

ZARITA

BY BENSON PARKER

FADE IN

INT. THEATER - DAY

There are a few people milling about on stage and half a dozen people scattered around in the audience. Most of the people in the audience are not paying attention to the people onstage. Two men sitting together in the audience are watching ZARITA onstage going through lines.

FIRST MAN (AGENT)

What did you say her name is?

SECOND MAN (PROFESSOR)

Zarita, Zarita Zamora.

AGENT

You're right, she's amazing. And she graduates... ?

Professor

In a couple of months with the class of '97. She'll get her BA in Theater Arts, she's fluent in Spanish, and...

AGENT

Is she Mexican?

PROFESSOR

No, she's Spanish American. She grew up on a big ranch down near Silver City that's been in her family for over two hundred years. I think she's descended from Spanish royalty, she's never said so, but...

AGENT

She's not even using a script.

Professor

I know, she has amazing visual and auditory memory. She can hear something one time and repeat it

(more)

(con'd)

perfectly, or read a page of script and have it down. I've had her in my classes for the past two years and have come to believe that she's a prodigy.

The agent looks at his watch and stands up.

AGENT

She's gorgeous I could watch her all day, but I've got a plane to catch.

The Professor stands up and the Agent gives him a business card.

AGENT

Give her my card and tell her that I would love to represent her. Let her know that I've got connections in New York and Hollywood. Tell her to call me anytime, and thank you again for -

Professor hands a manila envelope to Agent.

PROFESSOR

I'll tell her. This is the screenplay I was telling you about. I'd appreciate it if you'd look it over and let me know what you think.

Agent takes the envelope, fakes a smile, turns and walks away.

Zarita walks to the edge of the stage and notices a girl with blonde hair, a baseball cap, and a UNM tee shirt sitting in the middle of the theater watching her. Zarita looks down with mock seriousness at a young man, Gerardo, in the front row.

ZARITA

My ears have not yet drunk a
hundred words of that tongue's
utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

Gerardo looks up at her, smiles, and makes a kiss.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

A 1993 black Dodge Challenger races through a forest up a
twisting mountain road.

INT. DODGE CHALLENGER - DAY

GERARDO looks over at Zarita with trepidation as she
slams through the gears, driving the mountain road like
a teenage boy. He is Spanish American and is as handsome
as she is beautiful; they look like a couple.

ZARITA

What's wrong, GerBear, you look
a little pale.

GERARDO

Honey, I know you're a great driver,
but really there's no hurry. Your
family will be there waiting for
us whenever we get there. It's
Memorial Day weekend we've got
three days before we have to be
back in class. Slow down.

ZARITA

I guess I'm in a hurry to show
off my fiancé. We've been engaged
for three months, and they still
haven't met you.

GERARDO

Well I'm the man I'm the one who
should be driving anyway.

ZARITA

Oh, a macho man, I like that.

GERARDO

Tell me their names again.

ZARITA

Okay, we're going to the Zamora Ranch, the Bar Z Bar. My parents are Maria and Hector. My oldest brother is Salvadore, Sal --

GERARDO

He's the Vet?

ZARITA

Right, large animal doctor. His wife is Teresa, Sal and Teresa. My other brother, Manuel, Manolo, is a year older than me, and his wife is Consuelo, Manolo and Consuelo.

GERARDO

He's the one with a degree in Ranch Management? Honey, please slow down.

ZARITA

Right. And both couples have two beautiful children. Oh yeah, and Adoncia is our Mexican cook she's been with us since before I can remember.

GERARDO

Which one of the wives was Miss New Mexico?

ZARITA

That's Teresa, Sal's wife.

GERARDO

Yeah, I'm really looking forward to meeting her.

ZARITA

Oh you're in trouble already. I better not catch you flirting with her.

She gives him a playful shoulder punch.

ZARITA

That reminds me, I saw your stalker in the theater yesterday.

GERARDO

That crazy bitch. I told her months ago that it was over between us and to leave me alone.

ZARITA

What did you do to that poor girl? Oh wait, I know, never mind.

EXT. ZAMORA RANCH - DAY

The Zamora hacienda is a huge adobe ranch house with a red tile roof, a courtyard, out buildings, corrals, cows and horses. It is in the mountains with views of the surrounding desert and foothills.

Friends, neighbors and relatives of the Zamora family are having a cook out. Some of the younger men and boys take turns showing off their cowboy skills, riding and roping. Teenage girls sit on a corral fence and watch. A local Tejano band plays from the shade of a barn.

There are Spanish American couples, Mexican couples, White couples, and one Black couple. They are all Cowboy, many of them have children. The Black cowboy and his Black cowgirl wife talk in Spanish with a Mexican couple.

They are all dressed Western; however, there are subtle differences in their attire according to wealth, race, class, and age.

Zarita's brothers wait until she leaves Gerardo's side for a moment then they approach him.

MANOLO

Gerardo, do you know what you're getting into with her?

GERARDO

What do you mean?

MANOLO

Have you ever been around her
when she gets mad?

GERARDO

Yeah, unfortunately I have.

Manolo inspects Gerardo's face.

GERARDO

What?

MANOLO

I don't see any scars.

Gerardo laughs.

MANOLO

You think I'm kidding?

Manolo points to a scar on his forehead.

MANOLO

This is where she hit me with
a club when she was ten.

Zarita joins them.

ZARITA

It was a stick and you've got
delicate skin Manolo, skin like
a baby. That's the only reason
it left a scar.

She pinches Manolo's cheek, he pulls away laughing.
She looks up at Gerardo and puts her arm around his
waist.

Zarita

Don't believe him, Honey.

Salvadore points to a scar on his chin.

Salvadore
This is what I got when she pushed
me off a horse --

ZARITA
My horse!

Salvadore
It's partly our fault I guess. She
was the baby of the family and her
little feet didn't touch the ground
until she was five years old.

ZARITA
You guys shouldn't lie to my fiancé
like this.

MANOLO
And Momma and Daddy spoiled her
rotten.

ZARITA
Boys, Gerardo is going to be part
of the family one day and then he'll
learn that you guys just lived to
pick on me.

Manolo and Salvadore look at each other and roll their
eyes.

SALVADORE
Okay Little Princess, whatever you say.

MANOLO
Come on Gerardo we've got a bull over
here we'd like to introduce you to.

Gerardo walks away with a brother on each side of him,
then looks back over his shoulder at Zarita with comic
exaggerated fear as the brothers lead him toward a
chute with a wild bull in it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Zarita and Adoncia are packing a picnic basket and
chatting in Spanish when MARIA enters.

MARIA

Where are you kids off to this morning?

ZARITA

I'm gonna give Gerardo a tour of the ranch.

MARIA

Oh good, it's a beautiful day for it. Take him up to Smuggler's Pass, it's so nice up there this time of year.

Maria inspects the contents of the basket.

ZARITA

Okay, we'll take the Power Wagon.

MARIA

Good, it doesn't get driven much since you went off to college, and try not to get stuck.

ZARITA

Momma!

MARIA

I swear that four-wheel drive just means you can get stuck further from home. I remember when -

Zarita gives Adoncia an exasperated look.

ZARITA

Okay Momma, we won't get stuck.

EXT. MOUNTAINS - DAY

Zarita and Gerardo stand side-by-side with his arm around her shoulder, her arm around his waist, and their hips pressed together. She hooks her thumb through his belt loop. They can see for ten to twenty miles in every direction without seeing a road or a building.

GERARDO

We're still on the ranch?

ZARITA

Yeah.

GERARDO

How far does it go?

ZARITA

As far as you can see.

GERARDO

Wow. It's beautiful. This is why they call New Mexico the Land of Enchantment. You forget that this is out here when you spend all your time in Albuquerque.

The wind stirs her hair. They kiss.

EXT. RANCH - DAY

They kiss, then Gerardo puts a suitcase in the back of the Mustang. He steps over to the veranda where Hector stands watching them. Zarita puts another suitcase in the car while talking to Maria.

HECTOR

So what are you planning to do with that degree in Business Management?

GERARDO

Well sir, I don't have any definite plans but it's starting to look like Zarita is going to need a business manager. So I'm looking forward to helping her out in that department, if nothing else.

HECTOR

That sounds like a good idea. She's already starting to get some offers, and she's gonna

(more)

(con'd)

need someone to look after her affairs. She's a great actress but she's clueless when it comes to business, money, taxes, that kind of thing. Of course, you guys are always welcome here.

GERARDO

Thank you sir, it's nice of you to say so.

Zarita looks over at Gerardo talking with her father and smiles.

ZARITA

Come on Gerardo.

Gerardo and Hector shake hands. Maria kisses Zarita.

MARIA

Zarita you drive careful now. You've got all day to get back to Albuquerque.

They say their goodbyes.

INT. CAR - DAY

Zarita races down the mountain road with Gerardo holding on beside her. An old Santana cd plays in the background.

ZARITA

I'm so glad we found each other. My family loves you, I knew they would. Everyone was taking me aside and telling me how nice you are and how much they like you. Even Sal and he doesn't like anyone. He told me you weren't much of a cowboy but that you were a nice guy and that he likes you.

GERARDO

I liked all of them; they made me feel like part of the family. We're blessed, you know.

ZARITA

I know.

Their loving eyes meet for a second then the car goes into a curve a little too fast, slides off the road, and flips into a canyon. Gerardo reaches over with his left hand to protect Zarita, accidentally hits the volume control on the stereo, the music blares out, Zarita accidentally slams one hand down on the horn, the car cracks trees, and scrapes boulders, sparks fly as the car rolls over and over before shuttering to a stop.

EXT. SILVER CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

In the emergency room parking area there are a dozen pickup trucks with people from the Zamora party sitting on open tailgates and standing around in small groups talking quietly.

INT. SILVER CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The Zamoras, six adults and four small children, wait in silence. Two of the children sleep in their mother's arms. A DOCTOR enters and addresses them as a group.

DOCTOR

She's going to be okay. She has cuts and bruises all over, but the only serious injury she sustained was to her head when the roof of the car caved in. Her skull was fractured and we put a small Titanium plate right here.

He holds up an x-ray and points. Maria looks, then grimaces and looks down.

DOCTOR

Tomorrow, we'll run some more tests, and she should be able to go home in a week or so.

He motions Zarita's parents aside and talks to them privately.

DOCTOR

Physically she should be fine, but we don't know if there will be any lasting mental complications or not. We don't know how much trauma her brain sustained, and we don't know how much Gerardo's death will affect her.

MARIA

Should we have her taken to Albuquerque?

DOCTOR

You could, but they can't do anything for her there that we can't do here.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Zarita's private room is cluttered with flowers. Her bed has her propped up as a NURSE checks her vitals.

ZARITA

How long have I been here?

The nurse looks at the chart.

NURSE

You came in yesterday afternoon. How do you feel?

ZARITA

Terrible. Where's Gerardo?

The nurse looks uncomfortable and doesn't answer.

ZARITA

Did he get hurt?

The nurse looks at her watch, the charts, she makes a note and pretends she doesn't hear Zarita.

ZARITA (louder)
Where's Gerardo? How is he? I
want to see him - now!

The nurse puts the chart down and takes Zarita's hand
in hers.

NURSE
I'm sorry, Honey, but Gerardo
didn't make it.

Zarita sits up on the side of the bed, the nurse puts
her hands on Zarita's shoulders to stop her, Zarita
stands up pushing the nurse across the room where she
slips and falls as Zarita gets up screaming.

ZARITA
No! No! This can't be happening.
God no. Gerardo.

Zarita tries to run but because of her injuries she
moves herky-jerky, lurching down the hall, bouncing
off the walls, trailing IV's. She jerks the bandage
from her head and drops it with blood and hair matted
to it. Two nurses come running around the corner and
grab Zarita by each arm. She stops, clenches her fists,
arches her back, and picks both nurses up off the floor
one on each arm as she screams.

