

WHEELS COME OFF

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Inspired by this writer and her disabled mother making their way through an inaccesible world.
(Some apocalypse added for seasoning.)

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OVER BLACK.

MANOELLA (V.O.)
Tony, shuffle abuela's playlist.

SOUNDTRACK: "You Get What You Give" by New Radicals.

CUT TO SEQUENCE:

- A pair of legs sneak past wheels then exit an apartment.
- Legs briskly walk down a dilapidated hallway and stairs.
- A leg punts a bicycle kickstand and sets off pedaling.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

MANOELLA CORTEZ (Latina - 16 going on 54 - face looks older than it should, aged by years of misfortune) zig zags while biking down barren streets. She bops her head to the music on her headphones and mouths words without saying them aloud.

MANOELLA

Wake up, kids. We got the dreamers disease. Age fourteen, they got you down on your knees. So polite, you're busy still saying please. Frienemies, who when you're down ain't your friend. Every night we smash a Mercedes-Benz. First we run, and then we laugh 'til we cry.

She may be a teenager but she's already racked up about seven decades worth of bullshit that has made her grow up too fast, too soon. She takes it all in stride. It's only made her astute.

Manoella wears scavenged clothes that don't fit quite right. A tattered bit of rope is repurposed as a belt. The bottom of her insanely oversized jeans are tucked inside her mismatched socks to stop them from getting stuck in the wheels.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

But when the night is falling, you cannot find the light. You feel your dreams are dying. Hold tight. You've got the music in you. Don't let go. You've got the music in you. One dance left. This world is gonna pull through. Don't give up. You've got a reason to live. Can't forget. We only get what we give.

This is one of her rare moments of freedom.

From the BAG ON HER SHOULDER we see TONY (a two foot robot with the same expressive abilities as Wall-E but ranking even higher on the lovable scale) peek his head out, looking curiously at the world zipping by. He bops to the music too.

INT. VARIOUS HOUSES - NIGHT

-- A window SHATTERS. Manoella's towel-wrapped hand sneaks through the hole in the glass and unlocks the door then steps inside. Tony scans the alley making sure they're alone.

-- Manoella ransacks a kitchen. She rifles through cupboards and drawers, filling her backpack with what she deems worthy.

-- Tony searches a living room. A pen, a stick of gum, a toy. He opens the back of a remote. The batteries have corroded. He throws the remote in his makeshift storage pouch anyway.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Manoella and Tony are flush to the wall. A thin white cord is wrapped around her hands. It holds up the partially smashed mirror they hide behind. The mirror tilts at a slight angle, reflecting the floor, giving the illusion no one is there.

MANOELLA

Don't you dare make a beep.
3...2...1...

A car modified to run on solar batteries speeds down the street. TWO MEN sit inside. A SPOTTER sits on the chair bolted to the roof. He holds a sharp machete type tool. These are who Manoella calls WHEELERS (white men of all ages and with identical tattoos). They're the self appointed Vanilla ISIS/Y'all Qaeda militia type who have taken over the area.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

6...5...4...3...2...1...

Another car. She lowers the mirror carefully but fast then counts down from ten while pushing the bike across the street. They hide in another alley just as a third car comes.

INT. HOUSE #4 (KITCHEN) - LATER

Manoella is atop the counter digging through high shelves.

MANOELLA

Jackpot! TonTon, come here.

Tony wheels into the kitchen.

TONY
What did you find Ella?

MANOELLA
Honey! It's been years dude. Seems kind of weird though. Is it good?

TONY
Allow me to scan it.

Manoella jumps down from the counter and holds the jar in front of Tony. He scans the jar. A beat. He's processing.

TONY (CONT'D)
The honey is crystalized.
Crystalized honey is safe to eat.
It simply needs to be heated until it's clear and golden again.

MANOELLA
(stuffing it in her bag)
Best news I've heard all year.

INT. HOUSE #4 (HOME OFFICE) - NIGHT

Manoella thumbs book spines and picks out two that stand out. "Oryx & Crake" by Margaret Atwood and one about foraging called "Edible Wild Plants". She throws them in her bag.

Manoella opens desk drawers. Nothing. She settles in on the comfy chair and stares at the TV on the wall. The TV comes alive. On screen, a 1950s B&W scene similar to "I Love Lucy" or "Dick Van Dyke". It's an over the top old time-y sitcom.

INT. 1950S LIVING ROOM - DAY - (FANTASY)

Manoella enters with her hair tied in a pony tail, adorned with a bow. She wears a tailored and ironed school uniform.

MANOELLA
(in Spanish)
Mama, I'm home.

CARLA (O.S.)
In the kitchen, darling!

INT. 1950S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS - (FANTASY)

CARLA NUÑEZ (36 - Latina with a magnetism that instantly yanks you into her orbit, dressed as the epitome of a white 50s housewife) buzzes around, walking briskly and with pep.

CARLA

Hi sweetheart! How was school?

MANOELLA

Oh, mother! It was swell. I made the Honor Roll again.

CARLA

My bright girl. This deserves a celebration! I'll make your favorite: biscuits and honey.

MANOELLA

What a coincidence! I stopped at the market and grabbed us some honey on the way home.

CARLA

You always think of everything.

MANOELLA

Will daddy-o be joining us?

CARLA

He's working late. Ain't that a bite.

MANOELLA

He's always working late.

CARLA

But I'm here and the two of us is all we need. Isn't it?

MANOELLA

It is.

CARLA

Why don't you put a record on and we'll dance while dinner is going?

MANOELLA

Any preference?

CARLA

One of your abuela's records would razz my berries.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I'm right on it!

INT. 1950S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS - (*FANTASY*)

Manoella flicks through the vinyls next to the record player. They're all artists and albums from the late 90s and through the 00s. She picks a vinyl and plays in on the phonograph.

SOUNDTRACK: "Shake It" by Metro Station.

After the first few notes Carla twirls into the living room. They dance intricate Lindy Hop and Swing steps. They move, shake, spin, jump, and laugh without a care in the world.

A loud and rhythmic THUMP THUMP THUMP bangs over the music but the women don't seem to hear it. THUMP THUMP THUMP.

INT. HOUSE #4 (HOME OFFICE) - NIGHT

REVEAL: Tony revs forward and bangs against the wooden leg of the chair that Manoella has fallen asleep on.

Manoella startles awake.

TONY

Sunrise is in seventeen minutes, Ella.

Manoella shoots to her feet and hastily picks Tony up with one hand and her bag with the other. She does her best to stuff him into the backpack safely while running to the door.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

SOUNDTRACK: "Dakota" by Stereophonics.

Manoella pedals furiously down the street. ENGINES REV nearby. Her eyes go wide. She bikes full speed into an alley, jumps off the bike, and hides behind an overturned dumpster.

Wheelers do the morning rounds. There's a flat bed truck with the phrase: "Thou shalt cut off the hand of a thief (Morley 37:19)" painted on it. A bus stop bench with an advertisement for CORTEX ROBOTICS is drilled to the truck bed with a haphazardly put together (and misspelled) wooden sign that reads "THIEFS!" hanging over it. FOUR BEATEN, AND BRUISED PEOPLE (three men, one woman) are strapped to the bench.

ERICK HANES (30s - white, skinny but menacing, tattooed, *his ring and little fingers were sloppily cut off years ago, ALWAYS whistling the tune of THE KILLER'S "MR. BRIGHTSIDE"*) stands in the back and taps between one of the man's hands.

ERICK

Right. Left. Right. Left. Right hand. Left. You a righty? Or lefty? So I know which one to cut first.

A TEENAGER pops his head out from the window.

TEENAGER

Erick. Hey Erick!...Wanna do
another lap or should we take these
crooks back to Morley?

The truck drives past where Manoella and Tony are hiding.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

TONY

Battery crit...

Manoella's hand flies over Tony's speaker to muffle it.

MANUELA

(angry whispering)
Quiet!

TONY (CONT'D)

(muffled)
...ically low.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Erick slaps the man in the face before responding.

ERICK

Morley'll like a mornin' present.
Y'all go back but drop me off.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

All the cars pass. Manoella holds and waits for silence to take over the city once again. It's safe. She exhales.

MANOELLA

You're gonna get us caught
one day.

TONY

Battery critically low.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I heard you the first time...I
charged you right before we left.

TONY

You did. Running diagnostics.

MANOELLA

What for? I know the issue.

TONY

Battery health: poor. Battery
needs replacing.

MANUELA

(imitating him)
Battery health: poor. Battery
needs replacing.

Manoella jumps back on her bike and pedals away.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - MORNING

Manoella looks around making sure the coast is clear and doesn't see anyone. She pulls back several slats of wood and sneaks into the alley then closes the entrance behind her.

REVEAL: *Erick watches from the shadows while whistling.*

INT. APARTMENT - DAWN

Manoella tiptoes in, shoes in hand. She pulls Tony from the bag. His battery indicator BLINKS RED. She plugs him to the long cord connected to the solar bank built by the window.

MANOELLA

(sotto)

Get breakfast started. Try to not bang around for a change. She's sleeping.

TONY

I'll do my best, Ella.

MANOELLA

Oh, and water the coffee down even more. We barely have any left. We're gonna have to go out further tomorrow to see if we find some.

TONY

Water to coffee ratio modified to 85-15%.

Tony heads for the kitchen. Manoella heads for the bedroom.

INT. APARTMENT (HALLWAY) - DAWN

Manoella stands in the very narrow hallway and carefully twists the door knob. She's about to step inside when a series of LOUD CLANKS coming from the kitchen reverberate through the apartment. Manoella mumbles under her breath.

CARLA (O.S.)

You snuck out again, shithead.

INT. APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAWN

REAL LIFE CARLA (36) stares from bed. This Carla is more worn than who we saw in the retro fantasy. She may be tattered on the outside but she has raging lightning storms behind her eyes and more will to live than anyone you've ever met.

MANOELLA

I told him to be quiet cuz you were sleeping. Sorry.

Carla opens her arms and kisses her head when she nuzzles in.

CARLA

I've been up for hours.

MANOELLA

Nights are way better.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Nights are more dangerous and if...

MANUELA

If anything happens to me you'd never find out. I know.

CARLA (CONT'D)

...if anything happens to you I'd never find out.

MANOELLA

(in Spanish)

I'm sorry, Ma. It's so much faster when it's dark.

CARLA

Those assholes also drive around more when it's dark.

MANOELLA

Only type of butthead with a set of hot wheels I know about is you.

CARLA

Ha fucking ha. Don't do it again. We're a team. We go together. Please.

MANOELLA

We found honey.

CARLA

The real thing?

MANOELLA

Looks janky but Ton says it's good, just have to heat it up or whatever. Was gonna surprise you but he's as quiet as a bomb.

CARLA

Time to get up anyway.

MANOELLA

You could sleep more.

CARLA

I'm good. Come on. Let's go. It's shower day. We're both getting rank...mostly you.

Manoella scoffs while reaching for a beat up pair of modified roller skates. The boot of the shoe has been removed, leaving only the sole and the wheels. In lieu of the boot part, there are homemade straps to keep the feet in place.

Manoella places the skates on the bed then removes the covers from Carla's bare legs. She helps Carla sit up then repositions her so that her legs are dangling off the side. She straps the skates to Carla's feet then turns to kneel on the floor right across from Carla. Carla wraps her arms around Manoella's neck. Manoella puts her hands over Carla's arms, holding her in place.

MANOELLA
Ready for take-off?

CARLA
Ready, Houston.

Manoella fakes rocket launch noises as she stands. She walks towards the door on the far wall, dragging Carla behind her. They reach the bathroom door. Manoella forgot to open it.

MANOELLA
I have to take one hand off. Hold on.

Carla tightens her grip around Manoella's neck. Manoella leans forward ever so slightly to open the door and it sets off a chain reaction. Carla's unresponsive legs push backwards and she rolls away. The momentum pulls Manoella back too. Before Manoella can stop it they're on the floor. Manoella rushes to check Carla's body for any injuries.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Are you okay? Does anything hurt?

Carla devolves into a fit of laughter.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Gonna assume that means nothing is broken.

CARLA
It's been a while since we ate it.

MANOELLA
(relaxes and chuckles)
My perfect track record, ruined. It's your job to remind me to open the door before we do this. This is your fault.

CARLA
I barely slept. Not in top shape because you decided to leave in the middle of the night. Technically it's your fault.

MANOELLA

I don't accept that narrative.

They exchange looks and laugh. Manoella reaches up to open a bathroom door that's barely wide enough to fit a person.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Door open. Attempt #2. No dragging me down with you this time.

CARLA

(only half joking)

I feel like dragging you down with me is my only mission in life.

Manoella ignores those words and readjusts Carla's limp legs.

MANOELLA

It's gonna be trickier from the floor than from the bed so...extra tight grip Ma, okay?

Carla nods and tightens her arms around Manoella's neck. Manoella presses her hands against Carla's before she strains to rise to her feet. They're on the move again.

INT. APARTMENT (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella walks halfway to the toilet then turns to face away from it and begins to walk backward instead.

MANOELLA

How's that?

CARLA

(looking over shoulder)

Pretty center.

MANOELLA

Okay. Putting you down.

Carla lands on the seat. Manoella removes the skates. She grabs a toothbrush and strains out a drop of toothpaste from the empty tube. Carla brushes her teeth. Manoella passes a bucket. Carla places it on her lap. Manoella gives her a water cup.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I'll go warm water for the bath.

CARLA

(while brushing)

Make sure Robocop makes it HOT.

It's freezing in here.

INT. APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

This tiny one bedroom is a showcase in Manoella's ingenuity. Everything is stored at wheelchair height and what can't be is MacGyvered into being accessible regardless. There's gadgets like a Rube Goldberg machine that pours a glass of water from the makeshift filtration tank set up by the window. This space is designed to maximize Carla's independence in every way.

A metal cup is dropped, CLANKING loudly on the tile floor. Manoella picks it up then walks to the ramp that allows Tony to get from the floor to the counters with ease. Manoella playfully flicks him in the head as he rolls towards her.

MANOELLA

Way to be quiet. Can we get some hot water going? It's shower day.

TONY

Yes, Ella.

Tony starts their makeshift hot plate/coil stove apparatus. Manoella opens a cabinet and pulls out one of the two cans of brown raisin bread left in the cupboard. That and a half eaten can of SPAM is all that's left. Manoella looks worried.

MANOELLA

If we slice each can of bread into ten slices how bad is it?

TONY

Normal caloric intake for the average human is: 2,000 calories. The bread is 1040 calories per can. 1040 divided by ten would be 104 calories per slice. I estimate there are about six ounces of SPAM left. That would put each cube at about 27 calories. For the past week you and Carla have had two slices of bread and two cubes of SPAM per day as your sole meal. Estimated daily caloric intake: 262 calories. At current consumption rate there are five days left of food. If rations are cut in half there are ten days left of food.

Manoella sighs and lets her head hang between her shoulders.

MANOELLA

With the garden still all messed up, we need to get better at finding stuff.

Manoella sniffs the bread. She's disgusted. She cuts three slices and drops two into the beat up, makeshift toaster (a metal mesh wire cage with raggedy cables connected to one of the solar powered batteries) that lives next to the equally makeshift coil stove. Manoella waits for the toaster to work but it does nothing. She tries again. It's dead.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Piece of garbage.

TONY
We'll go back to quadrant one of the perimeter.

MANOELLA
What good will that do? Food doesn't magically appear in places we already looked. We need to go further.

TONY
Your mother has clear instructions. No more than six blocks in any direction.

MANOELLA
Yeah, well...we broke that rule a long time ago for a reason.

CARLA (O.S.)
Mani! Cold!

MANOELLA
Water's still heating!...What's the temp on that?

A slim, sharp piece of metal - a probe thermometer - protrudes from Tony's hand and dips into the pot of water.

TONY
107 degrees.

MANOELLA
Good enough. Come on.

Manoella lifts Tony off the counter, puts him on the ground, then places the pot of hot water in his arms. He rolls away.

SOUNDTRACK: "Espacio Sideral" by Jesse & Joy.

INT. APARTMENT (BATHROOM) - LATER - (*MONTAGE*)

-- Manoella rolls in wearing a dusty men's suit jacket, her fingers pointed like a gun. She pretends she's a spy and this is a mission. Carla humors it while shivering.

-- Manoella helps Carla onto the makeshift bathtub lift and, with Tony's help on the pulley, gets Carla in the tub.
Manoella helps scrubs Carla's legs/back and washes her hair.

-- Manoella and Tony pulley Carla out of the tub.

-- Manoella helps Carla dress.

-- Manoella uses the skates to get Carla out of the bathroom and onto the wheelchair that hangs out in the living room. The wheelchair is too wide to fit through any of the doors or be usable in the bedroom so it lives out here.

INT. APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING

Carla wheels over to the table. Manoella enters with plates. Hers only has one slice of toast. Tony carries the drinks.

MANOELLA

Couldn't warm the bread. Toaster's busted. I'll fix it later. There's honey at least. And the SPAM's real crispy how you like it.

CARLA

Thanks baby.

Tony lifts the drinks and spills a few drops on the table.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Way to go Jarvis.

Tony likes Carla. At least as far as an AI can feel for its owners. Carla can't stand Tony. (*She pretends not to. Deep down she has a soft spot for him.*) He reminds her of things she'd rather not think of. She also never calls him Tony. The name has memories attached to it.

Manoella sits. They bite the bread at the same time and gag.

