem, I will work it out.

VICTORIA'S LAWYER

(to the mediator)

Luckily, Ms. Malamud is employed at the moment. That's why we are requesting that she be given custody of Agustin.

SIMON

Working? Doing what?

(agitated)

Pardon me, but I was the one keeping things afloat for all those years and just because she has had a job for a month and I haven't, you are threatening to take my son away? I hope that the judge understands how unfair that is.

VICTORIA'S LAWYER

I can assure you that the judge is not going to look favorably on this sort of verbal violence.

SIMON

(hitting the table)

Violence? I'm just saying it is like it is. Where's the violence?

VICTORIA'S LAWYER

The violence is everywhere, Mr. Fisher: on the street, when I

turn on the TV or read a newspaper like this one.

(picking up a newspaper with an article about the fight at the Department of Motor Vehicles)

And I believe that the less contact a child has with things like this, the better off he will be psychologically.

SIMON

(to Victoria)

You want to take my son away from me, Victoria?

VICTORIA

I don't want to take him away, it's just that--

SIMON

(furious, he interrupts her)

Have you lost your mind?

VICTORIA'S LAWYER

(to the mediator as she stands up)

Very well then. My client and I consider this mediation over and we choose to remain silent until we see each other in court.

SIMON

(to his lawyer)

And you don't have anything to say?

SIMON'S LAWYER

(to Victoria and her lawyer)

Yes, see you later.

CUT TO:

**INT. MINING COMPANY - LOBBY. DAY.**

The walls are covered with posters of the excavations that the company has carried out.

The RECEPTIONIST behind the counter greets Simon, who is wearing a suit.

SIMON

How do you do? My name is Simon Fisher, and I spoke to Mr.

Ederer's secretary. I was supposed to leave this for him.

RECEPTIONIST

Very good. Leave everything with me and I will give it to him.

SIMON

Well, actually, I would prefer to give it to him myself. And if Mr. Ederer is in, I would love to discuss something with him briefly.

(clarifying)

I worked for Seijas, Ibarra and Associates for ten years, so I know what I am talking about--

RECEPTIONIST

The engineer is at a construction site at this time.

SIMON

What about his secretary?

RECEPTIONIST

She is at lunch.

SIMON

It's four in the afternoon.

RECEPTIONIST

(ironically)

I don't handle her schedule.

SIMON

You know what? I'm not going to leave you a thing. You can all go to hell: you, Ederer and his secretary.

The HEAD OF SECURITY sees what is going on and walks over, but SIMON has left the building before he has a chance to say anything.

**EXT. MINING COMPANY - SIDEWALK. DAY.**

Annoyed and upset, SIMON takes out his car keys and grumbles as he makes his way over to the corner. When he gets there, he finds that his car is not there.

FLORIST

A Fiat Tempura?

SIMON cannot believe it. On the curb he finds the notice that he has been towed.

CUT TO:

**INT. ATM MACHINE. DAY.**

SIMON breathes deep. With a Zen-like calm, he withdrawals four hundred pesos from the ATM machine.

The receipt that comes out after the transaction says: "BALANCE: 3750 pesos".

CUT TO:

**INT. TOW CAR LOT - BOOTH. AFTERNOON.**

Without saying a word, SIMON pays the fine to get his car back.

CUT TO:

**INT. GARAGE. NIGHT.**

SIMON fills his trunk with dozens of sticks of nitroglycerin, the same ones that were used to demolish the abandoned factory.

CUT TO:

**EXT. CITY STREET. DAY.**

Very carefully, Simon parks his car alongside a curb painted bright yellow, blocking the ramp for wheelchairs.

He gets out of the car, locks it up and goes across the street to a café.

CUT TO:

**INT. DOWNTOWN BAR. DAY.**

A WAITRESS brings him a foamy café latte and three small croissants.

Simon, enjoying the soothing background music and the winter sunlight streaming through the window, watches his car parked across the street.

In no time, a tow truck arrives; a POLICEMAN and TOW TRUCK DRIVER get out.