ZARITA
GERARDO!

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

In the middle of the night, the blonde girl, Gerardo's
ex-girlfriend, ANDREA, enters Zarita's hospital room
carrying a dead, long-stemmed rose, and stands beside
Zarita's bed. Eventually Zarita opens her eyes, sees
Andrea, and looks shocked.

ANDREA
Well look at the poor little
rich girl. You don't look so
hot now, do you? Don't worry

(more)

(con'd)

I'm not going to do anything
to you right now. I'm enjoying
the fact that you're laying
up here in pain, suffering.

Andrea uses the rose to trace Zarita's face.

ANDREA (con'd)
Gerardo gave me this single,
long-stemmed, red rose just
before he met you. Very romantic
don't you think? I kept it
alive as long as I could, but
now that its dead, like Gerardo,
I guess I'll give it to you.

She lays the dead rose in the middle of Zarita's chest.

ZARITA
I'm sorry, I --

ANDREA
Shut up, Bitch. I know that
you were driving, and I know
that you killed my Gerardo.

Andrea walks to the door, turns and looks at Zarita.

ANDREA
Someday when you least expect
it, I'm gonna fuck you up.

Andrea steps out the door. Zarita cries.

EXT. ZAMORA HACIENDA - MORNING

Long shadows, desert landscaping, a fountain.

INT. ZAMORA HACIENDA - MORNING

Western elegance, art, antiques, wide plank flooring.

INT. HOME GYM - MORNING

MONTAGE

- Zarita walks slowly on a treadmill looking grim with a large bandage on her head and blue and yellow bruises.
- Zarita with a smaller bandage, looking better while working an elliptical.
- Zarita without bandage running on treadmill.

She steps off the treadmill dripping sweat, panting, drinks water from a plastic bottle, and looks out the French doors as Maria enters the room from behind her.

MARIA

Look at you! You push yourself too hard; you always did. You need to slow down; take it easy.

Zarita doesn't say anything.

MARIA (con'd)

I wish you would think about going back and finishing school. You only need one more semester. It would be a shame to throw all that away.

ZARITA

I'll never go back to Albuquerque.

MARIA

Well, you could go someplace else.

ZARITA

Momma, you know when I wrecked the car there were no other cars around, the road wasn't wet, there wasn't any sand on the road; it was my fault. I was going too fast, showing off, being reckless, and I killed the only man I ever loved. So please don't ask anything of me, I'm having a hard enough time just living with myself.

Maria looks down and doesn't say anything. Zarita sits down and starts to cry. Maria sits beside her and puts her arm around Zarita's shoulder.

ZARITA

I didn't even go to his funeral.

MARIA

Don't say that. You were in the hospital; your father and I went.

ZARITA

I'm sure his family hates me.

MARIA

His family loves you and worries about you. His mother has called several times and asked about you. They know it was an accident. It'll be alright, Honey. It just takes time; time heals all.

EXT. ZAMORA RANCH - DAY

Zarita and Maria sit on the veranda in large cushioned lounge chairs. Hector walks up from the yard and joins them.

HECTOR

Zarita why don't we go into town and buy you a new car?

ZARITA

Thank you Daddy, but I'd really rather just use the Dodge for now.

MARIA

That ole thing? It looks like its been in a war.

ZARITA

I love that old truck; it's what I learned to drive with.

HECTOR

Whatever you want Princess. But I was thinking more like a new Volvo; they're supposed to be real safe.

ZARITA

Thank you, Daddy but the Dodge is good enough for now.

HECTOR

Okay, but if you change your mind, just let me know. I'll get you whatever you want; you know that. Now, your brothers and some of the boys are around back playing cowboy. Why don't y'all come watch.

EXT. RANCH - DAY

Zarita and family watch as her little nephews ride sheep, and some of the ranch hands practice bulldogging.

Zarita and Maria sit on the open tailgate of a pickup truck. The radio in the truck provides Western back-ground music through the open empties window.

Maria puts her arm around Zarita's shoulders and gives her a little hug.

MARIA

I remember when you used to practice barrel racing in these corrals every day.

Maria reminisces about Zarita's barrel racing wins while Zarita stares into space.

FLASHBACK

MANOLO

Come on Gerardo we've got a bull over here we'd like to introduce you to.

Gerardo walks away with a brother on each side of him, then looks back over his shoulder at Zarita with comic exaggerated fear...

Zarita fights back tears.

ZARITA

Barrel racing seems like a long time ago, Mama.

MARIA

It wasn't that long ago. I remember when your grandfather used to break horses in these corrals. Now that was a long time ago.

ZARITA

I need to get away for a while.

MARIA

What? Why?

ZARITA

Everybody's being so careful around me. Looking at me with those commiserating eyes, asking me how I am, being careful not to mention Gerardo.

MARIA

You're our baby girl, and you need to stay right here until you're all better.

ZARITA

I am all better, physically anyway. It's just that being around family, I love these guys, but I was so sure that me and Gerardo were going to be a part of all this and now—it's just hard.

MARIA

I know, Honey; I know.

ZARITA

I lost more than Gerardo, I lost my chance to see my kids out there taking part, playing, being a part of all this. I need to get away and be on my own for a while.

MARIA

You'll get your chance, you'll get everything you want. You're young; you have your whole life ahead of you. Besides, where would you go? What would you do?

ZARITA

All I ever wanted to do is act, I always loved it. Now it's like I need it. I've been going over scenes in my room at night and it's the only time when I feel at peace. Losing myself in a part is like therapy for me. I can forget...

Maria looks down and doesn't say anything.

ZARITA (con'd)

I think I'll go to our place in San Antonio for a while.

MARIA

I want you to stay here, but I want you to be happy... so just know that we all love you.

INT. ZARITA'S BEDROOM AT THE RANCH - NIGHT

Zarita lies on her bed looking at a big brown leather family album. There are many pictures of her and her brothers and other relatives including black and white pictures of her great-grandparents standing side by side not smiling. There is a picture of her dressed as a cowgirl when she was a little girl standing beside a pony with a big red bow around its neck.

In the middle of the night, she puts the album on her dresser with a note to her mother on it, throws a couple of suitcases in the truck, and leaves.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Zarita drives the old pickup on a deserted highway. The radio reception fades in and out in the background. She seems in a daze and doesn't notice the radio until a few lines from the song, You Always Hurt the One You Love, come through loud and clear and then she has a melt-down. She stomps on the brakes, swerves off the road, turns off the radio, and beats on the steering wheel. Then she staggers out into the moonlit desert, falls to her knees, looks down, and notices her engagement ring.

ZARITA

No. I don't deserve you.

She frantically digs a hole in the soft sand using her hands like a dog, then puts the ring in the hole and covers it up. She looks around, picks up a big flat rock with both hands, lifts it over her head, and slams it into the ground. Kneeling before the headstone with her hands on her thighs and a full moon behind her, she arches her back and wails.

EXT. ISOLATED HILLTOP BUILDING - NIGHT

Under another full moon, a healthy-looking Zarita parks in front of a small windowless concrete block building on an isolated hilltop overlooking a city. "KATY" is painted in four-foot letters on the building. She unlocks the door to the building, and passes a hippy-looking guy who is on his way out. They exchange pleasantries, and she locks the door behind him.

In a dimly lit sound booth Zarita speaks into a microphone with a soft, smooth FM voice while looking at a six-inch round mirror that is propped up on the control desk before her.

ZARITA

Good morning San Antonio, this is Front Porch Betty coming to you from the front porch of K-A-T-Y Radio. It's two AM in Alamo City and you're tuned to your community supported public radio station where everyone has a voice.

She leans forward, looks in the mirror, and picks up a tube of red lipstick.

(con'd)

This morning's guest host is Pinky Patel. Pinky got her own program on KATY this morning by being a very generous listener supporter during our last fund drive. So I'm going to be in the background tonight while Pinky plays some of the music she brought in. What have you got for us Pinky?

Zarita applies a red dot to her forehead with the lipstick, she assumes a wide-eyed expression, sits up straight, then speaks with an Indian accent.

ZARITA (as Pinky)

Hello and Namaste, Miss Betty. I have brought wonderful music from the land of India. I think if more people were exposed to the music of India they would like it. This first song is titled Trapped and it is by Indus Creed.

Zarita cues the CD, leans back in her chair, and lights a cigarette.

EXT. RODEO ARENA - NIGHT

In the arena, a young cowboy rides a bull. In the bleachers, fans cheer him on. A few people are still filing in and taking seats, most of them are dressed Western.

In a loading chute, Cody eases down on to the back of Cat Man Do. Ty stands on the bars of the chute, he leans in and pulls a rope tight around the bull. The buzzer buzzes and a second later the rider in the arena flies off his bull and hits the dirt.

ANNOUNCER

Now that's the way to start off
a wild night of bull riding. Good
ride, cowboy.

CODY wraps the rope around his gloved left hand. TY leans over in the chute talking to him.

TY

Bear down, Cody. They say this
Cat Man Do likes to turn left
out of the chute so be ready.

Cat Man Do snorts, groans, and jerks from side to side in the chute slamming Cody's legs against the steel bars.

ANNOUNCER

Up next on the San Antonio PBR
Bud Light Invitational is a cowboy
from over in Bandera, Cody Williams.
Cody's drawn a 2,000 pound bull
that has only been ridden once
in his last ten outs. They call
him... Cat Man Do!

Cody nods his head, the chute flies open, Cat Man Do leaps out of the chute, and the song Katmando by Bob Seger booms from the arena PA system.

Cat Man Do bucks and spins to the left with fury, Cody holds on and matches him move for move.

The scoreboard clock shows two seconds.

Cat Man Do jumps five feet off the ground, does a bellyroll, then leaps again and flexes like a fish.

Three seconds. Ty stands on the back of the chute yelling encouragement to Cody.

Cody's free arm swings wildly trying to keep his balance, his hips adjust and move forward on his left hand.

Four seconds. Bullfighters dance around staying just out of range of the flashing hooves and deadly horns.

Cat Man Do kicks his rear end straight up in the air, Cody leans back, and when Cat Man Do's rear hooves come down he rears back up bringing his head and horns up toward Cody who is flying forward at the waist.

Five seconds. Two beautiful young cowgirls in tank tops, jeans and cowgirl hats jump up and scream.

Cody's head and Cat Man Do's head are inches from impact when Cody turns his head and takes the blow to the side of his face.

His hat flies through the air and his cheekbone flashes red. Cat Man Do is in such a rage that he loses control and stumbles down onto his forelegs. Cody spurs him with both boots.

Six seconds. Everyone in the audience stands and cheers. The announcer can barely be heard over the fans and the music.

SPEAKERS

K-K-K-K-K-Katmandu

Cat Man Do jerks up, fakes left, spins right, and throws Cody to the ground.

Seven seconds. The audience groans, then applauds.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - NIGHT

Ty is driving, CODY slumps in the passenger seat with his boot on the dash while holding a cold half-empty bottle of beer to his cheek. A country music radio station plays in the background.

CODY

This is what I got for my entry
fee - a sore head.

TY

Coulda been worse. It was a helluva ride; you done great. Holdin on after he headbutted you like that. I thought you had 'em.

CODY

Well thanks, but it doesn't matter how good a ride it is if you don't finish in the money.

TY

There's always next time. Hey, we're coming up on that place where they have Roller Derby. You ever been?

CODY

No.

TY

It's pretty wild, you wanna go check out some skate tramps?

CODY

I don't care, if you want to.