CARLA (CONT'D)

MANOELLA

Well...that's just as goddamn That's nasty.
shit-tastic as last time.

Neither of them stops eating. It's all they have.

CARLA (CONT'D)

The honey helps.

MANOELLA

Barely.

They laugh.

CARLA

Better than nothing, right?

MANOELLA

Better than nothing for sure.

INT. APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - LATER

Carla stretches her arm to its absolute limit over the wheelchair armrest. She's trying to reach the small, colorful puzzle piece that lays on the ground.

CARLA

(sotto, stretching harder)

Fuck my entire fucking life.

Manoella rolls her eyes, stands, takes the puzzle piece, hands it to Carla, then plops back onto her chair. The table is filled with old, tattered text books. She grabs her pencil stub and goes back to pouring over equations. Carla sits across from her, breaking a completed puzzle so she can start it again.

MANOELLA

This is fuc-...ding pointless.

CARLA

Watch your mouth in school.

MANOELLA

This is the living room not "school" and you just cursed. Twice. How come you get to curse all you want and I can't?

CARLA

This is school during school hours. And teachers do whatever they want. Everyone knows that. Also, adults get to curse any time they feel like it. You can start to throw "fucks" around when you're old enough to vote.

MANOELLA

I don't know if you've missed something but there haven't been elections in seven years, Ma.

CARLA

(fake surprised)

In *SEVEN* years? That seems like a long time. What happened?!

Manoella rolls her eyes and gets to work but instantly snaps.

MANOELLA

What fricking good are polynomials?

CARLA

It all helps.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

With what, Ma?!

CARLA (CONT'D)

The future. Making things feel
normal. I'm not having this fucking
conversation again, Claudia
Manoella. Get to it.

MANOELLA

Do not full name me.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Nothing wrong with your name.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

It's two old lady names
jammed together to make one
jumbo size grandma name. Who
does that to their kid?

CARLA (CONT'D)

I like it.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

That's the problem! Couldn't you
guys name me something normal like
Zoe? Or Hayley? Or Sarah?

CARLA

Would "Zoe" do her homework?
Because I'll call you whatever
white name you want if it'll work.

MANOELLA

UGH! Tell me what a polynomial is
and how it helped with your future.

CARLA

I'm not the one in high school.

MANOELLA

Technically, neither am I.

CARLA

You should be. Less
complaining, more solving.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I hate this.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I know.

INT. APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - LATER

Carla sits on the couch flipping through an old magazine. She reaches one of those shitty exercise/diet articles with the headline "The 8 Secrets To Strong, Sexy, Healthy Legs".

CARLA

Did you hear? All I need to do to
get these babies...

(points at legs)

...in the sexiest of shapes is go
for high-fiber carbs and do 100
squats a day?

Manoella ignores it. She sits in Carla's chair, racing Tony around the room to the finish line she's drawn in chalk on the floor. She wins and celebrates. Carla closes the magazine.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Recess over. Grab your biology book.

Manoella groans.

INT. APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - LATER

Carla lies on the couch with the copy of "Oryx & Crake" resting on her chest. Manoella reads the foraging book on the floor. Carla finishes the last page just as Manoella finishes the last page of hers. They wordlessly swap and start reading the other.

INT. APARTMENT NEXT DOOR (RIGGED MINI GREENHOUSE) - AFTERNOON

There's a makeshift watering system and mirrors that redirect streaks of sun to maximize the light the small batch of crops get. It's effective. At least it was when they had crops. The garden is very much infested at the moment and as a result it's dead. Leaves are curled and yellowed. The few "crops" are black. Manoella pulls out a small carrot from the soil and a CUTWORM crawls out of one of the many holes it has made. Carla is doing her best to spray APHID BUGS off the dead tomato plant.

MANOELLA

I don't know what else to try. They
keep coming back...Maybe we picked
the wrong spot to grow this time.

Manoella starts to push the table closer to the window.

CARLA

Maybe we suck it up and eat it.

MANOELLA

You wanna eat the worm carrot?

CARLA

I don't know why you're
complaining. That's a serving of
vegetable AND protein. Two for one.

MANOELLA
I'm not eating bugs.

CARLA
Way to get picky during the end times.

INT. APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

Manoella sits on the floor next to Carla. The broken toaster is on her lap and tools collected over years are in front of her. Tony assists. They chitchat, laugh, and eat. Manoella plugs the toaster in. It works! She happy dances. Carla smiles proud.

INT. APARTMENT (KITCHEN) - LATER

The trio teams up on the dishes, forming a near perfect assembly line. Manoella washes, Carla dries, Tony stores. Carla cuts a finger drying a knife. It's shallow but bleeds.

CARLA
(dismissing it)
It's basically a paper cut.

Manoella reaches for the first aid kit. She opens it and is taken aback by how sparse it is. A thermometer, a gauze, a couple squeezes of antiseptic cream, two band-aids. She plays it off, grabs a band-aid, and wraps it around Carla's finger.

INT. APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - LATER

Manoella takes the skates off Carla and tucks her in. She plugs Tony to charge then jumps in bed next to her mother.

CARLA
Buenas noches, Mani.

MANOELLA
(in Spanish)
Sweet dreams, Ma.

Manoella digs under the bed, pulls out a metal pen case, and one of the dozens of beat up notebooks that live down there. This one has "**THE MANY LIVES OF MANOELLA CORTEZ - VOL. 307**" written in bold colors on the cover. She flips to the end of the pad. She has less than a handful of blank pages left.

Manoella walks to the small closet in the room. The top two shelves are STACKS OF MISMATCHED NOTEBOOKS carefully organized by volume. These are years worth of writing. Each stack is labeled. They go back to Volume 210. There's a specific area labeled "Blanks". That part is empty.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Poop.

She heads to bed, opens the pencil case, and zeroes in on the wallet print of the studio portrait with worn edges she's wedged in the top lid. It's YOUNG MANOELLA (4) and her father ANTHONY CORTEZ (50 but doesn't look a day over 35 – silver fox with the Steve Carrell "sexy nerd" vibe). She's perched on Anthony's shoulders. They laugh at the camera. It makes Manoella smile. She swipes off some charcoal near the bottom. It's the only photo she has. She's protective. She takes one last look then moves on. She turns her attention to her supplies. The case is nothing but a graveyard of pencil stubs, sharpened to the very end of their utility. Nothing useful.

Manoella goes to where Tony is charging. She rifles through his pouch. BINGO! The pen he found earlier. She returns to bed, pops her headphones in, pulls out the beaten up phone she carries around, opens the music app, and shuffles the playlist titled: "ABUELA'S JAMS".

SOUNDTRACK: "There's A Good Reason These Tables Are Numbered Honey..." by Panic! At The Disco.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 1920S SPEAKEASY - NIGHT - (FANTASY)

A full band plays the song on stage and dancers shimmy along. Manoella - dressed as "P.I. Manoella Cortez" AKA a knockoff Carmen Sandiego - enters the packed club. She scans the room. All TEENS (15-18). It's a roaring 20s high school party.

A server takes her coat and hat. Under the coat, she's wearing her regular threadbare sleeping clothes while everyone else is in spectacular 1920s flapper outfits.

A CUTE GIRL walks up and pulls her to the dance floor. The girl dances. Manoella hesitates but dances too. The girl moves closer. Manoella is having fun then feels the heavy stares. Whispers grow louder. Everyone is talking about her. The girl tries to stop her but Manoella runs to the restroom.

INT. 1920S SPEAKEASY (BATHROOM) - (FANTASY)

The air is thick with smoke. The smoking women turn to look at Manoella when she tumbles inside. They begin to whisper. Manoella speaks to the room, matching the lyrics of the song.

MANOELLA
*I've never looked better and you
can't stand it.*

The room falls eerily silent. She realizes what they're casually smoking aren't regular cigarettes but instead STICKS OF DYNAMITE. All the fuses are nearly at the end. Her eyes widen. She bolts out of the bathroom.

INT. 1920S SPEAKEASY - CONTINUOUS - (FANTASY)

Manoella runs through the crowded bar, bumping into half the patrons on her way out. She spots Cute Girl and grabs her hand as she runs. They make it to the door just in time.

The building behind them blows, sending them flying through the air. They dust themselves off and look at the hellscape. The building next to it explodes. Then the next one. Then the next one. Then the whole city goes with it. It's all ash now. The two girls look at each other then back at the wreckage.

SUPERIMPOSED IN MANOELLA'S HANDWRITING: *"She didn't save the world. This time. But at least she saved her pal."*

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - AS BEFORE

ANGLE: Writing "***THE END!***" on the bottom of the last page.

The pad is closed and slid under the bed. She tries to sleep. A beat. Manoella reaches for the notebook, opens it to the last page again, and then scribbles.

ANGLE: Manoella writing "***Sorry. Not my best. Ran out of space.***" on the sliver of paper she has left at the bottom.

Manoella puts the notebook away again and closes her eyes.

INT. APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - LATER

Carla is seemingly sound asleep. Manoella opens one eye. She listens to Carla's even breathing and carefully turns in bed, trying not to wake her. Manoella looks over Carla's shoulder and waves her hand in front of her eyes. When she's satisfied Carla is asleep, she attempts to slip off the bed.

CARLA
(without opening her eyes)
I will tie you down if I have to.

Manoella falls back dramatically onto the hard mattress.

MANOELLA
As if.

CARLA

Try me.

MANOELLA

(playfully)

What are you gonna do? Chase after me?

CARLA

We'll go out tomorrow, dickhead. Sleep.

INT. BUILDING (HALLWAY) - MORNING

Manoella pushes Carla out of the apartment. Tony is in her backpack, peeking over her shoulder. They pass the broken elevator. The elevator doors have a HANDMADE SIGN in Manoella's handwriting that reads "*PIECE OF POOP!*" stuck to it. Each strip of tape holding it up is a different color.

Cans and metal items are tied to the stair doors. It's their makeshift alarm system. The door is also blocked with piles of random stuff for safety. No one coming up the stairs could access this floor without major effort or alerting them.

Manoella works on removing the stack of things. Once it's clear, she props the door open and wheels Carla inside.

INT. BUILDING (STAIRWELL) - CONTINUOUS

There's a handmade pulley system dangling over the open space in the middle of the staircase. It's a much more complicated and sturdy version of the pulley system they have in the tub.

Manoella straps the chair to the pulley then wraps the rope around her fists for better grip. Tony holds onto the end.

MANOELLA

On three. Everyone good?

TONY

Yes, Ella.

CARLA

Let's fly.

MANOELLA

1...2...3...

The pulley lifts off the ground. They struggle to get it over the railing but manage. Carla is suspended three stories up.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Coming down.

Tony lets go of more rope than he should. Carla plunges fast. Manoella leans back and digs her heels in, stopping the fall.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Woh! Woh! Slow! Why do we have to
go over this every time?!

TONY
Slow. Yes, Ella.

MANOELLA
You good?

CARLA
(sarcastic)
Absolutely goddamn peachy. Always had
a thing for near death experiences.

MANOELLA
Okay, trying this again.
(glaring at Tony)
SLOW!

Manoella lets go of some rope and Carla moves down at a more reasonable speed this time. They get Carla to the ground.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Manoella peeks out and checks. Clear. She fully removes the slats of wood covering the entrance to the back alley, wheels Carla out to the sidewalk, then covers the entrance again.

MANOELLA
We went that way the other night.
Checked everything. Picked clean.

CARLA
How about the buildings that way?

MANOELLA
Mostly commercial. Usually nothing
to eat in those.

CARLA
The neighborhood a few blocks that way?

MANOELLA
We went there three weeks ago.

CARLA
Let's check it out again.

MANOELLA
Why?! We're not gonna find stuff we
didn't before.

CARLA

Maybe we missed something.

MANOELLA

I am the one looking and **I** didn't miss anything. What we need to do is go further out.

Carla ignores the plea and starts wheeling herself in the direction she pointed to. Tony moves ahead, clearing any debris in her way. Manoella silently grumbles but follows.

We get to see the state of the city for the first time. It's destroyed. Not by a blast but by years of chaos and looting.

EXT. BOUGIE NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

Wrecked houses with blown out windows, graffitied surfaces, rammed doors, and burned/destroyed furniture strewn on lawns.

MANOELLA

(looking around)

Woooow! The land of opportunity.

Carla side-eyes her.

CARLA

That one.

MANOELLA

Distinctly remember checking that one out when we were last here.

CARLA

Let's relive the experience then.

MANOELLA

MY GOD! There's nothing there! Why don't you ever listen? This is exactly why I like coming alone.

Manoella stomps past her and disappears inside. Carla can't access the house. There's steps leading up to the front door.

CARLA

Go with her.

TONY

You'd be alone, Carla.

CARLA

She's alone right now, Bender. Go. I'll find a spot to lie low.

Tony is off. Carla moves to find a place that offers cover. She notices a hole on the concrete but thinks she can push past it. She can't. One of the front wheels gets stuck and the chair tips over, sending her flying to the ground face first. She slams her forehead on the pavement and instantly bleeds. *Carla is now stuck, injured, and completely exposed.*

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE (KITCHEN) - MORNING

Manoella grumbles, opening cupboards she knows she's checked. Empty. She stomps out in a huff but backtracks when something sounds different. She taps her foot around. There's a hollow spot. She looks closer and finds a latch. It's the same color as the floor. It's impossible to see unless you're looking for it. She opens it and walks down the dark stairs.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE (BASEMENT) - MORNING

Manoella cranks her handheld solar flashlight and lights up the space. A sea of wine bottles gleam back at her. She dusts off some labels. It's nice wine. Something RUSTLES. She points the flashlight around the room.

MANOELLA

Hello?

She moves deeper into the space. More RUSTLING.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Hello?

The RUSTLING is behind her now. Manoella carefully digs into her pocket and pulls out the tactical knife she always has on her. Manoella turns, knife extended. RUSTLING moves closer.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I'm small but I carry a lot of anger
inside...I sharpen this knife every
other day...Look pal, morning's not
going great so don't mess with me.

The RUSTLING keeps approaching. She pans, illuminating where the noise came from. **Beat. SO.MUCH.FUCKING.TENSION.**

She walks deeper into the wine cellar. Behind a rack she finds a T-4 ROBOT (Tony but with the height and build of a man) clumsily struggling to untangle his feet from a sleeping bag. Manoella relaxes and puts the knife back in her pocket.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Jesus fudge. You nearly gave me a
heart attack.

Manoella looks at the T-4's feet and kneels to succor him.

T-4
Intruder!

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Shhh!

T-4 (CONT'D)
Intruder! Intruder!

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I'm trying to help you!

The T-4 stops to process for a beat.

T-4 (CONT'D)
Help would be much appreciated, Intruder.

MANOELLA
(through gritted teeth)
Stop screaming then.

Manoella untangles him and he can move freely again.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
There.

T-4
Thank you, Intruder.

MANOELLA
Stop calling me that.

T-4
I'm Tony.

MANOELLA
Well aware.

T-4
How can I be of assistance today?

MANOELLA
Anything good down here?

Manoella walks further into the cellar. The robot follows.

T-4
Taste preferences have not been
uploaded to your profile. I am
incapable of knowing what you deem
"good". Please update profile.

MANOELLA
I really need to stop trying to
have conversations with you guys.

The light glistens against metal. There's a shelf with a
couple dozen cans on it. Her face lights up. She runs over.

It's things normally paired with wine: olives, cockles, clams, mackerel, cod liver, sardines, anchovies, octopus, mussels, and scallops. Manoella's face contorts in disgust.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Didn't think we could do worse than
canned bread...

Manoella starts to stuff her bag. As she does, her flashlight catches things on another shelf. There's sleeping bags, water, some weapons, a couple flashlights. Most of those are worn and dirty. They haven't been here long like the cans.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
How did you get down here?

While she asks the question she moves the flashlight down the wall. That's when she sees the writing. It's dozens of verses from the new "Book Of Morley". They all revolve around stealing, thieves, and the punishments required. **ANGLE ON KEY WORDS:** "Flog", "Cut", "Prophet of Yahshua", "Hand", "Steal", "Plunder", "Thief", "Sin", "Execution", "Stoning", "Repent".

T-4
Erick instructed me to.

She's heard that name before? Then it clicks. She walked into the wolf's den. *Shit!* She quickly grabs the last few cans.

MANOELLA
I'm sorry but I have to do this.
(runs behind the robot)
I have a friend and he needs a new
battery.

Manoella opens the T-4's back panel.

T-4
Intruder has made unauthorized
access to control panel.

MANOELLA
Dad made both of your batteries the
same size and same ports. Yours is
just higher voltage than his.

Manoella finds the battery slot.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry.

The T-4 goes dead. Manoella runs to the stairs.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella emerges from the basement to find Tony staring.

MANOELLA
What are you doing in here? You
should be with mom.

Manoella heads for the entrance. Tony follows.

TONY
Carla sent me to find you.

MANOELLA
I've told you not to leave her alone.
I found a decent haul and **this...**
(she lifts the battery)
...but we need to go. Right now. I think
someone lives here now. Come on. Move.

EXT. BOUGIE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MANOELLA
Ma? You won, okay. I just-MOM!

Manoella hears whistling as she approaches the door. Tony trails behind her. When she exits she finds blood running down Carla's face and Erick with his spiked mace club jammed into her throat. Erick is a Wheeler but he also likes to do his own thing. He often roams and catches people alone.

ERICK
'bout damn time you joined us.

MANOELLA	CARLA
What did you do to her?!	Mani, take it slow. I'm good.
ERICK	MANOELLA (CONT'D)
She was already bleedin' when I found her.	Liar! What did you do?!