The tow truck driver attaches the wheels of the car to the clamps while the policeman writes out the ticket and leaves the towing notice on the curb.

Simon asks for the check, dips his last croissant into the coffee, and watches the tow truck drive away with his car.

CUT TO:

**EXT - INT. TOW CAR LOT - BOOTH. DAY.**

The tow truck drives into the parking lot. Another twenty or so tow trucks drive in and out to leave countless towed vehicles.

The outraged OWNER OF A TOWED CAR argues in the booth with the employee who had taken care of Simon before.

OFFENDER

You are rude and this whole thing is totally fascist: first I have to pay and then I get a chance to defend myself?

EMPLOYEE

(ironic, yet clearly fed up with his job)  
Exactly.

OFFENDER

You just won't stop until something awful happens, will you?

No sooner has she said this than an enormous explosion sends all the cars in the lot flying through the air.

The windows of the buildings shatter and a tow truck knocks the roof off the booth.

A trail of smoke rises endlessly into the sky and the alarms of all the cars in the neighborhood go off.

FADE TO:

**NEWSPAPER HEADLINES OFF THE PRESS.**

Newspapers report how the case has developed after the incident.

"FIRECRACKER ENGINEER: CAR TOWED FIVE TIMES IN A YEAR".

"PUBLIC OPINION: UNJUSTIFIED BUT UNDERSTANDABLE".

"THE DEFENSE CLAIMS THAT IT WAS AN ACCIDENT: THE ENGINEER WORKED WITH EXPLOSIVES AND THE MOTION OF THE TOW TRUCK CAUSED THE EXPLOSION".

"INSURANCE COMPANY SUES THE TOWING COMPANY CLAIMING IT IS LIABLE FOR NOT FORESEEING ACCIDENTS OF THIS SORT. REFUSES TO PAY DAMAGES".

"DISMISSAL OF THE PUBLIC OFFICIALS WHO RENEWED THE TOW COMPANY'S LICENSE. INVESTIGATION INTO MILLION-DOLLAR BRIBES".

"THOUSANDS OF CITIZENS DEMAND THE RELEASE OF 'THE FIRECRACKER ENGINEER,' NOW A NATIONAL HERO".

We hear the beginning of the "Happy Birthday" song as sung by a group of lively inmates from the next scene.

INMATES

*Happy birthday to you  
Happy birthday to you*

**INT. PRISON - DINING HALL. NIGHT.**

Victoria and Simon's son walk past the INMATES who are surrounding Simon. They place a cake covered with candles on the table.

INMATES

*Happy birthday, dear Firecracker  
Happy birthday to you*

While Simon thinks about what to wish for, the inmates and PRISON GUARDS applaud and shout things like "Way to go, Fire Cracker!" "You show them, Fire Cracker!" and so forth.

Simon smiles, clearly moved. He embraces his wife and son and blows out the candles.

FADE TO  
BLACK.

The music indicates the movie has come to an end. But block typewriter letters that read "BONUS TRACK" appear on screen.

## BONUS TRACK

**EXT. GALA PREMIERE AT AN IMPORTANT THEATER - SIDEWALK. NIGHT.**

FELIX, an elegant man of 50, pulls up in a luxury car alongside his BEAUTIFUL COMPANION.

At the entrance to the parking lot, camera flashes go off and JOURNALISTS and ADMIRERS greet him.

The PARKING ATTENDANT walks over.

PARKING ATTENDANT  
(handing him a ticket)  
Keys in and headlights on, sir.

FELIX  
Certainly.

Felix engages the emergency break, gets out of the car and opens the door for his companion. They smile for the cameras.

The parking attendant gets in the car, releases the hand brake, locks all the doors and speeds away.

Startled, Felix watches what is happening.

Another PARKING ATTENDANT in a uniform slightly different from the one worn by the man who just stole his car comes over to take the next vehicle.

As we see Felix's astonished face, we hear the music that this time really marks the end of the film.

THE END