EXT. ROLLERRAMA - NIGHT

They turn in at a metal building that looks like an old aircraft hangar with a sign on the front that reads, "San Antonio Hellcats". Beneath the name is a blue neon skate with red neon flames coming off the white neon wheels. The parking lot is full of cars and pickup trucks, and there is an ambulance parked beside big double doors on the side of the building.

INT. ROLLERRAMA - NIGHT

Ty and Cody go in, find seats in the bleachers and look down at the alley, the middle of the banked oval track, where two teams of five girls each are being introduced to the fans.

The members of the visiting team are being introduced one at a time and they each skate a lap without music to a few cheers and boos from the audience. They wear matching green tee shirts with Austin Tornados printed on the back, jeans, knee pads, elbow pads, and small padded helmets.

Most of the audience isn't paying attention, they talk among themselves, mill around, and go for beers. In the alley, the referees, the San Antonio Hellcats, and their alternates prepare themselves for what is coming. After the last Tornado girl skates back into the alley the announcer announces the home team.

ANNOUNCER

Now, let's hear it for our hometown girls... The San Antonio Hellcats!

And the crowd goes wild. A young man opens the double doors on the side of the building where the ambulance is and the EMT turns on the flashing red lights and the siren. The PA system blares out We Are the Champions at the point in the song where Freddie Mercury first sings out "We are the champions". All five of the Hellcats and their three alternates hit the track at the same time and speed skate around the track and each other like a swarm of angry bees. Everyone is on their feet cheering, screaming and whistling, and the Hellcats are cheering, screaming and whistling.

The Hellcats are brightly costumed, glam punk divas, with over-the-top make up, in-your-face sexuality, and deliberate attitude; dangerous, sexy, white trash.

After a quick first lap the girls coast into the alley except for one girl who continues on to take her solo lap. The music changes to Sledgehammer, by Peter Gabriel, "You could have a steam train if you'd just lay down your tracks."

ANNOUNCER

Up first tonight for the Hellcats is a Steampunk goddess from out of the past... they call her Lexie.

Lexie is wearing a retro brown leather corset over a blue silk, low-cut blouse, short shorts, brown leather leggings from her skate tops to mid-thigh with assorted chrome gears up the sides of the leggings, and a short, black top hat with tinted goggles on it. She is pierced and tattooed. She skates with mechanical precision.

The Austin Tornados stand in the alley in a small circle facing one another with their arms folded talking to each other and trying to ignore the craziness that is going on all around them. Once in a while one of them glances over with fear and envy at the Hellcats.

Just as Lexie completes her lap the next Hellcat hits the track and the music changes to Suzy Bogguss singing, I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart.

ANNOUNCER

When she's not skating you might
find her out riding the range.
Her name's Cassidy and she's a
real Texas cowgirl.

Cassidy lopes around the track in ripped and revealing jeans, a western shirt, a belt with an over-sized buckle, and a beat-up Stetson. She carries a ten foot leather whip that she cracks over her head while yelling "Yahoo" at the fans.

ANNOUNCER

The next Hellcat hitting the track
tonight is a biker chick with a bad
attitude. The call her Harley.

The Steppenwolf song, Born to be Wild, blasts out when Harley takes to the track wearing black leather pants, a black AC/DC tee shirt, and a black leather jacket with "Hellcats" printed on the back. A chrome chain serves as a belt, and another one loops around one shoulder. She is bigger than any of the other girls. Her skating is lumbering and crude, she glares at the audience, yells at them, and makes obscene gestures. The crowd loves it.

Harley exits the track as The Angry American by Toby Keith starts playing.

ANNOUNCER

They say she served with honor
in Iraq before becoming a Hellcat.
Lets hear it for G.I. Jane.

Jane affects an exaggerated military march onto the track then skates with grace while wearing desert cammie pants, a tan tank top tucked in, with a wide Army web belt draped around her hips, and an Army helmet that is too big for her head. She is small, petite, she peeks from under the helmet and waves a big American flag on a pole while she swoops around the track.

ANNOUNCER

Up next for the Hellcats, they
call her... Princess Pain.

The Joan Jett song I Love Rock and Roll, comes on as Princess Pain (Zarita) takes to the track. Her beauty, costume, and theatrical makeup combine to scream - sex from another planet. Her eye makeup fans back into her black curly hair, her lips are bright red, her costume is all tight black leather.

CODY

Wow, look at Princess Pain.

TY

Yeah, she's a hottie alright.

CODY

I gotta get a closer look at her.
I'll be right back.

Cody goes down and joins a small group of fans at the rail by the track. Among the fans leaning on the rail are four young girls about twelve years old who are dressed and made up like Princess Pain. Two of them hold up handmade signs that read, "We Love Pain", and

(more)

(con'd)

"I Wanna B A Princess". The last of the young fans holds a single, long-stemmed rose. Cody is the last person standing beside the rail. He taps the young girl with the rose on the shoulder.

CODY

I'll give you a buck for that rose.

She looks at him as if he's crazy and shakes her head - no.

(con'd)

Five bucks.

She smiles and holds out her hand. He gives her a five, she gives him the rose.

Zarita skates toward him slapping hands with fans, smiling and saying hello to the girls. As Zarita skates by Cody he smiles and holds out the rose. She takes the rose, their hands touch, she gives him an incurious glance, and skates on, smiling and waving to the crowd.

The track is a stage and each girl an actor, but Cody can only see Zarita as she goes around and around counter clockwise.

MONTAGE

- Zarita zipping past opposing team members.
- Zarita jumping over fallen skaters.
- Maneuvering around bigger opponents.
- Clawing her way through the pack with frenzied violence.
- Zarita bruised and sweating.
- Zarita fights her way up beside an opposing skater then slams her elbow into the girls face and knocks her down. The referee blows his whistle and points at Zarita, she laughs and skates into the alley for her time out.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The Hellcats file into the bar with fans and husbands following them. The girls have changed into street clothes, a couple of them are wearing fresh bandages. HARLEY is the first one through the door.

HARLEY (Yelling)
We're the San Antonio Hellcats
and tonight we're number one,
Woo Hoo!

A few minutes later Cody and Ty come in and sit at a table against the wall. It is a table girls have to walk past to go to the Ladies Room.

Later

The girls and their entourage are eating, drinking, shooting pool, or playing darts. Zarita and Lexie sit at a table eating pizza and talking over a performer on stage who is droning a slow, depressing, personal song. He accompanies himself on a sad acoustic guitar. LEXIE frowns at the performer then turns to Zarita.

LEXIE
I'll be glad when the real band
comes back on, this guy is pitiful.
Somebody should tell that dude
that this ain't Seattle.

Lexie puts her hand beside her mouth, turns her head down and to the side, and yells.

LEXIE
Crank it up!

Then she turns to Zarita.

LEXIE
You did pretty good on the track
tonight. Elbowing that girl near
the end of the event, that was cool.
That's the kinda thing you have to
do to show people that you're a
Hellcat not just some Roller Derby
girl.

Zarita nods and keeps eating.

LEXIE (con'd)

I'm glad you came out with us tonight. I know you've only been with us for a few weeks but this is the best thing about Roller Derby, going out partying after an event, or after practice.

ZARITA

Yeah, I haven't been out much since I moved here. All the other girls seem to have a boyfriend or husband here tonight. Where's your boyfriend?

Lexie looks around the room.

LEXIE

I haven't picked out tonight's chew toy yet.

Zarita laughs.

ZARITA

It's a sweet lozenge that you choke on. (Shakespear)

Lexie smiles at Zarita.

LEXIE

What does that mean?

ZARITA

It's just a saying.

Lexie looks around and notices Cody sitting across the room looking at Zarita. The band takes the stage.

TY

Well, are you gonna go over and talk to Princess Pain?

CODY

Don't rush me. I'm strategizing.

TY
Yeah, right.

Lexie looks from Cody to Zarita.

LEXIE
Come with me to the Ladies Room.

When Zarita and Lexie walk past Cody's table, he looks up at Zarita and smiles.

CODY
Hi.

Zarita ignores him.

TY
Yeah, I think she likes you.

CODY
Shut up.

TY
Dude, nothing against you, don't take it personal or anything, but you are way outta your league with her.

CODY
No, she's gonna be mine; she just doesn't know it yet.

Later

Lexie is onstage singing, Where Have All the Cowboys Gone? sounding a lot like Paula Cole. A DRUNK COWBOY stands in front of the stage looking up at Lexie with a bottle of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other as he sways from side to side.

DRUNK COWBOY
I'm right here, Darlin' I think I'm in love with you. Look no further sweetheart here I am.

Cody watches as one guy after another asks Zarita to dance and gets turned down. Harley, Cassidy and Cassidy's husband Brad have joined Zarita at her table. They are watching Lexie onstage when Cody approaches.

CODY (to Zarita)
Would you like to dance?

Zarita blows smoke from her cigarette, barely looks up.

ZARITA
No.

Cody returns to his table and sits down.

TY
Don't feel bad, she's turned down everybody else.

CODY
I'm just laying the groundwork.
This is all going according to plan.

TY
What? Your plan to not get layed?

CODY
She'll come around. And I'm not trying to get laid. I just want to look at her, talk to her, be close to her.

He looks at Zarita, Lexie is looking at him.

LEXIE (to Zarita)
That's the guy who gave you a rose at the event tonight. Course, I guess it's only fair that you turn him down - you've turned down everybody else. What's up with that?

ZARITA
I'm in mourning. I was engaged and... it didn't work out.

HARLEY

Yeah, I guess we've all been there.

ZARITA

And working at Tudie's Café you can imagine how many times a day I get asked out.

HARLEY

No, I can't, how many?

ZARITA

Well, I don't keep count, but at least three or four times a day. It gets old after a while.

Harley is the biggest of the girls but not the best looking.

HARLEY (Laughing)

I haven't been asked out three times in the past year.

EXT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

Tudie's Café is a plain white concrete block commercial building with a sign that reads, "Tudie's Café Open 6 AM til 4 PM Mon. thru Fri." There are glass block windows on each side of the front door.

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

The interior of the café is very plain, colorless. The owner, Tudie, is behind the counter wearing a white uniform with a name tag. Tudie is in her fifties, a little overweight and attractive, with a soft Texas accent. Larry the cook can be seen behind the pass-through to the kitchen. He is in his fifties, lean and quirky wearing a truckers cap, and an apron over jeans and a tee shirt.

The country song, Baby's Got Her Blue Jeans On, by Mel McDaniel plays on the jukebox. Zarita wears tight jeans, a tee shirt, athletic shoes, and no makeup. Her hair is pulled back tight. She's gorgeous.

Jukebox

"They turn their heads and watch her
till she's gone
Lord have mercy Baby's got her blue
jeans on."

MONTAGE

- A nice looking, well dressed young man sitting in a booth smiles and gives his business car to Zarita. She looks at it, gives it back, shakes her head and says, No.
- A handsome cowboy stops at the register on his way out and says something. She smiles and says, No.
- In the kitchen of the café, Zarita signs for a food delivery, gives the form back to the driver, and says, No.
- A long-haired, rad-looking young dude sitting at a table with his buddy looks up at her, starts to say something, and she cuts him off with a, No. His buddy laughs at him.

The jukebox SERVICEMAN is pouring quarters into a cloth bag when Zarita walks up.

ZARITA

Tudie said it was okay with her
if I asked you to put some new
songs on the jukebox.

The Serviceman looks up, smiles, and spills quarters.

SERVICEMAN

No problem, Zarita, whatever
you want, be glad to.

She brings a sheet of paper from behind her back.

ZARITA

I made a list. I really appreciate
this, some of the people who go to
Roller Derby have been coming in
and this is some of the same songs
that are played there. So thank you.

The Serviceman is flustered.