She steps forward. Erick digs deeper into Carla's throat.

ERICK (CONT'D)
Tell 'er.

CARLA
Chair flipped. I fell. He's telling the truth.
(trying to diffuse)
He's a good guy. He helped me back on the chair.

ERICK

Been keepin' tabs on you. You got a
damn nice setup. Too nice to happen
without stealin'. I just hadn't
caught you yet. Least not 'til now.

MANOELLA

Yup. You got me. I'm the thief tho.
Not her.

Manoella moves closer, backpack extended, and sneaks her hand in her pocket. Erick notices the battery in the hand with the bag.

ERICK

Is that from...?

It's evident Erick cares deeply about the T-4. Manoella gets what he's talking about.

MANOELLA

He's just powered off.

ERICK

(digs weapon deeper)
Thief! You broke him!

Manoella panics.

MANOELLA

No! He's fine! You just need
to put this back in!

CARLA

Manoella...run. It's okay.

Manoella ignores Carla's words.

ERICK

(digging spikes deeper)
Bullshit.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. *Stealing is wrong.*
Let her go. She didn't do
anything. Here's the battery.

CARLA

Stop talking and go.

MANOELLA

All you have to do is install it
again. Promise. She didn't break
your rules, I did.

CARLA

Shut the fuck up. Just leave me.

Erick considers then lifts the club and walks to Manoella. When he's within arms reach, Manoella pulls out her knife and stabs him twice in the upper thigh. Erick screams and falls to the ground. Manoella jumps over him and runs to the chair.

ERICK
I'm killin' you both!

MANOELLA
Ton, RUN!

Manoella tries to push the chair but THE FRONT LEFT WHEEL IS TWISTED. It broke when Carla fell! Instinctually, Manoella forces the chair onto its two back wheels and runs. She looks over her shoulder. Tony, unable to keep up, falls behind.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
I have to get him.

Manoella stops the chair, doubles back, and scoops Tony up. She hands him to Carla who puts him on her lap. They run. Manoella looks back. Erick is after them but he's limping. **HARD**. If she just keeps going he won't be able to catch up.

EXT. BOUGIE NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

They turn a corner. Manoella sees a huge house with an open garage door. She dashes towards it.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (GARAGE) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella wheels them inside and tries to tug on the door to shut it. It's rusted and stuck.

MANOELLA
Come on!...MOVE!

Manoella yanks harder. Carla and Tony anxiously look on.

ERICK (O.S.)
I'm slicin' your gimp momma open,
you bitch.

Manoella strains and the door finally budges. She slams it shut. They're thrown into darkness.

ERICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Then I'm bringin' you in as the stealer
you are. Don't think I'm not findin' you.

TONY
Ella, would yo-

CARLA
Shhh!

MANOELLA
Shhh!

The three sit in the darkness. His rambling sounds closer.

ERICK
WHERE ARE YOU?! GIMME MY SHIT BACK!

Erick keeps screaming as he walks past the house. Manoella cranks the flashlight when they can barely hear him anymore.

CARLA
We should stay here for a bit.

MANOELLA
Yeah.

Manoella sits on the floor and points the flashlight at the front wheel. There's no fixing that.

CARLA
How does it look?

MANOELLA
Pretty terrible.

CARLA
That's not great.

MANOELLA
Not even a little.

Manoella tries to play it off and hide her worry but she knows they're fucked without a functioning wheelchair. *We linger on this sentiment for a beat.* The darkness of the room helps hide the concern painted on Manoella's face from Carla. Manoella pushes the fear back down, jumps to her feet, and points the flashlight at Carla's. She's bleeding profusely.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
That's pretty terrible too.

CARLA
It's just a paper cut. Doesn't even hurt.

MANOELLA
Looks deep tho. We have to clean it. Can't afford you getting an infection or something dumb.
(handing over her bag)
There's food in there. Eat. Gonna see if I can find something to handle that while we wait.

CARLA
(grabbing her arm)
He's still out there.

MANOELLA
He's way past us. I'll be careful. Promise.
(to Tony)
Stay with her. *I mean it.*

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 - MORNING

-- Manoella ransacks kitchen cupboards.
-- Manoella digs through the home office drawers.
-- Manoella rummages in hallway closets.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (BEDROOM) - MORNING

Manoella opens the door. She half screams but covers her mouth. A body lies on the bed. They've been dead for years but the gun is still in it's hand. Self-inflicted. She shakes it off and walks to the bathroom.

MANOELLA

I'm sorry. I need stuff. I'm sorry.

Manoella looks through the drawers and cabinet. She finds a few stray make-up removal cotton pads. She stuffs them in her pocket. That's about all that's left in there.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (GARAGE) - MORNING

Manoella walks in on one of Carla and Tony's bickering sessions.

CARLA

No. You can't "assess" me, you
glorified Roomba. Get off me.

MANOELLA

No luck. No alcohol, disinfectants,
or meds. All I found was this.
It'll help clean somehow I guess.
Maybe even plug it.

Manoella picks Tony up and places him on the ground.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Get me water from the bag.
(to Carla)
Hold the flashlight up here.

Carla points the flashlight at her face and squints. The light blinds her. Manoella grabs the water bottle from Tony.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Lean your head back.

Manoella pours water on Carla's face and it clears the blood just enough that she gets to see the wound for the first time. It fills back up with blood almost immediately.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Ma, this is gnarly. We have to get back. I can at least try to help with stuff we have.

CARLA

No. He's probably close. We can't move fast with the chair like this.

MANOELLA

He's gone!

CARLA (CONT'D)

I said no.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Then let me go and bring stuff here. I can be back in twenty minutes. Fifteen if I run fast enough.

CARLA

You're not going anywhere alone.

MANOELLA

Then what?! What do you want me to do?! Do I just sit here and watch you fricking bleed?

CARLA

Be *very careful* with your tone.

MANOELLA

Screw this. I'm going. You two wait here. I'll be right back.

CARLA

Mani. MANI! MANOELLA!

(tries to move, is stuck)

FUCK!...Go with her.

TONY

I can not do that, Carla.

CARLA

Why not?

TONY

Ella told me to stay with you.

CARLA

And I'm telling you to go with her.

TONY

You are hurt, Carla. I will not leave you.

CARLA

Not even C3PO will listen to me. Great.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

-- Manoella runs through alleys.
-- Manoella cuts through gardens and backyards.
-- Manoella runs smaller streets. Anything to go undetected.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Manoella looks up to see a plume of black smoke filling the sky. She knots her brow in confusion then it hits her.

MANOELLA
No. No. No. NO!

Manoella runs faster than she's ever ran. She turns a corner to their street to find their building engulfed in flames.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
NO! NO! NO! NO!

Manoella runs to the building but Erick is exiting the alley. She ducks. He lights wood and kindling by the entrance and limps away while giving the building the finger. She hides and cries. Everything they owned, their entire world is burning.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Manoella walks down streets, sobbing and dejected.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (GARAGE) - DAY

Manoella runs inside, weeping, and clings to Carla.

CARLA
What? What happened?!

Manoella cries harder. She's inconsolable.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Talk to me!

MANOELLA
It's all gone. All of it.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (GARAGE) - AFTERNOON

Manoella is curled up in fetal on the floor. She's not asleep, just heartbroken.

MANOELLA

That was my only photo of dad.

CARLA

What?

MANOELLA

Back in the apartment. What if I forget what he looks like?

CARLA

Come here.

Carla opens her arms. Manoella slides into them and cries.

MANOELLA

That place took years.

CARLA

I'm not going to tell you it doesn't suck ass because it does but we'll find another one. Plenty of fine real estate to go around these days. We'll be okay. We always are...and I have a feeling no one's been lining up to raid office supply stores. There's gotta be crates of notebooks out there somewhere.

Manoella glosses right over that last part.

MANOELLA

Took me five fricking weeks to find all the stuff for that pulley. Two to build it. A week for the toaster. The solar bank? Four months. I hate him.

Carla kisses the top of her head. Unbeknownst to Manoella, Carla's strong façade quietly crumbles. If only for a moment, Carla allows the fear, anger, and sadness to seep through. She steels herself again. They fall into silence.

CARLA

Mani...Mani.

MANOELLA

Hmmm.

CARLA

I need to use the bathroom.

Manoella inhales and exhales deeply then stands.

MANOELLA

I'll go scout the place.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 - AFTERNOON

-- Manoella opens doors looking for the bathroom. She goes way down the hallway and gets lucky on her sixth attempt.

-- Manoella lifts the toilet and immediately regrets it. She gags, drops it, and exits the bathroom.

-- Manoella rests her head against the wall. Beat. She kicks the wall and continues to kick it until her foot goes through the plaster. Now that she's got that out of her system she takes a sobering breath. She's back in action.

-- Manoella heads back to the garage, walking with a purpose.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (GARAGE) - CONTINUOUS

MANOELLA

Wish I could say the opposite but I got zero good news. There's only one bathroom on the first floor, it's way down the hallway, and it's...it's foul. You're gonna have to not look.

Manoella drags the chair to the door connecting to the house. There's three steps and the chair is too wide for the door.

CARLA

We can't bring it inside.

MANOELLA

The long, complicated plan is: you get off the chair, we lift you up the steps, I break the chair down, I carry it inside, get you back on the chair, get you all the way down the hallway only using the back wheels. I then get you off the chair again because it doesn't fit through the bathroom door either, carry you into the bathroom, then carry you out of the bathroom, and lift you onto the chair again.

CARLA

And the short, not complicated one?

MANOELLA

Wait here.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (BEDROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella walks into the bedroom with the dead body.

MANOELLA
I'm so sorry. I am.

She pushes the corpse off the bed, quickly covers it with the duvet, then yanks the blood stained top sheet and takes it.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (GARAGE) - CONTINUOUS

MANOELLA
Short plan is: we get you off the chair, you sit on this, I drag you all the way there.

CARLA
That sheet has seen better days.

MANOELLA
We all have...easy or complicated?

CARLA
Short plan it is.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS

Carla sits on the sheet. Manoella pulls her and the sheet down the hallway towards the bathroom.

SOUNDTRACK: "El Anden" (Ft. Mala Rodriguez) by Bajofondo Tango Club.

INT. THEATER STAGE - NIGHT - (FANTASY)

A glamorous Nutcracker set. It's "The Land Of The Sweets". Manoella - playing the lead - enters in an immaculate outfit. She pulls a toy chest full of larger than life toys. Carla sits in the chest dressed as The Nutcracker. Manoella helps Carla out of the chest. A SWARM OF BALLERINAS join them but *instead of performing the typical Nutcracker "Spanish Chocolate Dance" ballet, they do a Hip-Hop routine to match the song.*

Erick - dressed as The *Evil Mouse King* - runs on stage. A group of Wheelers dressed as *EVIL MICE* join as his entourage. Erick chases Carla and Manoella around but the ballerinas protect the women from Erick and the gang.

Carla hops into the toy chest. Manoella pulls her around the stage trying to avoid Erick. The dancers pin Erick and the Wheelers down then begin to attack them as Manoella pulls Carla off stage. They make their escape. The Wheelers bleed on stage.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (LIVING ROOM) - SUNSET

Carla lies sideways on the blood stained mattress Manoella has rolled down from the bedroom to the living room. Manoella sits with Tony. His battery indicator BLINKS RED.

MANOELLA

You're gonna have to shut off while
I trade these out, okay?

TONY

Okay, Ella. Powering off.

Manoella opens the back panel and removes the old battery. She stares at the newer model. It's labeled with the CORTEX ROBOTICS logo. She runs her fingers over the name before inserting it. She waits. Tony doesn't immediately boot up.

MANOELLA

Ton...TonTon.

Silence. He finally restarts.

TONY

Hi, Ella.

MANOELLA

How's it looking?

TONY

Running diagnostics...Battery health: good.

MANOELLA

Well, it's not "excellent" but it's better than "poor". And it's a newer battery anyway so...progress.

TONY

Thank you, Ella.

MANOELLA

Of course dude...We need to finish setting up.

They continue blocking broken windows and blown up entryways.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I don't know I can make this any better...Garage was safer...And warmer. Maybe we should get back in there...We'll go to the garage. At least for tonight.

Manoella walks past the mattress. Carla reaches up and grabs her. Tony shifts things, piling them on windows and doors.

CARLA

Stop.

MANOELLA

I have to...

CARLA (CONT'D)

Shhh.

(pulling her down)

Lay down.

She lies down. They look at each other. Carla scans her face.

CARLA (CONT'D)

When did you get so big?

MANOELLA

Ma, I gotta...

CARLA

Be still for five minutes, would you?

MANOELLA

4:59, 4:58, 4:57, 4:56...

CARLA

You're such a fucking brat.

MANOELLA

Wonder who I got it from.

CARLA

Definitely not me.

MANOELLA

Of course not.

CARLA

We're fine for tonight.

MANOELLA

We're exposed. We'll be safer in the garage. No one's opening that big door - at least not without us hearing it - and I can block the entrance to the small door. It's the best place in this whole house.

CARLA

We're staying here.

MANOELLA

Sleeping here is stupid but you...

CARLA

My back hurts. My neck is sore. My head is throbbing.

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)
I'll have to use the bathroom at least once more tonight and I can't drag myself up and down those steps the three more times it would take to make that happen. If you want to go to the garage, fine. I'm staying here.

MANOELLA
I'm sorry. I didn't...I thought...you should've said.

CARLA
It's okay. I'm telling you now. Massive murder sized stain aside, the mattress isn't half bad. I should be fine if I get a few hours

MANOELLA
Sleep. I'll keep watch.

CARLA
Nu uh. Stay. You need sleep too.

Carla pulls Manoella to her and holds her against her chest.

MANOELLA
One of us has to be awake.

CARLA
Clearly someone's already died on this thing. What's two more murders on its body count? Sleep.

Manoella laughs then sighs. She knows she *is and looks* tired.

MANOELLA
Only for a little bit. Then I'll go on watch.

CARLA
(kisses her head)
Okay, sleep for a little bit.

MANOELLA
We have to find a way to fix your chair.

CARLA
I know.

MANOELLA
Or get a new one.

CARLA
We'll make a pit stop at Wheels'R'Us.

MANOELLA
On our way to the arcade?

CARLA
In between the arcade and pizza.
We'll buy a gazillion tokens then
get a Supreme at Il Capo.

MANOELLA
Sounds like a perfect day.

CARLA
Oh....also....let me know if we need
to make a "No Stabbing" rule.

MANOELLA
No stabbing. Got it. Next time I'll
just let the guy keep chasing us.

CARLA
Solid plan...You did good today, shithead.

A beat.

MANOELLA
Will you tell me something about him?

CARLA
Manoella...

MANOELLA
One thing. Please.

CARLA
(beat, ponders)
I used to take him to parties and he
was the worst dancer in the room. Every
single fucking time. No matter where,
it was impossible to be worse than him.
That man was born with two left feet.
He was terrible but I always made
him...And he always went along with it.

MANOELLA
You took dad to parties...?

CARLA
That's sort of what happens when
you're dating someone.

MANOELLA
Yeah, but...he was old.

CARLA
(laughing)
He didn't act like it.

MANOELLA
When did you take him to parties?

CARLA
Always. From the beginning.

MANOELLA
So....if you were nineteen then he
was.....forty-six.

CARLA
See?! And you said math wouldn't help you!

MANOELLA
(rolling her eyes)
What did you dance to?

CARLA
Salsa, merengue, bachata, reggaeton. All
of it. Well, in his case, none of it.

MANOELLA
Ewwwwwwww! You and dad
dancing reggaeton. That's a
terrible mental image.

CARLA (CONT'D)
(laughing)
You asked.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Did you...
CARLA (CONT'D)
You said one thing. I gave
you one thing.

Manoella nuzzles into Carla and starts to doze off. Carla
forces herself to stay awake and keep an eye out for danger.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT - (FANTASY)

A nightmare. Manoella's soul leaves her body and starts to
float away. She tries to hold onto *anything* but her hands
can't seem to get a firm grip. She floats to the ceiling and
passes right through it. She goes through the floor and into
the bedroom on the second story. She tries to cling to the
bed and the dresser. She can't. She grabs the corpse's leg.
It comes off. She drops the dismembered limb. Manoella makes
it to this ceiling and goes through it too.

EXT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (ROOF) - NIGHT - (FANTASY)

Manoella tries to cling to the chimney but can't hold on. She
floats away from the house and up into the sky.

EXT. SKY/OUTER SPACE - NIGHT - (FANTASY)

Manoella helplessly floats further away. The house becomes a dot on the globe. She drifts through and past clouds and finds herself in outer space, gliding amongst the stars. She manages to cling to a comet that begins to drag her away from Earth.

Erick appears riding a GIANT ROCKET. He's chasing Manoella.

MOON (O.S.)
You have to let go, Lola.

Manoella turns to find an ANTHROPOMORPHIZED MOON with a human face - HER FATHER'S FACE! - staring at her with a smile.

MANOELLA
What? Look how fricking high I am!

Manoella moves further from both Earth and the Moon. Erick is gaining ground, getting closer and closer to Manoella.

MOON
The more you let it drag you the
further you'll go from where you
want to be.

The comet drags Manoella further but Erick is only a few feet away from her now. Manoella is starting to become agitated.

MOON (CONT'D)
Let go.

Erick extends his hand trying to grab her. He's too close.

MANOELLA
I'm scared, Papi.

MOON
We all are.

Manoella inhales and loosens her grip on the comet. She free falls down to Earth and screams in terror. The floor gets closer and closer. Just as she's about to hit the ground...

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Manoella abruptly wakes up. She's panting, sweaty, and out of breath. She looks at Carla restlessly sleeping and feels guilt for actually dozing off.

Manoella extracts herself from Carla's embrace and taps Tony on the head, silently indicating he should follow her. Carla readjusts but doesn't wake up.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella unpacks their inventory. A quarter of a bottle of water, the bread, and the cans from the basement. Tony tinkers with every item, putting them in a perfect straight line. Manoella picks up the bread and analyzes it.

MANOELLA

Last of the bread.

TONY

Are you sad? Last week you said it tasted like "Satan's butthole". Is that not the case anymore?

MANOELLA

After a while my tastebuds developed "Satanic butthole blindness".

Tony looks confused, trying to make sense of the statement.

TONY

Do you need me to scan your tongue for an infection?

MANOELLA

(rolling her yes)

No...I'm just...I can think it tastes like turds and still dislike the idea of not having any more.

TONY

Feces are not nutritious. They actually contain dangerous bacteria and indigestible cellulose. You should not be eating feces Ella.

MANOELLA

(groaning)

How far is Earth from Pluto?

Tony pauses, scanning his data core for a beat.

TONY

That is not a straight forward answer. Planets in this solar system travel in elliptical orbits meaning the distance between them is perpetually changing. At their furthest, when the two planets are on opposite sides of the sun, Pluto is approximately 4.67 billion miles from Earth. At their closest, they are only 2.66 billion miles apart.

MANOELLA

Right, so he put all that useless info in your head but also made you incapable of getting an analogy. Great work dad...I don't actually know what poop tastes like, numbnuts.

TONY

Good. I was concerned. I did not think our rations were low enough that you needed to resort to that.

MANOELLA

(chuckling)

They'll be soon...How's your battery?

TONY

Forty two percent. I have power for twelve hours and six minutes, Ella.

MANOELLA

I only have the small solar charger in my bag, I'll try to get full juice on it tomorrow but you should run on battery saver mode until I can figure something else out.

TONY

Battery saver mode activated. Limited functions available.

MANOELLA

Sorry bud. I'll get you charged soon, okay?

TONY

Okay, Ella.

MANOELLA

Thoughts about the gash on her head?

TONY

It does not seem life threatening but it requires attention.

MANOELLA

Pull up the map.

A holographic map materializes between them.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Show me where we are.

A blinking dot appears on the map.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Show me Dad's house and his office.

Two blinking dots in separate directions appear on the map.
They're VERY far away.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
How far are we from each?

TONY
Current distance to Cortex Robotics
is 69.3 miles. Current distance to
the 12 July St residential address
is 67.6 Miles.

MANOELLA
How far are they from each other?

TONY
Distance between both is 8.3 miles.

MANOELLA
(scanning the map)
What's out there?...We have to find
a way to move her tomorrow.

SOUNDTRACK: "The Art Of Losing" by American Hi-Fi.

INT. BOUGIE HOUSE #2 (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING - (FANTASY)

Manoella and Carla try things that could potentially be used to transport Carla around.

VFX: Reminiscent of an avatar customizer screen. Each method is rated out of a 100% in things like: practicality, comfort, sturdiness, reliability, pimp-ness, etc.

-- A small foldable scooter. Practicality: 8%. Comfort 3%. Manoella tries to pull Carla on the scooter but it tips over immediately. Comfort and practicality both fall to 0%.

-- A skateboard with rope tied to it. Practicality: 32%, Comfort: 27%, Reliability: 48%. Manoella attempts to pull them around the room but the wheels are rusted and constantly get stuck. Reliability and practicality fall to 0%.

-- A computer chair. Practicality: 44%. Comfort: 62%. Manoella pushes and pulls it. The back of the chair breaks. Manoella is left hanging onto it while Carla rolls away with the seat and wheels. Manoella chases after Carla before she hits the wall. Sturdiness and reliability fall to 0%.

-- A small red wagon meant for a child. Carla is WAAAAY too large for it. Her knees and legs are sticking out the sides, her hips barely fit. Most of Carla is basically dangling out of the wagon. Comfort and Practicality are 0%.

-- Manoella walks into the room pulling an old Segway she found in the garage. They consider it for a split second then laugh. Pimp-ness is 75% but everything else is at 0%. Manoella unceremoniously pushes the Segway out of sight.

-- A bright orange shopping cart, but this not a regular cart. It's a CAROLINE CART (designed carts for adults with special needs. They're real and currently available nationwide at retailers like Target). They stare at it. Lifting Carla to the front facing seat will be a challenge. She's too heavy for Manoella to lift so Manoella tips the cart on its side, places Carla in the seat, then pulls it upright with Tony's help. Practicality is 0%, Comfort is 58%. Manoella pushes the cart around. It moves with ease. They can also get some decent speed. Reliability and sturdiness shoot up to 92% and 94%.

-- Manoella pads the back and bottom with blankets to make it softer. Comfort shoots up to 87%. It'll do.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tony is excited to not be stuck in a bag. Carla looks annoyed she's sharing tight quarters with him. The charger soaks up sun.

MANOELLA
What's first on the list?

EXT. STREET - LATER

CARLA (V.O.)
Water.

They look for receptacles. She finds a broken computer chair with intact arm rests, takes them, and puts them in the cart.

MANOELLA (V.O.)
What else?

INT. RANDOM HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAY

CARLA (V.O.)
Cooking and eating utensils.

They grab forks, spoons, and plates. Carla watches through a window from the yard. Manoella sees a table with some sturdy wheels. She tips it over, removes the wheels, and takes them.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Manoella pushes the cart to a hidden corner and throws a tarp over it, covering Carla and Tony. She runs inside.

MANOELLA (V.O.)
What next?

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

CARLA (V.O.)
A change of clothes. Or two.

Manoella grabs the best of what's there and leaves the rest.

MANOELLA (V.O.)
We also need stuff for your head.

Manoella searches, digging for any medical supplies.

CARLA (V.O.)
My head is fine, Mani.

MANOELLA (V.O.)
Sure it is.

Whoever lived here was into crafts. They have adhesives and other bits Manoella considers useful. She grabs it all.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

All three are crammed into the tarp covered cart that's now sitting inconspicuously at the edge of an alley. They peek through a hole. Cars are parked feet away. A limping Erick and posse drag a FATHER (40) and SON (15) out of a house.

FATHER
(pleading desperately)
We were hungry and passing through.
It was just there. We didn't know.
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It won't hap-

Erick calmly whistles and hits the father over the head with his mace club. He hits him again and it cracks the man's skin open. He starts to bleed then almost instantly passes out.

SON
DAD!

They throw the unconscious, bleeding man in the car then push his son after him. Manoella and the boy make eye contact.

WHEELER

Whatcha want us to do with 'em?

ERICK

Put the ol' man on a truck. Parade him 'round for a bit then take him to Morley. He'll decide if it'll cost him one or both hands. Take the boy to Hillsboro. They need bodies for patrol and supply runs.

The Wheeler grunts nod and jump into the car with the father and son. Erick gets into his car alone.

ANGLE: Erick looks down at his missing fingers. Long beat.

ERICK (CONT'D)

Chop a few fingers off first so he don't forget what thieving gets ya.

The boy becomes visibly panicked. Manoella tries to stand. Carla pulls her down, stopping her.

EXT. STREET - SUNSET

Manoella pushes the cart down the street. They're both quiet but obviously upset by what happened.

MANOELLA

We could've helped.

CARLA

Yeah. The two of us - *world class fighters* - taking on five guys. That would've gone dandy.

MANOELLA

I could've helped them.

CARLA

We didn't make it this far by butting into shit that has nothing to do with us.

Manoella huffs. They walk past a mini-mart. Manoella pushes Carla to the side of the building.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Hey...where are...

Manoella unceremoniously throws the tarp over the cart and Carla's head then moves towards the door.

MANOELLA

We need something to start a fire.

CARLA

(from under the tarp)

Be careful.

Manoella walks away without responding.

INT. MINI-MART - SUNSET

It's pillaged but she has a trick after years of scavenging. She lies on the floor at the top of the aisles and looks under each row. It never fails. Her haul: two lighters, gum, two sardine cans, instant mashed potatoes, pens, and a handful of bandaids.

Her eyes light up at the penultimate shelf. She runs to the end of the aisle, dives to the ground, and stretches her arm as far as it'll go. She struggles then finally grabs it: **A NOTEBOOK**. She's ecstatic. Then opens it...it's infested with SILVERFISH. They've eaten the pages. She throws it and storms out.

EXT. MINI-MART - SUNSET

Carla has moved the tarp aside and looks around, keeping watch for Wheelers. Manoella exits the mart looking sullen.

CARLA

Nothing?

Manoella holds up the lighters. She flick one alive.

MANOELLA

People never look under the shelves.

The flame is almost immediately extinguished by a fat drop of water. Manoella looks up and another drop hits her face. Then the sky opens up. Manoella rushes to the cart and runs off.

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain pours down. Carla and Tony sit under the tarp. Manoella, now soaked to the bone, pushes them into a rundown house. Once the cart is inside Manoella grabs a handful of the receptacles they've collected, runs to the backyard, and lines them up. She leaves them to fill up before she darts inside.

Carla begins to dry Tony off. Tony makes a happy whir.

CARLA

Don't get used to it, Optimus.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - LATER

Rain falls. The fireplace is lit. Manoella rips books to keep it alive. A mattress was pushed near the fire. Carla lies on it. Manoella hears one of the Wheeler cars with speakers bolted to the roof approaching. Her and Tony jump to finish blocking the windows and stop any light from seeping through.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Wheeler driver holds the microphone and speaks.

WHEELER DRIVER

Yahshua said "cut off the hands of the thief by way of example". We have thieves to make an example of. We are looking for the thief called Sarah Folds...

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - AS BEFORE

Manoella throws a final blanket over the living room window then returns to her spot by the fire.

WHEELER DRIVER (O.S.)

...the thief called Benjamin Rossum, the pair of mother and daughter thieves - the mother is in a wheelchair, the thief with the missing e-

CARLA

My Tia Iris was convinced I'd never amount to much and look at us now... number three on the "Apocalypse's Most Wanted." Wish she was here to see that.

Manoella chuckles then throws a book into the fire.

MANOELLA

I was thinking...

CARLA

Never - not one fucking time - has the phrase "*I was thinking*" followed by a pause been a good thing with you.

MANOELLA

Are you gonna let me talk without cutting me off?

CARLA

Depends on how reckless it is.

MANOELLA
 I was thinking we could go to No.
 Dad's. He's...

CARLA (CONT'D)
 Between the office and the house he's
 bound to have everything we need. I could
 also get new batteries for Ton and...

CARLA
 We're not doing that.

MANOELLA
 But he... CARLA (CONT'D)
 I already gave you my answer.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
 Good thing I'm pushing then.

Manoella throws a book into the fire and stokes it
 petulantly. Carla sulks, quietly hating the mere suggestion.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Manoella and Carla bicker as they walk.

CARLA
 I'm the adult. I make the decisions.

MANOELLA
 Just cuz you were born before me
 doesn't mean you're always right.

CARLA
 Actually yeah...that's exactly what
 it means, you shitbird.

MANOELLA
 Bullpoop.

They walk past the empty parking lot of a department store.
 Manoella turns into the parking lot.

CARLA
 Where are you going?

MANOELLA
 There might be good stuff in there.

CARLA
 No. We agreed we're going to check
 the neighborhood down that way.

MANOELLA
Did anyone say anything?

CARLA
Stop being a huge brat.

MANOELLA
Tony, do you hear something?

TONY
(fully missing the point)
Carla is saying she would prefer it
if we went to the neighborhood 0.21
miles south instead.

CARLA
What Cyborg said. MANOELLA
Why do I even try with you?

CARLA (CONT'D)
Claudia Manoella...turn around.

Carla bangs the sides of the cart in protest, clearly
frustrated that she has no control in where she's taken.

MANOELLA
You know I hate it when you CARLA (CONT'D)
full name me. Turn this fucking thing
around.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Manoella wanders aisles alone. Most of it is useless but she grabs assorted bits: a screwdriver, sponges, and hair ties. She finds two notebooks and is *THRILLED*. The excitement is short lived. Someone is approaching. Manoella digs into her pocket for the knife and holds it firmly while crouching behind a shelf. They move closer. *CLOSER. EVEN CLOSER.* She *tenses up*. They're on the other side of the shelf now.

ANDREW
Ari?

Manoella peeks from behind the shelf and sees ANDREW MEDDLER (30 - white, has Down Syndrome, the friendliest and warmest ball of pure sunshine) looking around and waiting for an answer. He's lost. Manoella weighs for just a second before she stands. She hides the knife behind her back just in case.

MANOELLA
Hey.

ANDREW
(waves and smile)
Hi.

MANOELLA

What are you doing here?

ANDREW

I'm Andrew. What's your name?

MANOELLA

(hesitant)

Manoella...Are you alone?

ANDREW

No. I'm with my friends.

MANOELLA

Where are your friends?

ANDREW

I lost them.

MANOELLA

Do you need help finding them?

ANDREW

Yes, please.

MANOELLA

Okay. Let's get you back with them.

They walk. KORAT KEARNEY (19 - deaf, has a calming presence to her) taps Andrew's shoulder. Andrew hugs her.

KORAT

(in ASL)

Where did you go?

ANDREW

(in ASL)

Lost.

(beat)

This is my friend Manoella. She helped me find you. This is Korat. She's deaf but can read your lips.

MANOELLA

Hi. My mom is waiting for me so I have to go but...

With no warning, Manoella's feet are swiped. She falls on her back and her knife goes flying out of her hand. She grunts when she slams onto the ground. The end of the cane that was used to knock her down is forcefully pressed on her neck.

SACKS

Who the hell are you?

Manoella looks up to find SACKS GARD (mid 20s - has mild cerebral palsy and walks with a cane, also happens to be the most handsome guy in any room) fiercely staring down at her.

MANOELLA
(indignant)
I was helping him.

RAMONA FRANCES (mid 20s - blind and uses a white cane but moves around the world with the confidence of any seeing person) and TRE BRENNER (19 - has a missing or incomplete limb, is effortlessly funny) hover around.

ANDREW
She's a friend.

Sacks turns without taking the cane off Manoella's neck.

SACKS
You can't wander off like that pal.
Ari is going crazy.

As if on cue, ARI MEDDLER (18 - talks fast, feels deep, fully open to the world) turns a corner and runs to hug Andrew.

ARI
I'm going to tie you to my hand if
you keep doing this.

Ari breaks free from the hug and Manoella is able to properly look at her. Time both stops and speeds up at the same time.

SOUNDTRACK: "Things I'll Never Say" by Avril Lavigne.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY - (FANTASY)

OVER THE TOP LIFE FLASHES, ALL HAPPENING INSIDE THIS STORE:

- Manoella and Ari's first date in the liquor aisle.
- Manoella and Ari's first kiss in the romance book section.
- Manoella proposing to Ari on the jewelry aisle.
- A frozen aisle wedding. Carla walks Manoella down the aisle. Manoella and Carla have their mother daughter dance.
- Their first apartment AKA the furniture showcase section.
- Manoella and Ari with one baby.
- Manoella and Ari with two babies.

-- The kids' school is in the supplies aisle. Carla teaches.
 -- Manoella and Ari as middle aged women.
 -- Manoella and her family have a funeral for Carla.
 -- Manoella and Ari as old women.
 -- The kids, Ari, and Andrew holding a funeral for Manoella.

ANDREW

Thank you Manoella...Manoella?

-- Manoella shoots up in her coffin.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - AS BEFORE

Ari, Andrew, Sacks, Ramona, Tre, and Korat all stare down.

ANDREW

Manoella.

ARI

Come on. He said she's fine.

When Sacks doesn't do it willingly, Ari pushes the cane and extends her hand to help. Manoella snaps out of it but can't take her eyes off Ari. Two simultaneous conversations happen.

MANOELLA

(to Andrew)
 Sorry. What were you saying?

RAMONA

(whispered to Sacks)
 What's her deal?

ANDREW

(to Manoella)
 Thank you for getting me back
 to my friends.

TRE

(to Ramona, catty)
 Ari is on her medusa shit
 again, enchanting everyone
 who lays eyes on her.

MANOELLA

(trying to play it cool)
 Oh, yeah. No problem. Totally...I
 should get going.

Korat extends the knife. Manoella takes it and turns.

ARI

Thanks. Really. Most folks would've
 left him or worse...hurt him.

MANOELLA

No sweat. It was nothing. I just
 walked with him for a few aisles.

ARI

Still. Means a lot.

Manoella smiles and nods then turns again.

ARI (CONT'D)
Are you alone?

MANOELLA
I'm with my mom. I should get back.

ARI SACKS
It's not much, but if you No.
guys need a place to crash
tonight you can stay with us.

ARI (CONT'D) SACKS (CONT'D)
Or some food. I think we can Definitely not.
spare a meal.

ARI (CONT'D)
(glowering at him)
As a thank you. He's a bit of an
ass but, Sacks has mastered the art
of canned beans.

RAMONA
He has. It's his secret talent.

Sacks yanks Ari aside for an inaudible but clearly heated conversation. They're exchanging firm words.

TRE
His secret is to burn them to ash
that way no one can complain about
the metal taste.

MANOELLA ARI
We're good. Thanks tho. Are you sure?