SERVICEMAN

My pleasure Zarita. I'll come by tomorrow and load some of these. Let me know if you think of any others that you'd like. We have a huge selection, and if we don't have it, we'll get it. So just let me know.

She smiles and turns, he watches her walk away.

INT. ROLLERRAMA - NIGHT

Before an event, the girls are putting finishing touches on their costumes and makeup while Lexie takes pictures of them.

HARLEY

What are you going to do with these pictures?

LEXIE

I'm going to have them blown up to poster size, and Zarita's gonna put them up at Tudie's.

CASSIDY

Did she say you could do that?

ZARITIA

I haven't asked her yet, but I think after she sees them she'll go for it. She told me the other day that business has really improved since so many skaters and skate fans have started coming in.

CASSIDY

Hey, can I get copies for Brad?

ZARITA

Sure. How 'bout you Jane? You want copies for your hubby?

Awkward silence.

G. I. JANE

Oh, nobody's told you, huh? My husband was killed in Iraq.

ZARITA

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know.

Zarita glares at Lexie while silently saying, "Why didn't you tell me?".

JANE

Yeah, he was a Marine. It was almost two years ago.

(Pause)

But hey, maybe we could have these pictures printed on cards like baseball cards, and sell them at events.

HARLEY

Cool, we could autograph them.

LEXIE

Who would pay for a picture of your fat ass?

HARLEY

Anybody who's seen yours which is about half of San Antonio.

MONTAGE

- The girls take turns posing, goofing around and striking Betty Boop pinup poses, and then becoming fierce, defiant, and sexy.
- Harley scowls at the camera, sticks out her tongue, makes obscene gestures.
- G.I. Jane holds an American flag, salutes, swings the flag overhead.

- Cassidy poses with her thumbs hooked in her western belt, swings her whip overhead, stands in profile looking at the camera while touching the brim of her cowboy hat.
- Zarita skates past, then jumps and strikes a pose in the air, she bends over and makes come here motions with her fingers while looking at the camera, she stands on her toe stops and looks over her shoulder at the camera in a provocative pose.
- Zarita takes pictures of Lexie skating directly toward the camera, posing on the track as if she has just taken a fall, and close up looking at the camera.

INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

ZARITA

Good morning San Antone. This is Front Porch Betty coming to you from the front porch of KATY radio. Tonight DARYL is in the studio with some of his favorite music. Daryl got his own program on KATY by making a donation during our last pledge drive. Where you from Daryl?

Zarita puts a toothpick in her mouth, pulls her hat visor down low, and assumes the soft, slow voice and accent of a Southern man.

ZARITA (as Daryl)

My home place is in western North Carolina, Appalachia, but I been out here 'bout three years now.

ZARITA

What music have you brought in for us tonight?

Zarita flips through a stack of CD's.

ZARITA (as Daryl)

I brung some of my favorite
Bluegrass CD's by Ralph Stanley,
Allison Krauss, Doc Watson
people like that there. Afore
we git started here though
I'd like to say that if I'd
knowed you were this pretty
lookin' I'd been down here a
long time ago.

ZARITA

Why, thank you Daryl.

Zarita turns up the volume on the Seldom Scene singing
It's All Over Now Baby Blue, then leans back in her
chair and looks up at the ceiling.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Zarita and Lexie shoot pool while Cody, Ty, Cassidy
and Brad sit at a nearby table.

ZARITA

Have you ever been married?

LEXIE

Yeah, once.

Lexie takes a cigarette from someone's pack on a
nearby table and lights it.

ZARITA

I didn't know you smoke.

LEXIE

I only smoke when I drink, and
I've told you that several times.
Course, you were drunk every time
I told you so yeah, I only smoke
when I drink.

A disturbance on the dance floor draws their
attention. Harley pushes a woman, the woman
swings at Harley, she lets it glance off her
chin, smiles, then knocks the woman down.

ZARITA

That Harley is a big ole girl,
isn't she?

LEXIE

Yeah, with skates on she's about
six two. I don't know what she
weighs but I'm sure she's over
two hundred, and not really fat.
She's a helluva blocker.

ZARITA

What kind of work does she do?

LEXIE

She's a pediatric nurse.

ZARITA

Wow, I woulda never thought it.
Where are you working these days?

LEXIE

I'm kinda between jobs right now.
I was a tour guide on one of those
riverboats for a while. Before
that I was a singer with a local
band. I guess the longest job
I ever had was laying carpet with
my ex.

ZARITA

That sounds like hard work.

LEXIE

Not really. He was a contractor
and to him that meant he could
get paid to party all day. He
drank so much beer that he would
wet the bed. We slept on left
overpiles of new carpet, end
pieces, like six or eight feet
square piled up a foot thick.
When he wet the bed, we'd just
throw the top piece of carpet
away. For a long time there the
asshole had me convinced that
it was me doing it.

Zarita laughs.

EXT. Upscale neighborhood - NIGHT

Zarita drives up to an expensive-looking high rise condominium building, there is no sign or name just big chrome numbers for the street address. She presses a remote garage door opener and drives down into the underground parking.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING - NIGHT

Zarita parks her old Dodge pickup truck in a numbered parking spot between a Mercedes and a Porsche, then walks over and enters an elevator where she presses the button for the top floor.

INT. CONDO HALLWAY - NIGHT

At the end of the hall Zarita enters the door code and goes into her corner condo.

INT. CONDO - NIGHT

The condo offers stunning views of the mountains and downtown San Antonio. It is a study in Western elegance with leather furniture, antiques, and original Western art.

Later

Zarita is on the phone with her mother.

MARIA (OC)

A waitress! Oh my word. Zarita why don't you come home, you don't have to work; we'll take care of you. Everybody misses you and worries about you.

ZARITA

I like working, it keeps me busy, and I told you before that I need some time alone.

MARIA (OC)

How are you sleeping?

Zarita doesn't answer.

MARIA (OC)

Did you try the pills the doctor gave you?

ZARITA

Yes, they work, but they make me real tired the next day.

MARIA (OC)

Are you still getting those headaches?

ZARITA

Sometimes.

MARIA (OC)

You should come back here and let Dr. Fernandez x-ray your head again and make sure everything is okay. Maybe your plate slipped.

ZARITA

I appreciate your concern Momma but I'm alright, really.

MARIA (OC)

The doctor told you to come back for check-ups and you haven't. So when are you coming home?

ZARITA

Soon, I'll come home soon, and I'll call you next week, but I've gotta go for now.

MARIA (OC)

Zarita, I can tell that your heart is closed now, but someday the right person will come along. Don't miss out on someone wonderful because you think you have to punish yourself.

ZARITA

I love you Momma.

MARIA (OC)

We love you too, Honey.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedside clock reads 4:17, there is a full moon shining through the window. Zarita tosses, turns, and moans in her sleep. She dreams the accident. The car slides off the road, rolls down the mountainside then comes to a stop on its side with Gerardo strapped in his seat above Zarita. She looks up at Gerardo's limp form. Blood drips from his ear down onto her face. She screams, jerks upright in the bed and babbles in an unknown tongue as she wakes up. She tries to brush away the imaginary blood from her face. Now awake, she slumps, covers her face with her hands, and shakes her head. She turns on the bedside lamp, and collapses back on the bed leaving the light on.

EXT. HEALTH CLUB - DAY

Zarita parks the truck in the health club parking lot then walks toward the door wearing workout clothes with a gym bag over her shoulder.

INT. HEALTH CLUB - DAY

MONTAGE

- Zarita in kick boxing class.
- Zarita swimming.
- Zarita pumping iron.
- Zarita takes part in an aerobics class while Max steals glances from across the room.

Later

MAX and Zarita walk toward one another in the gym. He bobs his head up and smiles.

MAX

Hey.

Zarita looks through him.

EXT. HEALTH CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

When Max sees Zarita come out of the gym, he gets out of his car and leans against it trying to look non-threatening, he is big and muscular, and looks as if he could be Gerardo's younger brother.

MAX

Hey Zarita, what's up?

She doesn't answer.

MAX

Why don't we go get a cup of coffee or something and chat it up?

She is unlocking the truck.

ZARITA

No.

MAX

Well you don't have to beat around the bush about it. You can tell me how you really feel.

He chuckles at himself, she gets in the truck.

MAX

Well, okay then. I guess you're busy, so I won't take up anymore of your time. But I'd like to let you know that -- we've never really been introduced, my name's Max, and I've been a member here for a couple of years, so any of the regulars can tell you that

(more)

(con'd)

I don't come here to socialize like some of these people. Some of my buddies just come here to meet girls. I'm not like that; I've never tried to hook-up with anyone here. I --

ZARITA

Oh, is that what you're doing now, trying to hook-up?

MAX

No. I'm trying to get to know you. All I want to do is talk with you.

ZARITA

Are you still in school?

MAX

College.

ZARITA

How old are you boy?

MAX

Max.

ZARITA

How old are you *Max*?

MAX

Nineteen.

ZARITA

I'm twenty-two.

She starts the truck.

MAX

What's your point?

She puts the truck in gear and drives away.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO - NIGHT

The bedroom is dark except for candles lighting up a shrine on the dresser which is covered with framed pictures of Gerardo, cards and keepsakes from Gerardo, and a half empty bottle of Tequila. There is a big mirror mounted above the dresser. Zarita sits before the shrine in cutoff jean shorts and a tee shirt with a gold cross on a chain around her neck. She holds the cross between her teeth and when she starts to talk the cross falls from her mouth.

ZARITA (Drunk)

Gerardo, Gerbear, you're the only man I ever loved. You'll be in my heart forever, Darling. You gave me life and I took yours. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, and I'm sorry I buried our ring. And I'm sorry..

She looks up from the shrine and sees her haggard reflection in the mirror. She leans forward, puts head down on the dresser and sobs.

INT. GYM - DAY

Zarita goes to her locker and finds a small rose with a tiny card attached. She opens the card.

CARD

No!

She laughs, and when she comes out of the locker room, she looks around the gym and sees Max across the room looking at her and smiling. She holds the rose by the stem and shakes it at him as if admonishing him. Then she turns around and smells the rose.

EXT. GYM PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Max is waiting when Zarita comes out.

MAX

Zarita look what I got in the mail today. It's a coupon for two dollars off any size pizza, and it's only a few blocks from here. What a deal. Come on lets go.

ZARITA

Max for all you know I could be married, or have a boyfriend, or --

He interrupts saying "No" the way she does.

MAX

No! I asked. You're not married, and you don't have a boyfriend. It's just me. You hate me because I'm younger than you. That's age discrimination, plain and simple. Boy I hope I don't get like that when I get older. Now... do you like anchovies?

She looks up at him and reluctantly smiles, and then as if making fun of herself.

ZARITA

No!

She throws her gym bag in the truck.

(con'd)

Okay, we can go get pizza, but only because I'm hungry, it's not a date, I'm not going out with you. You're too young.

MONTAGE

- Zarita holding a slice of pizza while Max makes her laugh.
- Zarita and Max racing one another up the gym rock wall.

- Max is in an aerobics class that Zarita is in. It is all women except for Max and a gay guy. The gay guy is following the routine perfectly. Max is stiff and uncoordinated causing Zarita to laugh.

INT. ZARITA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zarita sits on a couch watching television alone. She pauses the video, stands up, turns around, looks at herself in a large, framed and beveled mirror mounted over the couch. Reflected in the mirror the large flat screen television is paused on a close-up of Frances McDormand in the movie Fargo. Zarita looks in the mirror and speaks with Frances McDormand's Minnesota nice accent.

ZARITA (as Frances)

Well, Mr. Proudfoot, this call came in past three in the morning. It's just hard for me to believe you can't remember anyone calling.

Now, I know you've had some problems struggling with the narcotics, some other entanglements, currently on parole...

Zarita turns around, presses the remote and studies more of the video, then pauses it again.

(con'd) (as Frances)

So you think you might remember who those folks were who called ya?

Zarita plops back down on the couch laughing and resumes the video.

INT. ROLLERRAMA - NIGHT

The girls battle it out on the track. In the alley a girl knells beside a bench and wraps a bandage around another girl's ankle. Beside them a girl tilts her head back and holds a cloth to her own bleeding nose. Cody waits until Lexie is alone outside the track then he approaches her.

CODY

Hey you're a friend of Princess
Pain aren't you?

LEXIE

Yeah, and I feel like I know you.
I've seen you watching her for
a couple of weeks now.

CODY

Am I that obvious?

LEXIE

Yeah, 'fraid so.

CODY

Well, I was wondering if you two
would like a couple of tickets
to the PBR event this Saturday
night.

He holds up two tickets and without hesitation
Lexie takes them.

LEXIE

Professional Bull Riding? Hell
yeah. You gonna be there?

CODY

Yeah I'm entered. My name's Cody.

LEXIE

Well, thank you Cody. Her name's
Zarita. I'm Lexie and we'll see you
there Saturday night. Thank you.

EXT. FAIRGROUND ARENA - NIGHT

Zarita and Lexie join the parade of people walking
in front of the bleachers heading for their seats.
Zarita looks very top-drawer Western. Lexie looks very
low-rent Western. She has a small camera dangling from
her wrist that she holds up and takes the occasional
picture with. She doesn't look through the viewfinder
or seem to pay much attention to what she is taking
pictures of. She waves to people in the crowd that
she knows.

Men and women passing them, and people in the stands, look approvingly at Zarita, cowboys look at her and touch their hat brims then look over their shoulders as she passes by. Zarita acts as if she doesn't notice the attention.

From behind the chutes Cody keeps glancing over at the four empty front row seats until Zarita and Lexie sit down.

ZARITA

Wow, what great seats. Where did you say you got the tickets?

LEXIE

I told you, somebody gave 'em to me. When you're as charming as I am, people just give you stuff.

LATER

ANNOUNCER

Up next is Cody Williams. Cody's drawn a bull called Tuff Enuff. Show him who's tough enough, Cody.

Cody looks from under the brim of his hat to see if Zarita is watching him. She isn't. He pushes his hat down tight, looks up at Ty, bites into his mouthpiece, and nods his head. Tuff Enuff charges out of the chute and the song Tuff Enuff by the Fabulous Thunderbirds, blasts from the arena sound system.

LEXIE

Hey Zarita, look, there's your cowboy.

ZARITA

My cowboy? What are you talking about?

LEXIE

Don't tell me you haven't noticed him in the bleachers every Friday night watching you. Ever since that night he gave you the rose. I think he looves you.

ZARITA

You're crazy.

LEXIE

That's where the tickets came from.

Zarita looks from Lexie to Cody. Just then the rope is jerked from Cody's hand, he flies through the air, and lands in the dirt.

LATER

Cody and Ty make their way over to Zarita and Lexie in the bleachers.

CODY

Ty this is Zarita and Lexie.
Ladies, this is my pard Ty.

They say hello and Ty takes the seat beside Lexie.

Lexie

That was a great ride Cody.

CODY

Thanks, too bad it didn't last a second longer, so I'd be in the money.

ZARITA (to Cody)

Do you do this full time?

Lexie turns away and talks to Ty.

CODY

No, I work on my folks ranch full time and just do this on the weekends sometimes. How 'bout you? Do you work a regular job when you're not skating?

ZARITA

Yes, I'm a waitress.

CODY

Oh yeah, where?

ZARITA

Tudies Café.

CODY

Oh okay, I know where that is. You from around here?

ZARITA

Phoenix.

CODY

Do you have family here?

ZARITA

No. Do any girls ride bulls?

CODY

There used to be a few women who rode. I think it was back in the forties.

ZARITA

I'd like to try it one time just to see what it's like.

CODY

It's a rush, a frightening rush. You can end up in the money or in the hospital. Or you can get thrown a second short and end up looking stupid like me.

ZARITA

You didn't look stupid. You looked like you were in control - right up until you fell off.

CODY

Thanks, I guess, but I didn't fall off, I was thrown off.

They watch the action. Lexie and Ty talk and laugh.

ZARITA

What kind of money can you win?

CODY

It depends on where you're riding and what the purse is. And the position you finish in, like first place or tenth place. It's never enough though. After paying your transportation, entry fees, hotels, meals... and if you do it enough you will get hurt. It's just a matter of time.

ZARITA

Have you been hurt?

Cody rotates his left wrist.

CODY

Nothing serious, broke my wrist once, cracked some ribs, had a few stitches here and there.

ZARITA

So why do you do it?

Cody watches another rider hit the dirt then get chased by the bull until he jumps up on the fence.

CODY

I don't know. Why do you skate?
Girls get hurt doing that. I've
seen you take some pretty hard
hits. Seems like every time I
see you you've got a bandage,
or a bruise, or something going
on.

ZARITA

I don't know why I do it. Maybe
I'm punishing myself. No, I like
hanging out with the girls, going
out after an event. And I like
the performance aspect of it.

They watch another rider hit the dirt.

ZARITA

Why eight seconds?

CODY

Because ten is too long.

LATER

The event ends and they stand to leave.

ZARITA

Are you coming to the Derby next
week?

CODY

Yes, I am. And I was hoping I
could take you out afterwards.

Zarita smiles and looks away.

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Max and Zarita are seated on the couch making out.

ZARITA

One of the things I like about
you is that you've never tried
to go beyond kissing.

MAX

Before we go any further I want to feel like you love me even if you won't say it.

ZARITA

Damn boy, the things you say. I don't use the L word very often, but I will say this, I really... like you.

MAX

Ahrrrrgh!

INT. PUBLIC SKATING RINK - NIGHT

Disco music plays as Zarita tries to teach Cody how to roller skate. He keeps falling down as little kids skate past.

CODY

Dang, Z this is harder than bullriding. And this floor is a heck of a lot harder than the dirt I'm used to falling on. I'll be sore for a week.

She laughs and helps him up. Ty rolls by stiff-legged, wide-eyed and upright, with Lexie behind him pushing him.

Lexie and Zarita laugh and share an incredulous look.

Later, Ty and Cody sit on the sidelines drinking Cokes, Cody rubs his elbow, Ty holds his knee, as Zarita and Lexie put on a show for them, dancing, spinning around and showing off. Other skaters stop and watch Lexie and Zarita.

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT

Max and Zarita are seated on the couch kissing passionately.

ZARITA

Oh, Max.

MAX

Yes?

She whispers in his ear.

ZARITA

I'd better go, Honey. It's past your bedtime.

MAX

You know sometimes you're just mean.

ZARITA

Max Honey, you have to get your sleep, you have school in the morning. You don't want to be late for class now do you?

MAX

Ahrrrrgh!

EXT. DESERTED STREET - NIGHT

Zarita is street skating when a dirty, bearded homeless looking MAN grabs her from behind and tries to drag her into the bushes. She explodes with rage, and brings her knee up then kicks back with her skate hitting him in the knee. He drops her and grabs his knee. She could skate away but instead she spins around facing him. He grabs her in a bear hug with their faces inches apart, she leans back then slams her forehead into his nose. Blood explodes from his nose but he doesn't let go of her.

MAN

You bitch!

When he spits out the words his blood speckles her face. She wiggles her right arm free and jabs her fingers into his eyes. He drops her, roars, and covers his eyes with his hands. She kicks him in the knee and he goes down. Then she goes into a frenzy stomping him with her skate and imitating his screams of agony.

EXT. ZARITA'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Zarita tosses her hair back and looks up at Max.

ZARITA

I had a nice time tonight, Max.
They kiss.

MAX

This is so exciting. I've never
been in love before.

ZARITA

Damn boy the things you say. Hey
look, I've got to go in.

MAX

Can I see you tomorrow?

ZARITA

No I've got practice. I'll see
you at the gym.

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

Zarita is laughing at something LARRY said. The clock on the wall reads five. Paint cans and supplies are on plastic sheets on the floor. Zarita applies masking tape to a line on a wall while Larry rolls paint on another wall. Larry is still wearing his cooks apron. Tudie sits at the counter doing paperwork.

LARRY

Zarita you know you don't have
to stay late like this to help.

ZARITA

I know but you let me pick out
the colors and put up the posters,
so it's only fair that I help out.

LATER

ZARITA

How long have you known Tudie?

LARRY

Too long. I'm kidding. Let's see I'm fifty-six, so it's been about thirty years.

ZARITA

Wow, and you've been friends all that time?

LARRY

Yep, I've been with her through three husbands.

Zarita is dumbfounded.

LARRY

Yeah, I named her.

ZARITA

What?

LARRY

Before all them husbands when we were first dating my nickname for her was Sweet Patudie, which as the years went by it got shortened to Patudie, and now just Tudie.

ZARITA

A rose by any other name... (Shakespear)

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Zarita and Max lie on his disheveled bed with a sheet partially covering them. They stare at the ceiling breathing hard. Zarita lights a cigarette.

MAX

Was that good for you?

ZARITA

Yeah it was nice.

MAX

Good I was worried.

ZARITA

Why?

MAX

Because it was my first time.

ZARITA

What? Bullshit.

MAX

No, I'm not kidding. That was my first time.

ZARITA

Oh God, as if I didn't feel guilty enough already.

She pulls the sheet up over her head.

INT. GYM - DAY

Zarita finishes a kick boxing class and goes to the juice bar. She opens a bottle of water and starts to drink. Max walks up.

MAX

Why didn't you return my calls last night, Sweetie?

ZARITA

I was busy, and don't call me Sweetie.

MAX

I never get to see you anymore, at least not outside of here.

ZARITA

Well, like I said, I'm busy.

MAX

Zarita, I thought we had something special, I ---

ZARITA

No, we didn't.

She walks away.

INT. ZARITA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zarita peeks out the window and sees Max sitting in his car down the street.

ZARITA

Oh God, what have I done.

INT. GYM - DAY

Zarita waits until Max comes in the gym and sees her then she goes over and starts flirting with a good looking body builder. She stands facing the body builder laughing and touching his arm. Then she looks past him and looks at Max with hateful dead eyes. Max leaves.

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

Tudie has customers lined up and waiting at the cash register when she looks across the room and sees Zarita standing beside a table talking to Max. Tudie can't hear them, but she can tell from Zarita's body language that it is not good. Tudie looks over her shoulder and calls to Larry.

TUDIE

Larry, it looks like some guy is giving Zarita a hard time out here.

Larry comes out of the kitchen taking his apron off, goes directly to the table where Max is and sits down across from him. He stares at Max without saying anything. Zarita is standing, talking to Max with suppressed anger. Max is looking down at the table.

ZARITA

... then we went out a few times, we had some fun, and then you decided you own me. I don't want you coming in here anymore. We're done - get over it. Here's a little something for you to remember me by.

Max looks up at her hopefully, and she slaps his face, glares at him for a second, then walks away. Max looks down, his face turns red, then he gets up and leaves.

LARRY

Damn.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Each person slow dancing on the small, packed, dance floor is inadvertently touching two or three other people, elbows, hips, shoulders, butts, like one big dancing organism. Most of them are tipsy, stoned, in love, or in a world of their own, but a few of the men looking over the heads of the other dancers exchange looks that communicate a shared, special and hot experience.

Zarita sits at a table with Cassidy while Brad stands nearby talking to Cody.

CASSIDY

How'd you end up here, Zarita?

Zarita lights a cigarette, hesitates, becomes serious.