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Yeah.

Manoella walks away but thinks, stops, and pivots.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Actually, do you guys have any med
supplies? My mom...she got hurt...

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE (LOADING DOCK) - DAY

Manoella removes the tarp. Carla lies on some cushions in the main storage part of the cart bickering with Tony. She looks up to find Manoella and six strangers staring down at her.

CARLA
Uh...explain?

MANOELLA
I met them inside. They have alcohol and bandages at their camp and they're letting us have some.

CARLA
That won't be necessary. Thank you.

MANOELLA
What??? Can you give us a second?

ARI
Sure.

Ari pulls everyone away, giving Manoella and Carla privacy.

CARLA
They're strangers.

MANOELLA
They're harmless.

The group has their own conversation. It's inaudible but Sacks is obviously mirroring all of Carla's talking points.

CARLA
We're not going to go wherever with people we've never met.

MANOELLA
They're not gonna hurt us. Besides, that thing...it needs cleaning. They're offering some of their med supplies. We're going.

CARLA
I thought you wanted to go to your Da-Anthony's.

MANOELLA
Oh, NOW you want to go to Dad's?! CARLA (CONT'D)
A shit idea but better than going with who knows who!

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
We're going to Dad's anyway. This is just a necessary detour.

CARLA
Manoella. MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Carla...They're giving us a place to crash and food too. We're not passing that up.

CARLA (CONT'D)

We don't need their stuff. We have food and we can find a place.

MANOELLA

Fuc...dge, it can't just always be us. Being around other people besides you and this piece of junk for a night would be nice.

Tony looks down and scans himself for any damage he may have missed. Nothing. He's confused. He is not junk!

TONY

No junk detected.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Doesn't always have to be your way.

Manoella storms off in a huff. Ari and the group watch her.

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Manoella angry cries and kicks a can. Andrew pushes the cart. The group follows. Manoella dries her tears, trying to hide them.

ANDREW

Your mom said you could come with us! It'll be like a sleepover.

Andrew pushes further. Manoella stays put. Carla looks back.

CARLA

You coming or what?

Manoella jogs to catch up to them. A faint smile appears right before falls in step with Ari.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - SUNSET

Light cuts through the multicolored stained glass. Ari pushes the massive wooden doors to reveal their temporary set up. Manoella, Carla, and Tony look around in wonder as the colored rays of light fill the room in a mesmerizing way.

CARLA

Holy fucking shit.

MANOELLA

(whispering into her ear)
I don't think you're allowed to say that in here.

Ari laughs quietly.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - NIGHT

They've built a fire inside the holy water stoup. Sacks moves around the fire, cooking dinner with Ari and Ramona's help. Carla sits on the front pew. A piece of bandage covers her now clean wound. Andrew, Tre, and Korat small talk with her.

Manoella sits on one of the back pews, awkwardly looking on in silence. She plugs Tony in to charge. He winds down to "sleep mode". She hasn't been around anyone but Carla since she was eight. Her social skills are atrophied.

Sacks serves plates. He leaves two with significantly less. Ari digs into the pot and evens out the ones he singled out. Ari walks with three plates in her hand. She hands one off to Carla then heads towards Manoella. She offers the food.

ARI

Chef's special: charcoal beans.

Manoella laughs. A little too hard. She reels it back in ineptly. Ari sits next to her and begins eating.

ARI (CONT'D)

Andy likes her...He likes everyone but it's been a while since I've seen him excited to talk to another person. I think he's sick of us.

Manoella and Ari look at Carla and Andrew interacting.

MANOELLA

He can keep her.

ARI

(chuckling)

You guys been alone long?

MANOELLA

Since the beginning.

ARI

Just the two of you?

MANOELLA

And Tony.

ARI

Why doesn't Carla like him? Never seen anyone have beef with a Tony before.

MANOELLA

She doesn't not like him.
Just...a thing about my dad.

ARI
What happened with your dad?

Manoella shrugs. Clearly a touchy subject. Ari changes it.

ARI (CONT'D)
We've been together since the beginning too. Well, there was a few more but...y'know...We were all at summer camp.

MANOELLA
You weren't with your family when it happened?

ARI
(shaking her head no)
Every year my parents would send Andy off to camp with other special kids like him. I turned ten that year and for my birthday I begged them to let me go to camp too. It always sucked when he was gone and I was hell bent on making sure that summer wasn't terrible. I asked until I wore them down. Somehow both my parents and the camp agreed. It was just me and seventy other incredible kids with disabilities. It was the best summer ever. Then everything went down and...our parents never came. I'm guessing they didn't make it. They would've never abandoned us like that but, we don't know. Most kids got picked up. Counselors got picked up or bailed. The camp director and two of the counselors stayed, hoping our families would come. That never happened. We made due for two years. Victoria - the camp director - she was amazing, she basically became our mom but she got real sick one day. Jance and Toothie - the counselors - told us they'd go and try to find help or medicine. They never came back. Victoria died. We waited for months for them to show up. We ran out of food so we had to leave too. We found their bodies a few miles down the main road. They'd been shot. They walked maybe half an hour before they died. It's been just us since. We've kept each other alive.

MANOELLA
(overwhelmed)
I...that's...you...I'm...so sorry.

ARI
It's okay. It's been a long time.

MANOELLA
It has.

Manoella catches Sacks and Ramona sharing a kiss by the fire. She blushes, embarrassed that she intruded on their moment.

ARI
They do that a lot. You get used to it.

MANOELLA
Are they...together?

ARI
(nodding)
Been a thing since camp. Tre and Kori got together two years ago. Basically me and Andy have been third wheeling four people that are crazy in love. If the end of the world doesn't make you feel lonely, that definitely will.

They both laugh.

ARI (CONT'D)
He's not as bad as he's making himself look. He's just protective.

MANOELLA
It's fine. I get it.

They sit in silence for a long beat. It's clear Manoella wants to speak more but she doesn't know how.

ARI
I don't know where you're headed but we're walking to Ross Lake. Kori's family had a big cabin there. She thinks she can get us to it. The lake is right there so no worrying about water and I figure hunting in the woods should be easy enough. Not that I've ever done it but...I'm guessing.
(long beat)
It's a long way but you could come. I don't think anyone would mind.

MANOELLA

We can't. We have to get to my dad's office. I'm trying to build my mom a new wheelchair. Last one got busted.

ARI

You think your dad can help?

MANOELLA

(timid then bit more open)
 My dad's an engineer...Was an engineer? I don't know. Haven't seen him since everything happened either. We waited for him to come too. For weeks. We waited. He never did. Our neighborhood got bad and we had to leave. I don't know how she got us out of there. I was only eight. Couldn't even look over the chair to push it properly. I had to stand on the tipping levers and get momentum like you do with a skateboard or Tony and I pulled by the front rigging.
 Anyway...my dad...he built robots. He's the one who built Tony. That's why my mom, yeah...If anyone has all the stuff I need to make a new wheelchair, it's him. And...

Andrew laughs loudly from the other side of the room.

ANDREW

Manoella, your mom is funny!

MANOELLA

She is, isn't she?

ANDREW

Yes. She says you have music.

MANOELLA

Some. We didn't have time to copy much at all. Just have part of one of my grandma's high school playlists. Been listening to the same thirty seven songs for eight years. Don't have much diversity but they don't suck.

ANDREW

Play some music!

ARI

We haven't heard music in a long time.

MANOELLA

Really?

Ari nods and uhums while taking a bite of food.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I can't solve many problems, but I can solve that one. Tony. Speaker mode and shuffle grandma's playlist.

SOUNDTRACK: "La Agarro Bajando" by Gilberto Santa Rosa.

Andrew, Sacks, Ramona, and Tre jump to their feet and start to dance. Ari, Manoella, and Carla watch and smiles.

ARI

This is fun. What is it?

MANOELLA

Salsa. My mom's mom was Dominican.

ARI

That's cool. Do you speak Spanish?

MANOELLA

Decent amount. Not as much as I'd like. Grandma only spoke to me in Spanish. She was teaching me more but we never saw her after it all happened either. We went to her house once we had to leave our place. We hung around for days waiting to see if she'd come back but...nothing. I've tried to hold on to most of what she taught me.

ARI

I don't speak anything but English.

MANOELLA

I could teach you.

(clams up, awkwardly)

If you want.

ARI

That'd be fun!...Maybe you could come...to the lake...after you do what you need to do down here.

MANOELLA

Maybe. I can talk to mom about it.

Andrew walks up to the girls and forces them to dance. They don't resist. Carla watches Manoella from the pew while also vibing to the music. No one has a care in the world tonight.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - NIGHT

Everyone is scattered, sleeping in separate pews. Manoella and a sleeping Carla are in the same row. Tony charges in the corner. Manoella stares at the light pouring through the glass. Her face shines with a smile, too smitten to sleep.

Manoella tenses up when she hears WHEELER CARS approach. Headlights light up the stained glass as they drive by. Manoella can hear the Wheelers SCREAMING ANIMALISTICALLY and BANGING against the metal of the cars. All cars drive past the church and the city is plunged into silence again.

Manoella, more awake and alert than before, pulls out one of the department store notebooks from her bag along with a pen. She finds the spot with the most light and starts writing.

ANGLE: Manoella writes "*Captain Manoella Cortez & Lieutenant Ari...*" she pauses trying to figure out a last name. "...*Ari Meddler try to stabilize the sinking submarine. They...*"

EXT. ABANDONED CHURCH - MORNING

The group eats breakfast. Manoella, Ari, and Korat stand around the pulpit. Tony is perched on it with a holographic map of "Ross Lake" over his head.

ARI

That's Kori's cabin. If it's still there we're staying for as long as we can.

Korat taps Ari's shoulder and signs. Ari translates.

ARI (CONT'D)

Kori says there's no bedrooms on the first floor but that we could rearrange things if you decide to come.

MANOELLA

Thank you. My mom will probably say no but I'll try.

They go back to the map. The map zooms out.

ARI

We're walking in the same direction for another day or two but then...

ANGLE: Their paths overlap for a bit then diverge completely. The lake is in a different state. That walk is weeks long.

SACKS

We're about ready to head out.

EXT. ABANDONED CHURCH - MORNING

Ari and Sacks converse at the front. Sacks holds Ramona's hand, still visibly upset. Korat and Tre walk behind also holding hands. Next in line, Andrew pushes Carla and talks her ear off. Manoella is last. She walks alone in silence.

ANDREW

Do you want to play a game with me?

CARLA

Sure. What are we playing?

ANDREW

Momma liked to play The Alphabet Game on road trips. Ari says we're going on a road trip but instead of driving we're walking.

CARLA

It's a walk trip.

ANDREW

A walk trip. I like that. Do you want to play The Alphabet Game?

Ari notices Manoella falling behind and stops as they walk.

CARLA

Just be ready to get your ass beat.

ANDREW

(whispering and giggling)
You said a bad word.

CARLA

I've been told I do that a lot.

Carla points to an abandoned car dealership and it's sign.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Auto! Already winning.

Andrew laughs. Carla points to a Mexican restaurant.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Burritos!
(begrudgingly)
Cortex Robotics.

Carla points to a billboard. Manoella finally reaches Ari.

ARI

Why are you back here?

Manoella shrugs.

ARI (CONT'D)

We usually split up in pairs and meet up every few hours. I go with Andy and they seem attached so I guess you're coming with us today.

SOUNDTRACK: "White Houses" by Vanessa Carlton.

They hit an intersection and the group splits three ways. One goes right, one goes left, one goes straight.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Manoella, Carla, Ari, Andrew, and Tony move through the city. Ari basically talks at Manoella, who very rarely responds.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Manoella and Ari scavenge as a team. They quickly and easily fall into a groove. They break into a few units. Ari looks in top shelves of the kitchen, Manoella looks through the bottom.

EXT. CITY - SUNSET

Andrew pushes Carla. They play more games. Ari and Manoella walk behind. Ari talks, Manoella speaks a little more.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The group sleeps. Tony charges. Manoella writes.

EXT. WALL - MORNING

The foursome stands in front of a wall by a main road covered in HANDMADE POSTERS AND LETTERS. It's "MISSING" posters, letters asking loved ones to come to a certain location, or handwritten "THIEFS" (misspelled) signs with terrible composite sketches. They focus on the one supposed to be Carla and Manoella given the drawing of the wheelchair.

MANOELLA

I do not look like that.

ARI

I mean...if I like...squint and you sort of...turn this way...I can kinda see it.

MANOELLA
(rolls her eyes and walks)
I hate you.

CARLA
If my chin was that fucking big I would've not been voted "Best Face" in my Senior Class. That's all I'm saying. That's all I'm fucking saying. I'd like to speak to that asshole's manager because fat chance of them catching us if that's what they're telling people to look for.

Ari and Andrew look at each other and smile while Carla and Manoella grumble.

INT. DILAPIDATED HOUSES - MORNING

-- Manoella and Ari enter a house.

-- Another house. One starts looking through the living room and the other heads right to the back.

-- Different house. It's like they're anticipating each other's moves now. When one ducks the other one stands. When one goes left, the other goes right.

EXT. SECLUDED GRAFFITIED RIVERSIDE BUILDING - DAY

They take a break to eat some food. Ari and Manoella hover by the water refilling their canteens. Carla and Andrew hang back having an animated conversation.

ARI
How long did you know about Washington?

MANOELLA
I heard a family talking about it one night a couple years ago. They were walking there.

ARI
Why did you never go? The border is only a few miles away? You could've gotten away from these assholes.

MANOELLA
We had a good thing going. She had everything she needed. Starting over didn't seem smart.

Ari scans her face attentively, then it dawns on her.
Manoella never told Carla.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
(shrugs)
She would've wanted to go. It's not lying
if you just don't mention it, right?

ARI
(smiling)
Right.

CARLA
Hey! Thelma! Louise! You guys can walk
and talk. I promise. Let's go!

MANOELLA
She's a charmer.

ARI
Must run in the family.

Ari walks away. Manoella stays behind and goes all sorts of red.

EXT. RESTAURANT (FRONT ENTRANCE) - AFTERNOON

There's a few stairs leading to the door and it's also too narrow for the cart. They head to the back.

EXT. RESTAURANT (BACK ENTRANCE) - AFTERNOON

Same issue with the door by the dumpsters: steps and too slim.

MANOELLA
You're gonna have to stay out here.

ANDREW
I can stay with her.

MANOELLA (to Carla)	ARI (to Andrew)
We'll be quick.	We'll be right inside, 'kay?

CARLA
We don't need round the clock
babysitting. We'll be fine without
you for ten seconds. Go.

MANOELLA
Don't let her win anymore. She gets
a big head.

ANDREW

I almost won the last one.

MANOELLA

I'm betting on you this time.

CARLA

You're a fucking turncoat. You know that, right?

Manoella offers a shiteating grin. Ari chuckles.

ARI

Be good. Both of you.

Ari pulls Manoella by the hand and leads. They head for the door. It's locked. They have to run to the front entrance.

INT. RESTAURANT (DINING ROOM) - AFTERNOON

Fancy restaurant. Mostly intact. It feels both organic and high tech. Color palette: bluish-green. The chairs are translucent resin barrel. The pedestal tables seem to have been chiseled from ice caves. Acrylic panels ripple overhead along with gray clouds of stainless steel mesh. Floors and stone surfaces look as if they've been watermarked. (Visuals based on/inspired by Albert Adria's restaurant "Enigma".) They're bewildered. They look at each other and smile. This is cool as hell. There's an air of ease between them.

ARI

Last one to the kitchen has to eat the burnt bottom of the bean pot.

MANOELLA

Dea-HEEEEEEY!

Before Manoella can finish Ari takes off and laughs. Manoella follows. She's laughing too. She's clearly losing.

INT. RESTAURANT (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

MANOELLA

That's fricking cheating! Not fair!

Ari laughs. They look through the kitchen. Not much to find.

INT. RESTAURANT (PANTRY) - CONTINUOUS

Depleted. Manoella looks under the shelves. She shines her light and A TRIO OF RATS disperses in a hurry. Nothing.

Next shelf. No rats but she sees a weird shadow all the way down by the wall. She investigates. She moves a couple of empty crates and that's when she sees it: TWO BAGS OF FLOUR.

MANOELLA
Got something!

Manoella runs out of the pantry and into the main kitchen.

INT. RESTAURANT (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella shows off the bags to Ari.

ARI
Shit! Really?! Would those be good?

MANOELLA
TonTon says that as long as there's no mold in it and there's no weird smell it should be fine.

Manoella sniffs a bag then places it by Ari's nose.

ARI
Doesn't smell like anything.

MANOELLA
Exactly. We should...

A CAR interrupts them. They look at each other, duck, crawl to the window, and watch it approach. A makeshift FLOGGING POST is drilled to the roof with a sign that reads "THIEF" hammered to the top. A BEAT UP, UNRESPONSIVE MAN is tied to it with his arms over his head. The car stops. Manoella and Ari duck again. Car doors SLAM SHUT. MALE VOICES are heard. Manoella peeks and sees THREE WHEELERS head for the side of the building. The same side where Carla and Andrew are.

The Wheelers are LACES (22 - his laces are perpetually untied, he's about as slimy and intelligent as a slug), OLLY (19 - looks like a poorly drawn, real life Porky Pig), and VIPER (21 - is missing two teeth and they both happen to be his fangs). They make the Stooges look like Mensa members. A T-2 MODEL ROBOT lags behind them. The robot has issues with his balance and sways as he walks. It slows him down a lot.