ZARITA

When I was little my mother walked across the bridge to Nogales every day to clean hotel rooms. Starting when I was twelve she would take me with her to help work. The hotel had a restaurant and they gave employees a free meal every day so that was my one meal a day. I was lucky, at home I had a grandmother and five brothers and sisters who had it a lot rougher.

Brad sits down, starts to say something, senses the mood, leans back in his chair and looks around the room. Zarita finishes a beer, holds the bottle up, and jiggles it at a waitress.

ZARITA

One day when I was fourteen we just didn't go back. We had friends and relatives in the north and... I never saw my grandmother or my brothers and sisters again.

Cassidy puts her hand on Zarita's hand.

Later

Lexie and Zarita are sitting at a table together. Lexie starts singing along while the band plays Lynyrd Skynyrd's Give Me Three Steps. Lexie sounds great, Zarita joins in and is terrible. Lexie stops singing and makes a pained expression.

LEXIE

You know you're the best-looking girl in here, right?

Zarita stops singing and laughs. Lexie looks out at the dance floor.

LEXIE

Well that's the first time I ever saw Cody dance with anyone besides you.

Zarita looks and sees Cody dancing with a girl who has her back to Zarita. The girl is riding Cody's thigh and grinding against him. Cody and the girl dance around, and the girl, Andrea, gives Zarita an evil smile. After a stunned moment Zarita walks toward the door with Lexie trying to catch up with her.

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

The café is crowded. The new posters are up on the newly painted walls, and new music is playing on the jukebox.

Zarita stops at a booth and refills coffee for four older gentlemen. They are in their sixties except

(more)

(con'd)

SHERMAN who is in his forties. They are all well-dressed and well-kept, in expensive suits and exotic-skinned boots. They look and sound like Texas millionaires. There are business papers on the table before them. Sherman looks up at Zarita's name tag as she refills his cup.

SHERMAN

Zarita. That's a pretty name for a mighty pretty girl. Are you from Mexico?

Zarita affects a lilting valley girl accent.

ZARITA

You know I hear that all the time but I'm like, from the valley, I grew up in Glendale so like, you know, what-ever.

The men all laugh.

OLDEST MAN

Zarita if I leave you a hundred dollar tip will you go out with me?

ZARITA

Out where? The shuffleboard courts? The early bird special at the cafeteria?

The men laugh.

ZARITA

There's not enough Viagra in Texas for you to take me out.

A SECOND MAN at the table who looks just as old as the first man speaks up.

SECOND MAN

How 'bout me Miss Zarita? I'm not near as old as he is.

ZARITA

Does that mean you want to come home and meet my parents? You'd probably get along with them, they're almost as old as you.

THIRD MAN

What about me, Zarita?

ZARITA

That's just what I've been lying awake nights fantasizing about climbing into bed with your wrinkled old ass.

Over their laughter, to the other guys with her hand beside her mouth as if the third man couldn't hear her.

ZARITA

A good screw would probably kill him.

The men love it. Sherman watches Zarita walk away.

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

Sherman watches Zarita walk toward him. He sits alone in a booth. Then Zarita stands beside him and laughs as he talks with animation.

Later, Zarita comes up to the counter to place an order.

TUDIE

Sherman is getting to be a regular around here. Has he asked you out yet?

ZARITA

Yeah, everyday.

TUDIE

You should go out with him.

ZARITA

He's about twice my age, and he's been married.

Tudie looks out the front windows.

TUDIE

Is that his big new Mercedes
Benz out front?

Zarita laughs.

ZARITA

He has kids as old as me.

TUDIE

He also owns buildings, whole
buildings, downtown, big, tall
buildings.

ZARITA

I don't know. He is nice.

TUDIE

And nice looking. I'm just saying,
you deserve the best and he could
give it to you.

INT. DOWNTOWN HOTEL ATRIUM - NIGHT

A husky young man in a suit stands in front of a private elevator. When he sees Sherman and Zarita approaching he opens the elevator and puts his hand in to hold the door open. He follows them in and operates the elevator.

EXT. ROOFTOP RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sherman and Zarita exit the elevator and the maître de leads them across the dining area. Zarita is wearing a rust-tinted Versache cocktail dress and five inch spike heels. Her long curly hair is so black and shiny it looks wet. Every man looks at her. Trophy wives who moments before were full of themselves look at Zarita and are humbled. Some of them stop in mid-sentence as she passes by. She is elegant, she is acting, and she exudes a royal air.

Later, at their table.

SHERMAN

I wish I could find a way to spend more time with you. I'll tell you what; I'll give you a thousand a week to be my personal assistant.

ZARITA

Oh Sherman, you are so generous, but no.

SHERMAN

Okay, two thousand a week.

Zarita smiles.

ZARITA

No.

SHERMAN

Okay, just tell me what you want and it's yours. Anything, anything at all.

Zarita looks up at the night sky.

ZARITA

Well first I want Jupiter and Mars.

Sherman leans back and sighs with disappointment.

ZARITA

Then I want the Rocky Mountains.

SHERMAN

So far, no problem. What else?

ZARITA

Then I want you to quit trying to own me. We can go places and do things together without you possessing me. Not everything can be bought, Sherm. Besides, you're a, ah, well, there's a big difference in our age.

SHERMAN

Now why you wanna bring up a thing like that? Don't we get along? Don't I make you laugh?

ZARITA (Laughs)

Yes, but...

The waiter arrives.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER THAT NIGHT

Zarita and Sherman stop beside the Mercedes, Sherman is telling a story, Zarita is laughing, when a hulking YOUNG MAN dressed in black steps out of the alley, and points a handgun at Sherman.

YOUNG MAN

Give me your money.

Sherman takes a small step back, raises both hands almost chest high palms out, and shakes them side to side.

SHERMAN

Whoa, whoa, whoa...

Zarita jerks a leg up and snaps a spike heel into the back of the hand that is holding the gun. The gun flies from his hand, he grimaces, crouches, grabs his bleeding hand, and looks up at Zarita just as her leg comes up again and drives a spike heel into his forehead. His eyes cross, and he drops to the ground, out cold.

SHERMAN

What the hell was that?

ZARITA

That was the result of months of kick boxing lessons. I'll bet he won't try that again.

SHERMAN

Personal assistant, hell. You could be my security. Damn girl.

MONTAGE

- Deliveryman at Zarita's condo with flowers.
- Deliveryman at Zarita's condo with art work.
- Zarita and Sherman in a private box at a football game.
- Zarita and Sherman getting into a limo.

INT. ZARITA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zarita sits on the couch in the dark watching television. She pauses the picture on a close-up of Meryl Streep, then stands up, and tries to channel Meryl in The Devil Wears Prada.

ZARITA (sounding like Meryl)
Why is no one red-eee?

This stuff? Oh okay, I see. You think this has nothing to do with you. You go to your closet and you select, I don't know, that lumpy blue sweater for instance because you're trying to tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care what you put on your back, but what you don't know is that sweater is not just blue, it's not turquoise, it's not lapis, it's actually cerulean.

Zarita sits back down and aims the remote.

ZARITA
Meryl, you are a genius.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lexie is onstage singing the Jewel song Who Will Save Your Soul when she looks out and sees a totally drunk Zarita being led toward the door by a man who looks out of place. In the middle of singing a line Lexie says, "Cody". A surprised Cody looks at Lexie, no one else seems to notice. Lexie continues singing but looks toward Zarita and nods her head. Cody starts toward the door and blocks the door just as the man leading Zarita reaches it.

CODY

Where you think you're going, Dude?

The man looks at Cody, Harley and Ty are closing in behind Cody. The man leans Zarita against Cody and goes out the door without saying anything.

ZARITA

Who was that masked man?

Cody laughs and helps Zarita to a chair. She sits and puts her head down on the table and appears to go to sleep.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Cassidy's husband, Brad, stops his pickup truck in front of a small house on a dark, quiet street in a middle class neighborhood. Cassidy slides the empties window open.

CASSIDY

Okay girls you're home. Zarita we don't know where you live so here's where you get out.

In profile the back of the truck looks empty, then Zarita sits bolt upright in the bed of the truck and looks up at the sky.

ZARITA (yelling)

Whoaa sky.

Lexie's hand comes up from the back of the truck and smears Zarita's face.

LEXIE

Shhhh. My neighbors hate it when I come home late and wake them up.

Lexie and Zarita stumble out of the truck, stagger across the yard, and go in the house.

INT. LEXIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lexie and Zarita stumble in giggling and shushing. Lexie sits on the side of her bed, passes out, and falls over. Zarita takes Lexie's shoes off and puts her feet on the bed. Then she goes around and lies down on the other side of the bed.

INT. LEXIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Still dressed Zarita and Lexie lie touching, back to back on the bed. Zarita opens one eye and looks around without moving. Lexie's house is funky Western.

ZARITA

Where the hell am I? Oh right. Oh my head this must be why the doctor told me not to drink.

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

Larry and Zarita are in the kitchen, Larry is cleaning the grill, Zarita is eating. Tudie enters.

TUDIE

Zarita, let me see if I've got this right. You work here five days a week then you go to the gym every afternoon. And you skate on Friday nights, and practice on Wednesday nights. And you're doing a radio show Monday through Thursday from two to five AM. Right?

ZARITA

Yeah, so?

TUDIE

Good Lord girl when do you sleep?

Zarita shivers and looks repulsed.

Zarita

Sleep? Ugh, please, I'm eating.

Tudie and Larry laugh.

TUDIE

That's something else. You're always eating and you never gain any weight. I've never seen a girl eat as much as you do. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind, eat all you want, it's just...

Zarita looks down and stops eating.

ZARITA

I grew up in a little village down in Sonora, there was a bunch of us kids, and there was never enough to eat. I think my first words were, I'm hungry.

Tudie and Larry exchange a heartfelt look.

ZARITA

An uncle...

She makes air quotes when she says, "uncle".

ZARITA

...gave my parents money and brought me north when I was twelve. I guess I still eat like I'm starving. I'm sorry.

Tudie puts her arm around Zarita's shoulder and hugs her.

TUDIE

No, I'm sorry, I didn't know.
I shouldn't have said anything.
You eat all you want Darlin'.

As Tudie walks away she takes a tissue from her uniform pocket and touches the corner of her eyes with it. Zarita smiles as she goes back to eating.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO - NIGHT

Zarita sits on the couch watching television. She pauses the video, stands up, and sounds exactly like Renee Zellweger in Bridget Jones' Diary.

ZARITA (as Renee)

No! No! Its just that it's such a terrible pity, for England to lose such a great legal brain. For the people of England like me and you to lose one of our top people, our top person really. Well, better dash. I have another party to go to, single people, mostly puffs. Bye.

Zarita sits down laughing.

ZARITA

Let's see, that was a Spanish American, imitating an American imitating a Brit. No wonder it wasn't very good.

INT. SHERMAN'S MERCEDES - DAY

Sherman stops the Mercedes at a desolate crossroads with a gas station, feed store, bar, and corral. An old pickup truck with a horse trailer is parked beside the corral. A little old Mexican man stands just inside the fence of the corral watching a five year old boy ride a pony. A big saddled horse stands in the corral.

ZARITA

Look at that little cowboy. Pull
over let's stop a minute. How cute
is he?

Sherman parks, they get out and lean against the
corral. The old man keeps an eye on the boy as Zarita
speaks to the OLD MAN in Spanish.

ZARITA (Spanish, subtitled)

He's going to make a good cowboy.

OLD MAN (Spanish, subtitled)

Thank you, it is all he wants.

ZARITA (Spanish, subtitled)

Why aren't you riding the other
horse Senor?

The old man chuckles.

OLD MAN (Spanish, subtitled)

No, he's too much horse for me.
Too headstrong. I hoped there
would be some young cowboy here
that I could get to ride him. It
was all I could do to get the
saddle on him. He's a devil horse.