ARI
Shit. Shit!

The trio horses around steps away from the dumpster area.

MANOELLA
They're gonna find them.
(split second decision)
Hide.

Manoella bangs on the glass and waves hello then runs toward the front, forcing them to run after her.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Hide!

INT. RESTAURANT (DINING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Laces, Olly, and Viper enter through the main door and see Manoella casually walking right towards them.

LACES
Who are you?

Manoella smiles and playfully pretends to be the hostess.

MANOELLA
Table for three? Our VIP section is
right this way.

LACES
I asked you a question.

Ari walks out, clearly playing along with Manoella's ruse.

ARI
The chef's special today is
incredible. Highly recommend.

Manoella glares at Ari. Ari offers an unspoken "What?!" look in return, feigning ignorance. The guys immediately fall prey to Ari's so called "Medusa Shit" and are instantly smitten.

LACES ARI (CONT'D)
Who...? What? What can I get you gentlemen?

Ari pretends to be holding a pad and pen. She "waits" to take their order. The trio of idiots look at each other confused.

OLLY
What are y'all doing?

MANOELLA
(nonchalantly)
Just running a female-owned small
business.

Viper flips open an intricate butterfly type knife and takes a step closer. Dread hits and Manoella improvises.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
I can fix him.

VIPER
How?

Manoella walks over and opens the robot's back panel.

MANOELLA	T-2
Easy. The Zero Moment Point	Unauthorized access to
of his position-controlled	control panel.
joint motor needs	
recalibrating.	

Manoella's hands move deftly as she seemingly fixes things.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)	T-2 (CONT'D)
His angle trajectory should	Unauthorized access to
be based on a single	control panel.
objective optimization	
process and linear	
interpolation...	

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
...but right now it's looking like
it's doing a force resisting
balance control method instead.
(beat, she flips a switch)
There.

The robot straightens.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
(tapping the robot)
Try walking.

The robot walks straight. The guys look wildly impressed.

LACES
How'd ya do that?

MANOELLA
Anthony Cortez is my dad. He's the
guy who made these things.

Manoella locks eyes with Ari, letting her know to follow.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Okay, well...you're welcome for
that and now that we took care of
it for you...we'll get going. Bye.

Ari continues to play along.

ARI

It was such a treat to meet you gents. We really appreciate you stopping by. Be sure to rate us five stars and leave a good review.

VIPER

Ya didn't...

LACES

You're not supposed to be here!
This is our turf.

MANOELLA

Exactly. That's why we're on our way. Thanks for letting us know.

Manoella and Ari are about to reach the door when it opens.

ERICK

You assbrains left the...

Manoella and Erick make eye contact. They both freeze.

ERICK (CONT'D)

You...

Manoella immediately recognizes Erick and takes off running to the back, yanking Ari behind her. The three guys also run and quickly surround them. The girls have nowhere to go.

VIPER

Ya know her?

ERICK

That's the thievin' bitch we been looking for. The one that stole my shit and broke my Tony.

MANOELLA

Look, I'll own up to the food but I didn't break anything. I told you that. He just needs a new battery.

OLLY

She fixed this Tony and says she's Cortez's kid. Maybe you do only just need a new battery and-

ERICK

Shut your snout.

Olly stops talking. Erick walks up to Manoella. She doesn't flinch. He forcefully squeezes her face with his hand.

ERICK (CONT'D)
You fuckin' stabbed me.

MANOELLA
And you burned my house down.
Sounds like we're even.

LACES
A thief with a big mouth?

Laces laughs. Erick glares at him and he immediately stops.

ERICK
Morley's gonna get a kick out of
cutting your hands. Maybe I'll ask
if I can do it.

MANOELLA
He should come and get me himself
instead of sending you sentient sharts.

ERICK
He says we gotta bring you in with
your hands, he ain't ever said
nothin' about your tongues.

INT. RESTAURANT (DINING ROOM) - LATER

The girls are on the floor, tied back to back across from
their empty backpacks. All the bags' contents as well as what
was in their pockets has been dumped on one of the tables.

The men can be heard in the kitchen throwing stuff around.

MANOELLA
Could you reach my waist?

ARI
Probably. Why?

MANOELLA
Never get caught with only one knife.
Learned that when I was thirteen.
There's a tiny pocket blade tucked into
my waistband. See if you can get it.

Manoella quickly realizes she's asked Ari to reach inside her
pants. She tenses up. Her breath hitches when she feels Ari
searching for the knife.

ARI
Found it.

MANOELLA

Uhhhh...uhm...cut me out and then
I'll do you.

As soon as she's free, Manoella cuts Ari's rope then jumps to her feet. She clears the table and starts ripping open both bags of flour then piling it into a mound at the center of the table across from the door that leads to the kitchen.

ARI

(horrified at the waste)
What are you doing?!

MANOELLA

We need to get out of here before
they find Andrew and my mom.

ARI

How is baking going to handle four
grown ass men?

MANOELLA

(matter of factly)
Flour goes boom. One of the first
things my dad taught me.

Ari looks confused. Manoella stuffs their bags. She throws Ari her bag, then straps hers on her back. The only thing she keeps are the two lighters. She tests them. They both work.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna make this go everywhere
and it's gonna light up. Got it?

ARI

I don't. Very confused actually.

Manoella clumps a couple of the cloth napkins that were strewn about, sets them on the table, and lights them. They immediately go up in flames, starting a small fire.

ARI (CONT'D)

(suddenly fully on board)
Just tell me what to do.

MANOELLA

Tie back as much of your hair as
you can and duck. When this goes
off you run for the door. Don't
look back, don't wait for me if I'm
not behind you. Just run and get
them out of here.

ARI
I'm not... MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey! Anyone ever told
you chumps you don't have the
looks to be this stupid?

OLLY
The fuck did you...OYYYYY!!!!

Manoella pushes the mountain of flour with both her arms and the cloud goes everywhere.

MANOELLA
NOW!

Flour rains down on the flames creating a flash fire ball. Ari bolts to the door. Olly falls on his ass. The other three come running. Manoella throws the handfuls of flour she kept in her fists into the fire to create a smaller explosion then bolts.

ERICK
Get back here!

They try to chase the girls but Erick limps, Laces trips on his untied laces and falls, Olly can't stand on time, and Viper is too far behind for it to matter. The girls are gone.

ERICK (CONT'D)
You fuckin' morons. Go get 'em!

EXT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Ari is a few feet away looking back at the door expectantly. Manoella runs out and pushes Ari as she pushes past her.

MANOELLA
Go! Go! Go! GO!

EXT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Manoella and Ari run to the spot where they left Carla and Andrew. They're not there. Manoella and Ari are immediately alarmed and take off running down the alley looking for them.

EXT. ALLEY - ALLEY

Manoella and Ari peek over fences and look anywhere they think Andrew and Carla could've gone. Nothing. They're starting to panic. Manoella climbs a fence then the roof of a one story house which gives her a better vantage point. She spots them in a backyard a few houses down. Manoella jumps off the roof and runs in that direction. Ari follows.

EXT. HOUSE BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Carla and Andrew sit under the shade by an empty and filthy pool. They chat while dangling their feet over the edge.

CARLA

...and movies? Do you remember those?

ANDREW

We used to go to them every Thu-

Manoella storms into the backyard. She's fucking livid.

MANOELLA

Are you fricking serious?! What the fudge are you doing here?!

CARLA

What? It was hot over there and you took forever. I knew you'd find us.

MANOELLA

(mimics choking and paces)

You're...

ARI

We should get going. We need to meet everyone else soon.

Manoella forcefully drags the cart and tips it on its side.

MANOELLA

(through gritted teeth)

Come on.

Carla lifts her arms and Manoella wraps her hands under Carla's armpits then begins to drag Carla to the cart.

CARLA

What took you so long?

ARI

We got...

MANOELLA

...distracted. We got distracted and lost track of time.

Ari knots her brow. Manoella silently tells her to let it be.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

-- Manoella and Ari each chastise their partner. Ari scolds Andrew who looks remorseful. Manoella scolds Carla who rolls her eyes. It's reminiscent of parents reprimanding children.

-- Manoella and Ari hang behind as Andrew pushes Carla.

ARI

That was impressive...with the T-2
I mean...that you knew that stuff.

MANOELLA

Oh, I have no idea what I said.
It's just words I heard my dad
mention all the time. The thing
just had one of the control
switches in the wrong position *but*
they don't need to know that.

They look at each other and burst out laughing.

-- Manoella and Ari go through a gas station market. They're fully in sync by now and move like a well oiled machine.

-- Manoella, now mostly out of her shell, and Ari have an animated conversation. Carla and Andrew do the same.

-- Dusk. Another intersection. The two other pairs join the foursome and they merge into one larger group once more.

EXT. ABANDONED CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Manoella, Carla, Ari, Andrew, Sacks, Ramona, Korat, and Tre have set up camp for the night in the center of an abandoned carnival. The large, dilapidated rides loom around them.

INT. ABANDONED CARNIVAL RIDE (BUMPER CARS) - NIGHT

Manoella sits in a rusty bumper car. She's listening to music, writing in her notebook, lost in her thoughts. Ari jumps in the car and sits next to Manoella. Manoella rushes to slam the notebook shut. Ari pretends not to notice.

ARI

Food's almost ready.

Manoella removes one of her headphones. Ari repeats herself.

ARI (CONT'D)

Food. It'll be good in like five.

MANOELLA

Cool. Thanks.

ARI

I told them to save you the burnt bottom.

MANOELLA
(laughing)
Right. Of course...cheater.

ARI
(smiling)
Not my fault you can't run fast.

Manoella smiles back. Silence. She tries to hide her nerves.

ARI (CONT'D)
What's that?

MANOELLA
Just a thing I like to do.

ARI
Writing?

Manoella nods.

ARI (CONT'D)
What do you write about?

MANOELLA
Stuff.

ARI
Stuff like what?

MANOELLA
Stupid stuff.

ARI
You could never write anything
stupid...What do you write about?

Manoella hesitates but there's something about Ari that makes
her feel safe and she relaxes.

MANOELLA
A lot of things. Private
Investigators, the ballet, outer
space and rocket ships, submarines,
video games, weddings...

Manoella blushes at the accidental admission and backtracks.

ARI
(lifts her brow)
Weddings?

MANOELLA

Only once. And I ripped that page out. It was terrible.

ARI

So you like to write fantasies?

MANOELLA

I guess.

Ari holds the wheel and fakes pushes the nonexistent pedal.

ARI

If this was a real car and I could make it move, where would we go?

MANOELLA

(no hesitation)

The ocean. I've never seen it.

ARI

You've never been to the beach?!

MANOELLA

(shakes head embarrassed)

My dad kept promising he would take me. He never did. Something always came up...He died as king of the liars, sitting on a throne of broken promises.

ARI

Oooooh! She does have a flare for the drama. I like it!

That vulnerable moment hangs between them for a beat.

ARI (CONT'D)

Close your eyes.

MANOELLA

What?

ARI

You're going to the beach. Close 'em.

Manoella laughs but stops when she clams up under the intensity of Ari's stare. Ari is looking directly into her eyes, never breaking contact.

ARI (CONT'D)

Close your eyes. Come on.

Manoella is skeptical but closes her eyes regardless.

ARI (CONT'D)

Okay, lets take it piece by piece. Imagine how it sounds first. The waves...they almost make music. The way they crash against the shore and the rocks and each other...it's rhythmic. It's peaceful. Kinda sound like drums. Can you hear it?

Manoella nods.

ARI (CONT'D)

It smells...it's not rotten fish but it's fishy. Do you remember how the fish counter at the grocery store used to smell?

MANOELLA

Briny.

ARI

Exactly! That's what it smells like. You still with me?

MANOELLA

Drums and the grocery store. I'm keeping up.

ARI

(laughing)

Take it seriously!

MANOELLA

(cracking one eye open)

I am!

ARI

Close your eyes.

Manoella rushes to close her one eye again.

MANOELLA

They're closed.

(turns to show her both)

Closed. See?

ARI

Okay...so rhythmic sounds, briny smell. Uhm...were you ever barefoot in the playground?

MANOELLA

No? Sounds like a health hazard.

ARI

Okay but you've touched sand right?

MANOELLA

I think so?

ARI

You've NEVER touched sand?

MANOELLA

I said I think I have! I'm feeling very judged right now.

ARI

Nu uh. Impossible because this is a judgement free zone...Okay, sand! Every single grain, under your feet. You sink into it. Your weight makes it buckle ever so slightly with each step.

MANOELLA

I'm going to assume that's not you calling me fat.

Ari shoves Manoella's shoulder.

ARI

Trying to paint a picture for you!

MANOELLA

Okay, Bob Ross.

ARI

Who?

MANOELLA

Some guy from a book I found once. He painted stuff. I'll behave now.

ARI

Promise?

MANOELLA

Promise.

Manoella settles deeper into the seat. Her demeanor changes.

ARI

Rhythmic drums. Briny smell. Gritty, sticky, smooth sand.

MANOELLA

I'm with you.

ARI

The color...it's lighter blue at the shore but the further deep it goes it gets darker and darker and darker until it's almost black in the distance, right on the horizon. Do you see it?

Manoella nods.

ARI (CONT'D)

Walk up to the water. It's going to come at you fast but don't move. Let it hit your feet. How's it feel?

MANOELLA

Cold.

ARI

It is pretty cold. But that's what the sun's for. It's shining on your head and despite the water being kinda chilly you feel warm...Hear the waves crash and fall back. They're making sea music on the wet, slushy sand touching your feet. Take a deep breath in. Smell and taste the salt in the air. The sun feels hot on your skin...You're at the beach. Just you and the water...You don't need someone to take you, you just took yourself.

A tear streams down each of Manoella's eyes. She quickly wipes them and opens her eyes.

MANOELLA

Sorry. That's so lame. I didn't mean to do that.

ARI

Were they happy tears?

MANOELLA

(shrugging coyly)

Yeah...I guess.

ARI

Then it's not lame, it's rad. I don't think many people cry happy tears anymore.

MANOELLA

Probably not.

They smile at each other. Manoella relaxes again.

ARI

We're breaking the norm here. I fancy myself a rule breaker extraordinaire, Nelz.

MANOELLA

Nelz?

ARI

Manoella, Nellie, Nelz. You look like a Nelz.

MANOELLA

Never been called that in my life.

ARI

Well, you just were...Nelz.

Manoella blushes. The things she's feeling right now are overwhelming in more ways than she could explain.

ARI (CONT'D)

So...your first trip to the beach was good enough that it left you a little emotional, huh?

MANOELLA

It was.

ARI

I got my work cut out for me for the second one then. Gotta plan how I make it better.

Before Manoella can even process the statement, Tre's head peeks through the small window of the fake car.

TRE

If you don't come now, Andrew's going to eat both your plates.

ARI

(playfully)

Andy don't be a pig!..Who raised this kid? He's a savage...Come on.

SOUNDTRACK: "Into The Wild" by LP.

Ari opens the little door, holds the edge of Manoella's t-shirt sleeve, and pulls her. Manoella follows Ari's lead and instead of doing the logical thing and exiting through the door on her side, she crawls and exits through Ari's side.

EXT. ABANDONED CARNIVAL - LATER

The group sits around the fire eating and chatting. Manoella effortlessly participates in the conversation this time.

EXT. ABANDONED CARNIVAL - LATER

Another dance party. They laugh around the fire with abandon. They push Carla's cart to help her "dance" too.

Carla is placed in a sleeping bag. Then the younger ones take turns riding the cart around the parking lot.

Carla has never seen Manoella with people her age or this carefree. It feels monumental. Carla laughs and takes in the sight of her enjoying herself - specially around Ari - without the weight of the world on her back. She covertly sheds a tear or two (*She'd never admit to that. Fuck crying.*)

EXT. ABANDONED CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Carla, Manoella, Ari, and Andrew sleep on the floor. Manoella faces Ari and quietly studies her sleeping face.

EXT. CARNIVAL PARKING LOT - MORNING

Carla is already sitting in the cart. Everyone else is doing the last bit of packing up. Andrew hovers by the cart.

ANDREW

Do you really have to leave?

CARLA

I do.

ANDREW

I don't want you to. If you leave I'm alone. I don't have a girlfriend or boyfriend. I think even Ari has a girlfriend now.

Andrew looks over at where Ari and Manoella sit. There's no space between them. Ari leans, whispering something into Manoella's ear that makes Manoella smile impossibly wide.

CARLA

Who gives a fuck? I don't have one either. You're better off. Trust me.

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

All boyfriends do is have really attractive faces, say shit they don't mean, then leave you and his baby in the hospital because he *couldn't* possibly miss the skiing trip he had booked with his wife and kids even though you've just had to be resuscitated after going into cardiac arrest and became paraplegic... ANYWAY...Besides, you're not alone. You have your sister. She loves you. A lot.

ANDREW

But I don't have a friend. You're my friend. My best friend.

CARLA

I am. I am your friend buddy.

Carla pulls him in forcing his head to rest on her shoulder.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Remember how we were talking about movies?

ANDREW

Yeah.

CARLA

There was one about a lady who took care of a little girl. The lady had to leave the girl but before she did she made sure she said something *really* important. Something the girl was supposed to remind herself of every day. You want to know what it was?

ANDREW

Yeah.

CARLA

You promise if I teach you you're going to say it all the time?

ANDREW

I promise.

CARLA

The thing the lady taught the girl to say was "I'm a bad bitch." Now you say it. "I'm a bad bitch."

ANDREW

What does "bad bitch" mean?

CARLA

It means you're smart, you're confident, you're kind, you're super fucking hot, and you're so so so important. It means you don't need anyone else. All Andy needs is Andy. Andy is enough because Andy is amazing. More than anyone I've ever met so say it...say it.

ANDREW

I'm a bad bitch.

CARLA

Louder.

ANDREW

I'm a bad bitch.

CARLA

Louder. You gotta believe it.

ANDREW

I'm a bad bitch!

The group turns to watch Carla and Andrew.

CARLA

Say it like you mean it!

Andrew stands and projects his chest outward, screaming.

ANDREW

I'M A BAD BITCH!

CARLA

Yes you are!

Everyone looks on for a beat then bursts out laughing.

MANOELLA

How come he gets to curse?!

Manoella calls out from where her and Ari are sitting.

CARLA

How old are you Andy?

ANDREW

Three hundred and sixty three months and twenty two days.

CARLA

That sounds a lot older than sixteen.

Manoella and Ari laugh. They turn to look at each other. Carla and Andy go back to a quiet conversation. Manoella stands to stuff the last of her things in her bag.

ARI
You don't have to go.

MANOELLA
We do.

ARI
No. You actually don't.

MANOELLA
What are you doing?

ARI
Look at them. Why would we split them up? You guys don't have to be alone. You don't have to be alone. Come with us...Jesus christ, you're not in a fantasy anymore. This could be real. This *is* real now. You could stay with us.

MANOELLA
(packs more aggressively)
Staying with you *is* the fantasy. The reality is that I have to do this thing for my mom. I need to go to my dad's and fix this for her. That thing hurts her every day she uses it. It's great for now but not forever. She needs me to make her a chair and my dad has everything I need to build one. I have to get there. She also can't be moving around every day. We need to find somewhere to stay. For good.

ARI
That could be Kori's place.

MANOELLA
That's too far. It has to be my dad's house. That's where we're gonna live now.

ARI
Have you told *her* that?

MANOELLA
I will. Eventually. When we get there.

ARI
 (laughs bitterly)
 You're just running away cuz you're
 scared you can't rip out the pages
 if you don't like how this ends.

Manoella angrily zips up her bag and glares at Ari.

MANOELLA
 Screw you.

Manoella walks over to the cart.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
 Andy, say goodbye.

ANDREW
 Thank you for helping me find my
 friends, Manoella.

Andrew hugs Manoella

MANOELLA
 Of course.

Andrew hugs Carla.

ANDREW
 I will miss you, Carla.

CARLA
 I'll miss you too bud.

Manoella hugs the group. She skips Ari. Andrew sneaks in a final hug to Manoella. Manoella looks back at Ari as they walk away. Ari looks back after Manoella has turned.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Manoella pushes the cart with Carla and Tony down the street.

CARLA
 So...Ari?

MANOELLA
 What about Ari?

CARLA
 I don't know. You tell me.

MANOELLA
 No idea what you're talking about.

CARLA

You have no idea?

MANOELLA

Not a clue.

CARLA

Okay. I guess we pretend you didn't stop breathing since we met them.

MANOELLA

Pffft...been breathing just fine.

CARLA

Do you remember Miss Laura? Your kindergarten teacher?

MANOELLA

No.

CARLA

Well, every day you came home from school talking about Miss Laura, how pretty her green eyes were, and how you were going to marry her. Every single day. Every day Mani. Only got more obvious from there... I'm sorry you never got to do all the normal teenager stuff.

MANOELLA

It's fine. Based on every book we've read, high school seems a lot more complicated and dramatic than I have the patience for.

CARLA

(laughing)

Oh, you would've been *miserable*.

MANOELLA

Truly sounds like my nightmare.

Beat.

CARLA

You still should've talked to her.

MANOELLA

I did talk to her.

CARLA

You know what I mean.

MANOELLA

And say what, mom? "Hey, give me a call when the apocalypse ends. We'll go for milkshakes."

CARLA

Not that. That's fucking lame. Your game definitely needs work.

Manoella rolls her eyes and continues pushing in silence.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I dated a girl for most of high school. Patricia Medeski. She was two years older.

MANOELLA

Woooooh! Woh. Hold on. Woh! How did I not know this?!

CARLA

I was saving it as a bonding moment for when you finally admitted you're...I was saving it for now. Seeing as you're absolute shit at smooth talking, it makes me extra qualified to be your wing woman next time we meet a cute girl you have the hots for.

MANOELLA

God. One please, pleaseeee don't ever say "hots for" again. Two please just...don't in general!

CARLA

Why not?

MANOELLA

Because that's fricking embarrassing mom.....why is this the one time you're quiet? I need details!

Carla laughs. Manoella smiles as she pushes.

CARLA

I was kinda crazy about her. A lot crazy about her. She played piano...

SOUNDTRACK: "Dark Blue" by Jack's Mannequin.

EXT. CITY - DAY

They make frequent pit stops and find something to take everywhere. The bags and cart get progressively more full. They pass the time talking, playing games, and singing.

MANOELLA

What do you miss the most? From before.

CARLA

Google.

Manoella bursts out laughing.

CARLA (CONT'D)

What? Why's it funny? I miss being able to Google shit. I could prove anyone wrong in two seconds. I'd have you losing arguments left and right. Even more than now I mean.

MANOELLA

Sure.

CARLA

What about you? What do you miss?

MANOELLA

I miss cereal. And milk. And marshmallows.

TONY

I miss getting a full charge.

Carla and Manoella hang their heads back cackling.

TONY (CONT'D)

And software updates.

Tony looks at them confused.

TONY (CONT'D)

Why are you laughing, Ella?

MANOELLA

You're just a funny little dude TonTon.

EXT. STREET - DAY

They turn a corner and the CORTEX ROBOTICS building comes into view. Carla tenses up. She's bracing for this. Manoella pushes the cart faster and runs towards it.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (LOBBY) - DAY

The space is vandalized. Manoella kicks away glass and other debris, clearing a path for the cart. They walk up to the reception desk. A MASSIVE PORTRAIT of Anthony hangs behind it. He smiles while flanked by two robots: a T-4 and the much more advanced concept model that never dropped. The portrait is reminiscent of something royalty would have commissioned.

CARLA

He never was one for modesty.

Tony lights up. It's been a while since he's seen his maker. Manoella moves past the portrait. They walk further.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (HALLWAY) - DAY

Manoella opens door after door. All offices have been pillaged. They reach the end of the hallway. It's the big double doors with Anthony's name. Manoella opens them.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (ANTHONY'S OFFICE) - DAY

Instead of walls, the office has floor to ceiling glass with a view of the main assembly line on the floor below. Rows of unfinished robots at different stages stare back at them.

CARLA

I forgot how cool this view was.

MANOELLA

It's pretty neat. He used to let me sit on the conveyor belts...

CARLA

(annoyed at the recklessness)
Of course he did.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

It looked even bigger from there...I can see why you wanted to work here.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Everyone thought Anthony was going to change the world. I wanted to be a part of that.

MANOELLA

(running out the door)
I'm gonna see what I can find!
There's gotta be a pile of batteries somewhere!

CARLA

BE CAREFUL!

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (ASSEMBLY LINE FLOOR) - DAY

-- Manoella looks around, amazed and beaming with pride. Her dad did all of this. That's her last name on all the robots.

-- She looks through cabinets and boxes. She finds a stockpile of brand new batteries.

SOUNDTRACK: "Electric Feel" by MGMT.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (ASSEMBLY LINE) - CONTINUOUS - (FANTASY)

The box of batteries lights up with a nearly blinding glow. A choir appears, singing a lively gospel version of the song. Manoella (dressed in the choir outfit) and Tony start to perform along. All the PARTIALLY BUILT ROBOTS also join in. Manoella opens Tony's back panel and replaces his old battery with a brand new one. Tony is *absolutely fucking delighted*. He jumps and does pirouettes. The choir continues to sing.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (ANTHONY'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Carla and Manoella sleep on the floor. Tony quietly continues to do a happy dance a few feet away. He's the happiest guy.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS (ANTHONY'S OFFICE) - TWILIGHT

Manoella wakes and tiptoes to Anthony's desk. She sits in his fancy desk chair and has A Moment. She relishes it. *Magic happened in this chair.* She pulls out a notebook and writes.

ANGLE: "Manned Spaceflight Pilot Cortez and Flight Engineer Meddler are headed straight for an all consuming black hole."

INT. SPACESHIP CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - (FANTASY)

Red lights blink. They jump around, pressing buttons as the black hole they're hurling towards fills the bridge's glass.

TONY (V.O.)
Impact in seventy two seconds.

Manoella frantically attempts to divert course. Ari stops. She's made her peace. She calmly rests against the console.

ARI
Slow down Cap.

MANOELLA
I'm trying to save your life.

TONY (V.O.)
Impact in sixty three seconds.

ARI
Yeah, I don't know about that.

MANOELLA
I just reversed the right thrusters. Do the same to the left.

Ari walks up to Manoella and grabs her shoulders, stopping her from running. The black hole gets closer.

TONY (V.O.)
Impact in fifty seconds.

ARI
You did all you could.

MANOELLA
Doesn't feel like it.

ARI
There's no one I would've rather been stuck in cryo sleep for a few thousand years and 2.2 million light years away from Earth with.

MANOELLA
Nonsense. This was a failure. We were supposed to reach Lakeous Rossxiosis and make contact with a new civilization. All we got was...that. It was all for nothing. *I failed.* Everyone.

TONY (V.O.)
Impact in thirty seconds.

ARI
(closing the distance)
I've truly never met a dumbest genius in my entire life Cortez.

Ari stares at Manoella dead in the eyes. Manoella falters. The black hole is about to engulf them.

TONY (V.O.)
Impact in twenty seconds.

ARI (CONT'D)
You going to kiss me or what?

MANOELLA
We're about to die.

TONY (V.O.)
Impact in fifteen seconds.

ARI
All the more reason to.

Ari steps even closer. There's no space between them. Manoella still doesn't make her move.

TONY (V.O.)
 Impact in ten seconds.
 10...9...8...

Manoella is frozen. They're inches away from each other.

ARI TONY (V.O.)
 You're wasting time, Cap. 7...6...5...4...3...

Lips are all but touching now. Their breaths are ragged.

TONY (V.O.)
 ...2...

Ari rolls her eyes and shakes her head. She grabs Manoella by the collar and pulls her in the last couple millimeters. They get sucked into the black hole right as lips finally meet.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CORTEX ROBOTICS - MORNING

Manoella and Carla study the map while having some food. They look at directions leading to their next stop: Dad's house. A second cart full of parts is tied parallel to Carla's cart.

MANOELLA
 If we take Simon Street it should
 be an easy, straight shot to Dad's.

SOUNDTRACK: "DON" by MIRANDA!

EXT. SIMON STREET - DAY

The "easy way" looks like a war zone. A fallen light post. A multi-car pile up spills over onto the sidewalks. Cars have gone through business windows. Traffic is backed up as far as the eye can see. There's debris from the crash everywhere.

TONY
 Conditions: Suboptimal.

CARLA
 You really do go out of your way to
 state the obvious, Tin Man.

EXT. SIMON STREET - DAY - (FANTASY)

The scene transforms into a retro, 8-Bit obstacle course video game.

Wheelers are spread throughout as enemies to defeat. Manoella straps a jetpack on Carla's back. Carla turns it on, parkours up a wall, and immediately does a back flip in the air. Manoella plays and starts racking up points like crazy. She crushes every obstacle and defeats all Wheelers. Erick falls from the sky. He's the BIG BOSS. They run, Erick chases them. The finish line is in sight. It's a massive gate. Manoella and Carla race to it. Erick is on their tail BUT they smash past the gate before he can get to them.

SUPERIMPOSED: "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!"

EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - DAY

Manoella and Tony push the broken gate to make room for the carts. When the space is wide enough they enter.

EXT. CORTEZ HOUSE - DAY

They stare at the grandiose mansion with SOLAR PANELS on the roof. It's intact save for a couple of broken window panes. Manoella pushes the carts up the path that leads to the front door. She lifts a decorative rock with a slot for a key and uses it to open the front door then pushes the carts inside.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

The moment they're inside Carla bursts out laughing. Manoella works on separating the straps that hold the carts together.

MANOELLA

What? Why are you laughing?

CARLA

If they knew I was here they would
lose their fucking minds.

MANOELLA

Wh....Oh....

INT. 1990S MEXICAN SOAP TV SET - DAY - (FANTASY)

SOAPY 90s TITLE SEQUENCE IN SPANISH WITH **SUPERIMPOSED TEXT:**

- "TELEVIZIO PRESENTA" logo (knockoff "Televisa" network)
- Carla Nuñez & Anthony Cortez star in "INFIDELITY GAMES"
- FEATURING:
- Alonsa Cortez (50s) as "THE WIFE"
- Mayte, Marisol, and Miguel Cortez as "THE EVIL CHILDREN"
- SPECIAL GUEST STAR: Manoella Cortez as "THE BASTARD CHILD"

NOTE: ALL DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS IN SPANISH.

Carla and Anthony kiss passionately in his Cortex office. The door blows open. In walk Alonsa and the Cortez kids. They stop kissing and look shocked. His family looks appalled.

ALONSA
With the help?!

MIGUEL
Father, we expected more from you!

MAYTE
What will people think?!

MARISOL
You'll ruin our reputation!

Alonsa lunges and gives Carla an over the top, soap opera slap. Carla reacts in kind, holding her face and gasps.

MANOELLA
Cut! What the hell?

REVEAL: Manoella - the director - sits at video village behind monitors. She rips her headphones and walks to set.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
You weren't supposed to hit her.

ALONSA
This whore is kissing my husband!

MANOELLA
It's not in the script! If it's not in there, it doesn't happen. Back to one.

CARLA
Was I good?

MANOELLA
You were great, Ma. Keep doing exactly what you were doing. Loved the shock on your face but let's not overdo it. I still need it to feel organic when we do your close up. Papi, I need you to dig deeper. Act like you care about more than just sex with your hot intern please. Your family just walked in on you. Life may or may not be falling apart here. I wanna see that.

ANTHONY
Copy. Great adjustment. Thank you.

MANOELLA

(to the wife and kids)

You four, you're nailing the "we're terrible people" bit. Amazing work. It's like you're naturals...Let's take it from the top everyone.

The crew readjusts the set. Alonsa seethes as she talks with her kids. Manoella returns to video village.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Everyone set? We're losing time and money here people.

CARLA

Are we starting from the kiss?

MANOELLA

Yes. Right from the top.

Anthony and Carla reset. Anthony pins Carla against the desk, Carla wraps her hands behind his neck. They kiss again. Alonsa loses it and runs to Carla. Her kids follow. Anthony stands between them. Alonsa pulls Carla's hair and screams.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Oh hell no.

Manoella runs and pulls Alonsa's hair. Cortez kids pull her hair. Crew jumps in. As it's about to devolve into a brawl...

FREEZE AND CUT:

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

Manoella holds a portrait of Anthony with his family in one hand. On the other she holds one of him with YOUNG MANOELLA (5) that lives next to the family portrait. Carla still chuckles in the background.

MANOELLA

It's not funny.

CARLA

It's a little funny. She'd really break out in full body hives if she knew I was inside her house.

MANOELLA

She would...This looks just like I remember. Lets see what else is here.

SOUNDTRACK: "She's So Mean" by Matchbox Twenty.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

Someone looked through cabinets but didn't take much. There's still a decent amount of cans, even coffee. They rejoice.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BEDROOM) - DAY

Manoella enters one of her half sister's bedrooms. Carla watches from the hallway. Most drawers are open but the place doesn't look ransacked. Just like someone packed in a hurry. Manoella digs around drawers. She runs her hands over the dresser then unexpectedly swipes all the stuff that lived atop it to the floor. She turns to Carla and shrugs.

MANOELLA

Whoops.

CARLA

(shrugging)

Whoops.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BEDROOM #2) - DAY

This sister also packed in a haste. Manoella tears up the room.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BEDROOM #3) - DAY

The brother's bedroom suffers the same fate.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - DAY

Manoella is about to run inside but Carla stops her.

CARLA

We have to sleep somewhere.

MANOELLA

True.

Manoella wrecks the vanity.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

All done...Let's make food.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (GARAGE) - DAY

Manoella stares at a breaker box. She flips a switch from "Electric + Solar" to "Solar". Lights flicker on. They laugh. They haven't had actual electricity in years.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (KITCHEN) - AFTERNOON

Carla and Manoella sit at the fancy dinner table with a decent amount of food. This hasn't happened in a while.

MANOELLA

Do you think he died or do you think he went with them?

The question hits a sore spot. Carla tries to hide it.

CARLA

No idea.

MANOELLA

I think he did. Leave I mean. Now that we're here, I think they just left. I think that's why he never came. I think we waited for no reason. I made you wait for no reason...Is it weird that I'm happy he probably chose them?

CARLA

You're a weird ass kid so, if I'm being honest, that's one of the least weirdo things you ever said.

MANOELLA

(sarcastically)

Thanks, ma.

(beat)

I think we did better by ourselves.

CARLA

I think so, too.

They eat in silence for a beat.

MANOELLA

Power means I can use his stuff to put the chair together. That'll make it so much faster.

SOUNDTRACK: "Olvidame" by Motel

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - NIGHT

Manoella flips the lights on. There's tools, parts, and half robots neatly organized everywhere. She scans the room and notices the framed picture by the computer. It's a picture of YOUNGER MANOELLA (7) and her dad working on a PARTIALLY BUILT TONY. She smiles but jumps back into work mode.