SHERMAN

What'd he say?

ZARITA

He told me I could ride the other
horse.

SHERMAN

Well, that's nice.

Zarita tightens the cinch, mounts, then makes the
horse back up and stop, then pivot in a circle to the
left and stop, then pivot in a circle to the right
and stop. She then kicks his flanks and takes off
at a hard run around the corral. The old man takes
his hat off and slaps his thigh with it.

OLD MAN (Spanish, subtitled)
Look at that girl ride. Now that's
a real cowgirl. Ride him girl; show
him who's boss.

Sherman smiles, and nods, and looks wide-eyed at the old man as if he understands him. Zarita rides the horse hard for a couple of minutes then slows to a walk beside the mounted Mexican boy and talks with him.

INT ANDREA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Andrea opens a black case that holds cassette tapes, she takes one out, puts it in a tape player, listens to it, rewinds it, then picks up a phone.

INT ZARITA'S CONDO - NIGHT

The phone rings in Zarita's condo, she picks it up, and Gerardo's voice comes through.

GERARDO (on tape)
Hey Andrea it's Gerardo. Are we
still on for tonight? I can't
wait to see you. Call me back.

Zarita stands up screaming and throws the phone across the room.

MONTAGE

- Zarita in bed asleep, thrashing about saying "No" over and over.
- Another night, her bed is disheveled and she sleeps with her head at the foot of the bed.
- Another night, she sleeps on the floor beside the bed, her empty bed is a wreck.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lexie and Ty sit at a table watching Zarita and Cody two-step around the dance floor.

LEXIE

Look at those two, they're perfect together. I don't know why she keeps saying that they're just friends.

TY

Maybe because she's also dating a millionaire?

LEXIE

That's not going to last. She told me just the other day that Sherman wanted to introduce her to his kids, and she said no. She said she likes being around him and going out with him, but that he's too possessive.

TY

Cody needs to be more possessive. I told him that hanging back and waiting for her to come around might not work, and that he needs to make his intentions plain to her before somebody else gets her.

LEXIE

Good, you're right, he's too nice, too easy going.

TY

Maybe she'll get tired of old money bags and realize that Cody is who she should be with. Don't tell her this, but he worships her. There are plenty of other girls he could be going out with but he won't.

LEXIE

Wow, I wish somebody felt that way about me.

TY

Well, hang in there Lexie you might get lucky someday.

Lexie punches Ty's shoulder.

LEXIE

Asshole.

INT. SHERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sherman and Zarita watch the Dallas Cowboys on television. Sherman gets up, makes a pained expression and favors his left knee.

SHERMAN

Owww.

ZARITA

Are you okay? You want me to get that for you? I know those boney old knees of yours are about worn out.

SHERMAN

You know, as much as I love you sometimes you piss me off.

Zarita stands, raises her hands almost chest high, palms out, and shakes them side to side.

ZARITA

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

She sounds like Sherman when they were almost mugged.

SHERMAN

You are sooo funny.

Zarita uses a little girls voice and demeanor.

ZARITA

Oh, is daddy getting angry?

He starts toward her with a slight limp and a glint in his eye. She moves away staying just out of reach and affects an old woman's voice.

ZARITA

Now don't go getting upset dear.
Remember your blood pressure.

He starts laughing and chasing her around the room.

ZARITA

You better slow down Sherm. I don't
want to have to do CPR on you.

He sweeps her up in his arms and heads for the bedroom.
She uses the little girl voice again.

ZARITA

Oh no, please stop, help, help.

INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

Zarita has Mary Chapin Carpenter's Cajun anthem
Twist and Shout playing softly in the background.

ZARITA

This is Front Porch Betty
coming to you from the front
porch of KATY radio. Tonight's
guest host is Evangeline. Where
you from Evangeline?

Zarita looks at herself in the mirror and applies
a big beauty mark to her cheekbone, and a colorful
scarf to her head while speaking with a Cajun accent.

ZARITA (as Evangeline)

I'm from Bayou Goula. That's in
Iberville Parrish, south of Baton
Rouge.

ZARITA

I see you have some CD's and some
other stuff with you tonight.

ZARITA (as Evangeline)

Oui, I have some Texas Swing Cajun,
some Dancehall Cajun, some Zydeco,
and I brought you some shrimp
gumbo that I made myself.

ZARITA

Oh thank you. It smells wonderful.
Tell me, are there many Cajuns
in the greater San Antonio area?

ZARITA (as Evangeline)
No, not really, but there are a
lot of people who like the Cajun
music.

ZARITA
Well, slip that right in there,
press that button and turn us
on to what you have. Then we can
dig into this gumbo.

Bayon Pom Pom by Michael Doucet starts playing. Zarita
takes a fast food hamburger and fries from a paper bag.

INT. TUDIE'S - DAY

Cody, Ty and Lexie sit in the nearly empty restaurant
with coffee cups before them. They can hear the laughter
of Larry, Tudie and Zarita coming from the kitchen.

LEXIE
What they doing back there?

Cody and Ty don't respond. Tudie comes from the kitchen
laughing and begins to clear a table.

Sherman walks in by himself and sits in a booth.

LEXIE
Well, Cody, there's your nemesis.

CODY
What do you mean?

LEXIE
That's Sherman.

CODY
Christ he's old as dirt.

Zarita comes from the kitchen, goes over and starts
talking to Sherman. Lexie glances at Cody, Ty glances
at Cody, then Lexie and Ty look at one another for a
profound second.

CODY

Well, I guess I could go kick his ass.

TY

You could, but I don't think it would improve your standing with Zarita.

CODY

A millionaire! How am I supposed to compete with that?

Zarita laughs at something Sherman says.

LEXIE

Cody. Look at me. Believe me when I tell 'ya... you've got nothing to worry about.

Cody looks down and shakes his head.

Montage

- Zarita and Lexie grimace as Cody gets thrown from a bull in 2 seconds.
- The four of them in the front seat of Ty's truck looking glum, no one speaks. Cody looks out the passenger side window, Lexie and Zarita exchange serious looks.
- Zarita and Lexie yell encouragement to Cody as he rides a bull, he stays on for 8 seconds and they cheer and exchange excited looks.
- The four of them in the front seat of Ty's truck driving home at night with everyone happy and talking at the same time. Cody waves a handful of bills, his winnings. Zarita kisses his cheek.

EXT. BULLRIDING EVENT - NIGHT

Zarita and Lexie watch the action from the stands. Cody straps his left hand to the back of a bull called Trouble. When the chute flies open the song, T-R-O-U-B-L-E by Travis Tritt blares from the PA system. Zarita and Lexie sit very straight on the edge of their seats and cheer for Cody. From the start Cody is catching air and leaning back too far.

LEXIE

Hang on, Cody. Ride 'em cowboy.

Zarita stands up and puts her hands over her mouth.

ZARITA

This doesn't look good.

Cody flies off, but his hand stays tied down to the bull's back. The bull continues bucking, spinning and jerking Cody around like a rag doll. The music stops, the crowd gets quiet. Finally, one of the bullfighters jumps on the bull and cuts the rope, thus, releasing Cody. He falls to the ground, limp. The bull exits, then bullfighters and medics crowd around Cody. Zarita sits down and Lexie puts her arm around her.

LEXIE

He'll be okay, he's tough.

Zarita holds the gold cross on her necklace.

ZARITA

Oh God, please no, not again.

Cody is finally helped to his feet. The crowd cheers their relief as he slowly walks from the arena with a medic on each side.

LEXIE

He's alright. Take it easy Zarita
he's okay.

Sitting with her elbows on her knees, Zarita holds her head and cries. Lexie tries to comfort her.

INT. ROLLERRAMA - NIGHT

Cody comes rushing in just before Zarita is introduced. When she hits the track Pat Benatar's Hit Me With Your Best Shot fills the building. Zarita quickly gets up speed and when Benatar sings out, "Hit me with your best shot" Zarita puts her hands on her knees, sticks her butt out, and gives the audience a wide-eyed, open-mouthed surprised look.

She quickly spins around, skates backwards and strikes a pose with one hand straight up over her head, her other hand in her hair, one knee raised, her head back, and her eyes closed. She incorporates sexy swaying dance moves into her turn around the track then just before stepping back into the alley she goes up on her toe stops and takes several little ballerina steps. She stops in the alley facing Lexie, with her back to Cody.

LEXIE

Damn girl, I didn't know you had all a that.

ZARITA

Was Cody watching?

Lexie looks over Zarita's shoulder and sees Cody standing in the first row of the bleachers waving his hat in circles over his head and yelling.

LEXIE

Oh yeah, he was watching.

Zarita turns around and smiles at Cody then she sees Andrea sitting in the top row of the bleachers alone with a life size poster of Gerardo from the waist up propped up on the seat beside her.

Zarita sits down on a bench in the alley and holds her head.

MONTAGE

- Zarita and Cody sharing a candlelit dinner.
- Zarita and Cody having a tailgate picnic under a tree.
- Zarita and Cody kissing.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO - NIGHT

Zarita sits on the couch with a glass in her hand, and a half empty bottle of Scotch on the table before her. The television is on an old movie, and there is a big fire in the fireplace. The doorbell chimes.

ZARITA

Go away!

The doorbell chimes again. Zarita gets up. She's wearing faded jeans, a long-sleeved blue work shirt and thick socks. She opens the door and sees Sherman standing there with a huge box.

SHERMAN

Hey, I --

Zarita cuts him off.

ZARITA

Why didn't you call first?

SHERMAN

Because I didn't think you'd let me come over. I haven't seen you in two weeks, and -

She walks away leaving the door open, he follows her in.

ZARITA

So what do you want?

SHERMAN

Well, I thought I'd come over with a little peace offering and see if I couldn't get back in your good graces.

She rolls her eyes.

ZARITA

Sherman we've been through this before and I'm starting to get tired of it. You don't seem to learn, as many times as I've told you that I'm not interested, you just keep on keeping on like you think you can wear me down or something.

Sherman opens the box and lifts up a black mink stole. It is beautiful, light dances over it.

Zarita is disappointed.

ZARITA

Really Sherman? Look around, do you think I'm going to be won over by a mink stole? Do you think that at twenty-three years of age I'm even going to wear a stole? I thought you had better taste than this. You disappoint me. Yet again, now get out.

SHERMAN

Just try it on.

ZARITA

Fuck you.

Sherman steps closer to her holding the stole up in front of her.

SHERMAN

I just want to see you in it.

Zarita pushes him away.

ZARITA

And I want to see you out of here.

She goes over and opens the door then comes back to where Sherman stands in front of the fireplace.

SHERMAN

Zarita please.

ZARITA

Why don't you get it? Is it your age? Are you getting senile? How many times do I have to tell you? Now get out of my life asshole.

He pushes the stole up in her face.

SHERMAN

Zarita please I love you.

She explodes, snatches the stole from his hands and throws it in the fireplace where it goes up in flames. She slaps his face and pushes him toward the door.

He staggers out the door with his head down. She slams the door behind him and lets out a primal scream. The mink continues to burn.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A band plays in the background. A very drunk Lexie talks to a MAN sitting beside her. Zarita sits across from Lexie.

LEXIE

I'm not leaving with you because I left with you before, so no thank you.

MAN

But I was so out of it that night I didn't know what I was doing.

LEXIE

You weren't doing anything. That's why - No!

Lexie looks at Zarita's forehead.

LEXIE

Got me all sparked up then passed out and snored like a train all night. It was so loud I couldn't even sleep. Are you my designated driver?

ZARITA

Yes.

LEXIE

Good, lets blow this pop stand.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Zarita helps Lexie walk to Zarita's truck. Lexie whispers for no apparent reason.

LEXIE

Don't take me home. That asshole knows where I live, and he might show up.

Zarita laughs.

Zarita

Okay.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO - MORNING

Lexie wakes up in Zarita's guest bedroom, goes in the bathroom, comes out, stops and looks around. She is barefoot and wearing the wrinkled clothes she slept in. Zarita sits at the breakfast bar with coffee and cereal, she looks clean and fresh. Music plays softly in the background.

LEXIE

Have I died and gone to heaven?
Is this your place?

ZARITA

Yeah.

LEXIE

Did Sherman set you up with this?

ZARITA

No!

Lexie goes to the open sliding glass door, steps out onto the balcony and is stunned by the view of the beautiful rolling hills of San Antonio. She steps back in the room.

LEXIE

Wow! Well, you sure didn't get this working at Tudie's. C'mon girl what's the story.

ZARITA

Well, if I tell you, you have to promise not to tell anyone.

LEXIE

Okay, no problem, I promise. Wait, are you one of those thousand dollar a night hookers?

ZARITA

I can't believe you'd say such a thing.

LEXIE

I was kidding, but what's the deal, really?

Lexie sprawls in a huge leather chair, squirms around and smiles, absorbing the luxury.

ZARITA

I have a credit card and my parents take care of it every month but please don't tell anyone. It would change everything.

LEXIE

Okay, don't worry, I won't tell. So they pay the rent on this place and make your truck payment, and--

ZARITA

Actually, my family has owned this
condo for years, and the truck has
been paid for since the seventies.

LEXIE

So what was all that bullshit
about growing up in poverty in
Old Mexico?

ZARITA

Yeah, I lied.

Something suddenly dawns on Lexie.

LEXIE

Oh! That's why you weren't
impressed by Sherman.

Zarita goes in the kitchen area pours a cup of coffee
and brings it to Lexie.

ZARITA

Yeah, I've known men like him
all my life. Friends and business
associates of my father.

LEXIE

So why do you work?

ZARITA

What else am I gonna do, sit
around all day? I need to stay
busy, and besides I like working
there, and I love Tudie and Larry.

LEXIE

I knew there was something special
about you.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO - NIGHT

The doorbell chimes. Zarita limps to the door in
shorts and a tee shirt with bandages around her
left ankle and right wrist. She has a black eye,

(more)

(con'd)

and a fishnet burn on her left thigh. She opens the door and Cody stands there with an air cast from the knee down on his right leg, one pinky finger in a splint, stitches over his left eye, and a bruised and swollen lower lip. They look each other over with concern for a moment, then start to laugh.

CODY

Darlin' we must be doing something wrong.

Zarita laughs then grabs her side.

ZARITA

Don't make me laugh I've got bruised ribs. What happened to you?

Cody limps into the room. She kisses his cheek as he enters, then closes the door behind him.

CODY

I got run over. It wasn't bad enough that he threw me in two point two, no, he had to turn around, chase me, and then run over me. What about you? Hell, you look worse than me.

ZARITA

I was the jammer, and Harley gave me a whip into the pack, they clotheslined me, and we all went down. Then I'm trying to get up and this two hundred pound Amarillo Alleycat skates by and stomps on my ankle. I swear I think she did it on purpose.

Later

They are propped up in bed, still dressed, with their shoes off, with blue ice packs, a heating pad, and beers on the bedside tables. Code leans over to kiss Zarita but as soon as their lips touch he jerks back.

CODY

Ouch, sorry, I forgot, my lips
bruised.

Zarita tries to move closer.

ZARITA

Owwee, my ribs.

They squirm around trying to get closer but just end up laughing, in pain, at themselves.

CODY

You know I really look forward
to being with you, but maybe
tonight we should just take a
couple Vicodin and get some sleep.

LATER

Zarita softens her eyes.

ZARITA

Well, my lips aren't bruised.

The sheer curtain on the sliding glass door undulates.

INT. ZARITA'S CONDO - Day

Sun shines on the sheer curtain on the sliding glass door. Zarita and Lexie sit on the couch with glasses and a bottle of wine on the table before them. Lexie looks around the condo.

LEXIE

This place is beautiful. I could get used to this. You're lucky you know, having a family with money.

ZARITA

Yeah, I know. And it's not like I did anything to deserve it. Oh, I am fortune's fool. (Shakespear)

LEXIE

Do you know how hard it's been for me not to tell Cody? I think the only reason he hasn't asked you to marry him is because he's so poor. Ty told me that he barely makes enough to get by on working on the ranch. You should invite him over and fix him dinner.

Zarita laughs.

LEXIE

What?

ZARITA

I don't know how to cook. I know how to microwave; I could invite him over for popcorn. Or I could invite him over and call out for something. I'm good at calling out.

LEXIE

How can you not know how to cook?

ZARITA

We had a cook.

LEXIE

Oh my God.

ZARITA

I eat at Tudie's during the day
and then I call out for something
at night, or I drive through
some place. Besides I don't know
if I even want to get married.

LEXIE

Why not?

Zarita looks away, clouds up, doesn't answer.

LEXIE

Do you have any other secrets
that you want to share with me?

Zarita looks into Lexie's eyes for a couple of
seconds, then looks down.

ZARITA

I was engaged once, and we went
home for him to meet my family.
It was Memorial Day weekend
last year. On the way back to
Albuquerque, I was driving,
being reckless, speeding. The
car slid off the road, rolled,
he was killed. I killed him.

Zarita starts to cry. Lexie puts her arm around
Zarita's shoulders.

ZARITA

My first true love and I killed
him.

Lexie has tears in her eyes as she hugs Zarita.

LEXIE

That wasn't your fault. It was
an accident. You can't blame
yourself for an accident.

ZARITA

But I do blame myself. I was
driving, it was my fault.

They cry and hold one another, then Lexie pushes Zarita back, holds her shoulders, and looks at her tear streaked face.

LEXIE

Okay, say it was your fault.
You did a bad thing, but that
was over a year ago. It's
time to let it go, move on.

ZARITA

I can't just let it go he was
my one true love and I killed
him.

Lexie shakes Zarita by her shoulders.

LEXIE

Get over yourself, girl. You've
got everything going for you -
you're young, rich, beautiful,
and you want to feel sorry for
yourself because of an accident
that happened over a year ago?
C'mon girl.

Zarita gets up and goes out on the balcony.

Later

Lexie goes out on the balcony and looks at Zarita
sitting in a lounge chair watching the sun set.

LEXIE

You okay?

ZARITA

Yeah, I guess so. That was the
first time I ever talked about
with anyone. Well, besides my
mother. Thanks.

LEXIE

No problem, Z. You're gonna be
alright, hang in there.

EXT. CODY'S TRAILER - DAY

Cody's single-wide is old and dilapidated. It is parked in a pasture without any landscaping. His truck and Zarita's truck are parked near the door. Concrete blocks are stacked to form steps up to the door.

INT. CODY'S TRAILER - DAY

Cody sits on one end of the couch holding a beer engrossed in a Western movie (Giant) on television. Zarita sits on the other end of the couch, on the edge of the seat, flipping a short piece of rope trying to do a trick where she flips the rope, it makes a loop and the end of the rope falls through the loop making a knot. She can't do it.

ZARITA

You know I heard that every year men are killed riding bulls.

CODY

Yeah, I've heard that.

ZARITA

Well, I think you should quit. You know, quit while you're ahead.

Cody continues to look at the television. Zarita flips the rope and misses again.

CODY

I'll quit bull riding if you'll quit skating.

ZARITA

Hey I'm not going to get killed skating.

CODY

No, but every time I see you take a fall and get hurt it hurts me too.

The end of the rope drops through the loop making a knot. She gets up, sits back down beside him, and puts her hand on his thigh.

INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

Cody sits on the other side of the big window that separates the sound booth from the rest of the studio. He is leaning back in an office chair holding a cup of coffee, and smiling at Zarita who is in the sound booth.

ZARITA

It's two AM in San Antonio, I'm
Front Porch Betty and my guest
host tonight is SHORT FUSE. What
have you brought for us tonight
Short Fuse?

Zarita turns her truckers hat around backwards, and becomes Short Fuse a loud, punk rock, metal head, psycho bitch.

ZARITA (as Short Fuse)

What have I brought for you?
I've brought the revolution is
what I've brought. If there's
any of those old hippies listening
in tonight, well, no! There
ain't gonna be no peace and love
around here tonight we're gonna
tear down the walls and burn
down the house. The revolution
will not be televised, but it
will be on the radio and it
starts right now. Wowww!

Zarita cues the Sex Pistols doing Anarchist. She looks through the window at Cody who is laughing so hard he is crying.

Later

White Riot by The Clash is playing when Zarita looks down and sees all six lights on the phone blinking. She turns the mike on, steps away from the console, and from across the booth she yells over the music.

ZARITA (as Short Fuse)
Tell those assholes to quit
calling down here. I'm trying to
fire up the revolution, and they're
calling in with requests for Christ's
sake. Get out in the damn streets
you bunch a posers.

She comes out and sits in Cody's lap while The Clash
play in the background.

Later

Twisted Sister's We're Not Gonna Take It is playing
as Zarita dances around in the booth singing along,
poorly. She reaches over, flips the mike on, and
yells over the music.

ZARITA (as Short fuse)
Yeah! We're not gonna take it,
and we're not trying to be
different - we just are. When I
leave here tonight, I want to
see smoke rising above the city.
I want to see flashing lights
rushing to the scene of your
mayhem. I want to hear sirens
screaming (she screams). It's
time to take to the streets and
raise some hell. Whooooaaa!

INT. CODY'S TRUCK - Sunrise

Cody is driving with Zarita beside him as they
leave the KATY parking lot.

CODY
Zarita, I know I said it before
but I can't help myself - you're
amazing. I had no idea you were
so talented. You should be on stage,
or in the movies, or something.

ZARITA
All the world's a stage,
and all the men and women merely
players, Darlin'. (Shakespear)

INT. TUDIE'S CAFÉ - DAY

Larry, Tudie and Zarita are in the kitchen, Larry is cleaning the grill, and Zarita is eating.

TUDIE (to Zarita)
Monday is Fourth of July, so we'll be closed do you have any plans?

ZARITA
Not really, how 'bout you guys?

TUDIE
Larry will be doing some back yard grillin'. You're welcome to come over if you want, we'd love love to have ya.

ZARITA
Thanks. Maybe I'll call you.

EXT. TUDIE'S - DAY

Zarita goes out the back door of Tudie's where her truck is parked and finds a flyer on the windshield. The flyer looks like an old wanted poster with a picture of Zarita under the word, "Wanted" and below the picture, "Zarita for the murder of Gerardo."

Zarita looks around, crumples the paper, and throws it in the truck. She gets in the truck, slams the door, pounds on the steering wheel, and screams.

EXT. RIVER WALK - NIGHT

Cody and Zarita stroll River Walk hand in hand. In a little alcove away from the crowds they sit on a bench. Cody takes a small jewelry box from his pocket, opens it, and shows a ring to Zarita.

CODY
I know I don't deserve you but if you'd have me, I'd love to spend the rest of my life with you.

Zarita takes the box, looks at the ring, closes the box, looks lovingly at Cody, then gives the box back to him.

ZARITA

Why don't you hold on to this for now and give me some time to think about this. Okay?

CODY

Oh, okay, take your time. I'll always be here for you whenever and whatever you decide, I'm yours.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Zarita's truck glides down a two lane, moonlit highway without another car in sight. She looks as if she hasn't slept or had a shower for a few days. The interior of the truck is littered with fast food wrappers and empty beer cans. The ashtray is full, her suitcases are on the floor of the truck. She passes a highway sign.

Through the windshield as the sign slowly passes by.

SIGN

Ajo Arizona 89 miles.

FADE OUT