She dumps what she grabbed at Cortex and the things she's collected along the way onto the work table and stares at them. She focuses on the random swivel caster wheels scattered throughout the pile. She has an idea. She grabs her backpack and digs through it to find the old pair of boots she'd thrown in there. She slams the boots down on the work table.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

She exits the basement hiding her hands behind her back.

MANOELLA

It's all there. I'll get started on it tomorrow but I have something...

CARLA

You know I fucking hate surprises.

Manoella presents the new version of the skates they used to move Carla around in the old apartment. She built these using the caster wheels and the boots. Carla smiles.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (HALLWAY) - NIGHT

Carla's arms are wrapped around Manoella's neck as they run around the house testing the new skates.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Carla and Manoella hold each other in bed. They sleep soundly for the first time in recent memory.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (HOME OFFICE) - MORNING

Carla sits on the big leather chair. Manoella fills her arms with stacks of books from the shelves and drops them in front of Carla before kissing her and running away. Carla reads.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - MORNING

Manoella runs in with Tony in her arms. This is her playroom now. She unfolds the rough sketch she drew of the chair and tapes it to her desk. She collects the welding tools then dresses up appropriately: apron, gloves, respirator, safety glasses, and the welding helmet. Once she's ready she turns to Tony. She puts googles on him too. She grabs two sheets of metal and welds.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - DAY

She takes in her progress. It looks like random metal scraps. She eats a spoonful out of the bowl on her lap. The picture by the computer catches her eye. It's Tony on the worktable.

MANOELLA

Do you remember this?

TONY

I have no data prior to Tuesday May 16th, 2056.

MANOELLA

The day we booted you.

TONY

Correct.

MANOELLA

I guess that makes sense. It would be like asking me if I remembered when mom was pregnant with me.

Manoella shovels a few more bites of food into her mouth and jumps off the counter. She's back in work mode. She lowers the welding helmet and extends her hand in Tony's direction.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Clamps.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - LATE AFTERNOON

Manoella digs through drawers and grabs a case. A **POLAROID OF A MUCH YOUNGER CARLA AND ANTHONY DANCING** is taped to the inside of the lid. She smiles, grabs the photo, and runs.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (HOME OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

Carla reads in silence. Manoella sits at the edge of the desk and extends the polaroid. Carla takes it and studies it.

MANOELLA

Found this in Dad's stuff...How old were you there?

CARLA

Never seen this before. If this is the night I think, then I was nineteen. It was a friend's holiday party. I was already pregnant here, just didn't know it yet.

Carla offers the photo back.

MANOELLA
I'm sorry I took your legs.

CARLA
You didn't. Hey...you didn't. I wanted you and I've never regretted you for a second...Your dad asked if I wanted an abortion.

MANOELLA
Of course he did. CARLA (CONT'D)
That's not what I meant.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
No, the big important man couldn't have people finding out he had an affair with the intern.

CARLA
No. That's not what I was getting at...It was a discussion we had and we both decided not to do it. We both wanted you. What happened, happened but it wasn't your fault.

MANOELLA
Sure.

CARLA
Look at me. You're the best fucking thing I ever did...Even though you're also the biggest dickhead I know.

MANOELLA
I'm the thing that stole your ability to dance and walk and live and be a normal twenty year old. That's what I am.

CARLA
What you are is the person that's kept me alive for the last eight fucked up years. Literally and figuratively.

MANOELLA
I should go work again. Do you need anything?

CARLA
Mani... MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Do you need anything?

CARLA (CONT'D)

For you to understand that what happened during that surgery was in no way your doing. No one thinks they're walking into a routine C-Section and will come out paralyzed. It's not even in the probability books. There's no way to plan for that. It was a freak situation. It wasn't your fault.

MANOELLA

(walking away)

I'll be in the shop. Holler if you need me.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella rests against the wall and stares at the work table.

FANTASY: *Anthony lovingly teaches MANOELLA (7) how to weld while they labor over a PARTIALLY ASSEMBLED TONY.*

Manoella rushes and WHOOSHES the memory away with her hands. Her father and her younger self DISSOLVE INTO THIN AIR. Manoella gets back to the chair. Tony moves closer to help.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - LATER

The chair is about 90% done but is missing some key parts.

MANOELLA

We need better break handles and better pieces to make foot rests. These are too small now.

TONY

I will add them to our list.

MANOELLA

A house on this block has to have something I can use. It's dumb to wait until tomorrow. Let's go.

TONY

But Carla has made it clear
we...

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Are you coming or are you
staying?

TONY (CONT'D)

I will come with you Ella.

MANOELLA

Move it then.

SOUNDTRACK: "Pills" (Ft. Sarah McLachlan) by The Perishers

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Manoella peeks inside the bedroom and finds Carla asleep.

INT. ABANDONED MANSIONS - NIGHT

-- Manoella ransacks, stowing anything of utility in her bag.

-- Manoella digs through all the containers in the garage.

-- Manoella finds the perfect footrests. She smiles. If she can at least get this chair done things will feel better.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

She stares at the sky. A peaceful beat. ENGINES REV. They hide. The cars ride by. They start to head back but a second wave of cars comes. Manoella darts into an alley. When she peeks out she sees Erick hanging out from one of the windows. They stay hidden until she's certain no more cars will come.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - DAWN

Manoella works through the night. She puts the finishing touches on the chair. *It's finally done.* She beams with pride. SURE, it's the Frankensteined version of a wheelchair. NO, it's not necessarily pretty BUT it's functional. That's what matters. Manoella and Tony high five.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - MORNING

Manoella runs in and starts jumping on the bed, immediately waking Carla up. Tony looks on from the door.

MANOELLA

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!

CARLA

I take it back. I regret having kids.

MANOELLA

(plopping down)

It's done! It's done. I finished it and it needs a test ride.

Carla smiles and kisses Manoella's forehead.

CARLA

You're fucking amazing and I'm so lucky you got your dad's brain.

MANOELLA

Do you want to see it?

CARLA

Duh. Obviously.

Carla sits up excited. Manoella runs and returns seconds later.

MANOELLA

What do you think?

CARLA

That we need to take it for a spin.

Manoella helps Carla off the bed and onto the chair. They laugh.

EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - MORNING

Manoella pushes Carla and the chair around. Tony sits on Carla's lap. It's pretty smooth. Manoella laughs as she pushes Carla up a small hill. When they reaches the top of the incline she sees a Wheeler car approaching. It's Erick. They freeze.

MANOELLA

Fudge.

CARLA

Fuck.

He stops, pokes his head out the window, and calmly whistles. Manoella instantly turns the chair around and runs. She almost makes it to the house. They're maybe sixty feet from the door.

EXT. CORTEZ HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Erick hits the gas and cuts her off. He pokes his head out again.

ERICK

A thief with a big mouth. You told us your daddy made the robots. I woke up and it suddenly came to me where you'd be at. It's a funny thing how I already know what post Imma nail your tongue to.

Manoella produces her knife at lightning speed. She stabs one of his front tires and takes off with the chair. She's forcing him out of the car. At least now they're on an even playing field. He grabs his mace club as he exits the car.

ERICK (CONT'D)

You fuckin' bitch.

Erick still limps but he's *pissed* so he's gaining on her. Manoella, Carla, and Tony reach the house.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (NARROW FOYER) - CONTINUOUS

MANOELLA

Close the door! Close the door!
Close! Close! Close it!

Carla pushes the door. Manoella practically jumps over her to help. Carla's chair puts distance between her and the door. Her force is reduced. It's mostly Manoella and she's quickly losing. They almost close it but Erick jams his arm through. With one big push he forces it open and rams his way in.

ERICK

You and me got unfinished business.

MANOELLA

Sorry, business is closed for the day.

Manoella pivots and propels Carla further into the house then starts hurling anything she can get her hands on at Erick. Carla and Tony join.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

You'll have to come back tomorrow.

Paintings, chairs, lamps, picture frames. If they can grab it, it's flying in his direction. It's only making him angrier. He talks while dodging things and swinging his club.

ERICK

The Prophet says we should give thieves a chance to repent, that Yahshua would accept if they mean it. But I'm a bad disciple. I don't ever think they mean it. I don't think you would ever mean it.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

They make it to the wider room. Manoella reaches for one of the fancy GEOMETRIC MARBLE DECORATIVE ACCENT SCULPTURES that lived on the coffee table and throws it.

MANOELLA

I know there's no therapy in the apocalypse but anyone else ever get around to telling you cults are bad? Cuz like...while we're here...cults are not great. Just putting it out there.

He fails to dodge that one. It hits him in the cheek and the weight of it sends him to the ground. He starts to bleed.

ERICK

You gonna see hell today.

Manoella realizes this is her opportunity. She grabs the chair and runs to the bedrooms. She bolts down the hallway.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BEDROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Manoella slams the door shut. She looks around the room trying to find something to block the entryway with but before she can, Erick smashes it open with his club.

He goes to rush her but SCREAMS IN PAIN instead. He looks down to find Tony's long, probe thermometer stabbed through his calf. He grabs Tony and throws him across the room. Tony crashes against the wall and hits the ground with a thud.

MANOELLA

Ton!

Manoella runs to Erick. She digs into her pocket but Erick notices. He grabs her wrist and yanks it. She was holding the knife. He pushes the knife open, flips her around forcing her back onto his chest, and brings the blade to her neck.

ERICK

Once. You only fuck with me once.

Manoella tries to fight him but it's hard when he's behind her. Carla attempts to wheel herself closer but the moment she's within reach Erick kicks her back and she rolls away.

ERICK (CONT'D)

You're next. Don't worry.

Manoella flails, reaches back, and digs her nails into his eye. He loosens his grip. She slips out. Erick, now angrier, slices the air with one eye closed while stepping in Manoella's direction. Carla moves and inserts herself between them. Erick tips her chair over sending her to the floor.

Manoella tries to help Carla. Erick pulls Manoella by the hair and throws her on the bed then presses the knife to her neck with one hand while he wraps the other around her windpipe. He chokes her. Manoella struggles, desperately trying to get air.

ERICK (CONT'D)

There's nothin' I hate more than
dirty thieves.

Erick was so focused on Manoella that he lost track of Carla. She has dragged herself to him. She firmly tugs on his ankles and pulls him to the ground. He still holds the knife. On his way down he stabs her in the chest. He slices through a major artery and punctures a lung. Carla starts gushing blood.

MANOELLA
MOM!

Unfazed Erick turns his attention back to Manoella. He chokes her. She fights him harder. Then...*the CRACK of a club against bone*. Erick lets out a final groan before he goes limp atop Manoella. She sees his club roll off to the side then hears Carla struggling to breathe after the effort she just exerted swinging the weapon against his head to kill him. Manoella pushes his body away and runs to Carla to put pressure on the wound.

CARLA
(playfully dismissive)
It's just a paper cut.

Carla coughs up blood. She fights to catch her breath. Blood is pouring out of her chest despite Manoella's efforts.

MANOELLA
Hang on. Just hang on. I gotta get-

Manoella tries to stand but Carla pulls her back down.

CARLA
Don't think you can patch this one up baby.

MANOELLA
(crying)
I can fix it. You told me, remember? I have dad's touch. I can fix anything.

Carla is losing too much blood. She's starting to fade.

CARLA
Don't be alone.

MANOELLA
I'm not alone. I got you. Two of us. All we need. It's you and me, Ma. Always has been. Always will.

CARLA
Thank you, Mani.

MANOELLA

For what? I didn't do anything. I
still have to fix you. You can
thank me then.

Manoella puts Carla's head on her lap. Carla dies.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Mom. Mom. MA! Fuck. Listen to me.
I'm cursing. Ass. Bitch. Fuck!
Shitbird. Assbasket. Motherfucker.
WAKE UP! Fucking scream at me for
saying shit I shouldn't. MOM! How
the fuck are we a team if you
fucking leave? COME ON!

-- Manoella shakes Carla. Carla doesn't move.

-- Manoella sobs. The sun rises higher in the sky.

-- The sun starts to set. Manoella's been there for hours.

-- The floor is caked in blood. So is a despondent Manoella.

-- Tony - screen now cracked and tons of parts bent from the
impact (he's in bad shape) - struggles to make his way to
Manoella. He attempts to pull her. She pushes him away.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)

Leave me alone.

TONY

We should go, Ella.

MANOELLA

Fuck off dude.

-- Manoella dissociates and fades into one of her fantasies.

SOUNDTRACK: "Collide" by Dishwalla.

EXT. HILL - SUNSET - (FANTASY)

A lone house on a hill by the ocean. One side overlooks the city, the other side is ocean views. The city looks normal.

Cars buzz by. People are everywhere. Everything is lively.

CARLA (O.S.)

Hey shithead.

Carla stands dressed in all white with massive angel wings poking from her back. Manoella runs to her. They hug. Tight.

MANOELLA
Who let you into heaven?

CARLA
I think there was a mixup in the
paperwork. *For sure.*

They laugh. Manoella stares at Carla like she's fine art.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Dinner time. Come on.

INT. HILL HOUSE - SUNSET - (*FANTASY*)

Manoella and Carla walk hand in hand into an open floor plan with pristinely white decor. Tony - upgraded to a super hip full-size model - moves around putting the finishing touches of an expansive meal. Manoella lights up and runs to him.

MANOELLA
TonTon!

TONY
Hello, Ella. I made your favorites.

Tony exits the kitchen. Manoella smiles and yanks Carla behind her. Manoella and Carla run from the kitchen to the dining room to discover a lavish smorgasbord of dishes. It's a mix of Dominican and U.S. food. Tony drops the last of the plates that complete the overwhelming spread of food.

TONY (CONT'D)
Please, enjoy.

Manoella piles on a bit of everything until it's spilling over. Carla follows suit and looks on adoringly. They fall into easy conversation. This is normal. This is happy.

INT. HILL HOUSE - DUSK - (*FANTASY*)

Savory plates have been replaced by a table full of lavish desserts. Manoella leans back on her chair with a smile.

CARLA
You need to go.

MANOELLA
I don't want to.

CARLA
You were ready a long time ago, I
just refused to admit it.

They sit in silence, basking in the moment. A bright ray of sunlight parts the darkening sky and shoots down onto the yard right outside the dining room.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Big man's calling. I gotta go Mani.

MANOELLA
I miss you, Ma.

CARLA
Who wouldn't? I'm kinda the shit.
(kisses her head)
By the way...I heard you...There's a strict "No Cursing" rule upstairs so...don't get too used to it.

MANOELLA
(laughing)
I'll keep that in mind.

Carla walks to the yard but hovers for just a beat longer.

CARLA
Te amo.

MANOELLA
Yo también te amo.

CARLA
See you around inside this big brain of yours, Claudia Manoella.

MANOELLA
Yup, still not a fan of being full named.

CARLA
It's a beautiful name.

MANOELLA
I guess it's kinda alright.

They smile. Carla flaps her wings and shoots up into the sky. The bright ray of light is gone. Manoella is alone again.

MANOELLA (CONT'D)
Ma? Come back, I gotta tell you something else...Ma?
(nothing, heartbroken)
See you around, Ma.

It hits her. Carla really is gone. She's truly alone. Devastating. She walks out, past the yard, and to the beach.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK - (*FANTASY*)

Manoella stands on the shore. Waves continuously hit her feet.

Each splash brings forth a memory with Carla that Manoella gets to relive. She relishes each one.

After a long beat Manoella sits on the wet sand and looks out to the water. She watches the sun fade.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - AS BEFORE

Manoella runs her hand over Carla's bloody hair. She kisses Carla's forehead and slips out from under her. Manoella walks to the chair and straightens it. She sits in it and sobs.

INT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BASEMENT WORKSHOP) - NIGHT

Hours later. Manoella has changed out of the bloody clothes. Tony sits on the workshop table. She works on fixing him.

EXT. CORTEZ HOUSE (BACKYARD) - MORNING

Manoella, a refurbished Tony, and the wheelchair stand by a fresh grave. She slips the polaroid of her parents dancing into her pocket. She looks at Tony, he looks at her.

MANOELLA

You ready?

TONY

Yes, Ella.

Manoella stuffs Tony inside her bag and slings it on her back. Tony rests his head on Manoella's shoulder.

MANOELLA

Adios, Ma.

EXT. CORTEZ HOUSE - DAY

Manoella hovers in front of the house, taking it in one last time then turns around and begins to walk.

MANOELLA

Tony, shuffle abuela's playlist.

SOUNDTRACK: "Slide" by The Goo Goo Dolls.

Manoella begins to walk. She walks and walks and walks.

CUT TO CREDITS:

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Months later. Manoella walks the path that leads to the picturesque lake. She steps onto the dock behind the cabin to find Ari, Andrew, Sacks, Ramona, Korat, and Tre frolicking and laughing by the edge of the water.

ANDREW

Manoella!

They turn to her. Ari lights up. Andrew runs. Ari follows. Andrew rams into Manoella, almost knocking her to the ground.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You came!

MANOELLA

I did.

ANDREW

Did Carla come too?!

Andrew scans the path for Carla's chair but all Manoella can do is shake her head.

Ari understands. She reaches for Manoella's hand and squeezes it, offering her unspoken support.

Manoella looks down at Ari's hand holding hers.

MANOELLA

Can I stay for a little while?

ARI

However long you want.

BACK TO CREDITS.

SOUNDTRACK: "Alone Together" by Fall Out Boy.