

SALSA INFERNÁL
A screenplay by Albert Richard

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FADE IN:

1 EXT: PRIMITIVE COURTYARD RURAL MEXICO -- LATE AFTERNOON

In a rustic open courtyard of a tiny Mexican mountain village, two elderly Mexican women dressed with dark shawls are making salsa. They are sisters, Esmeralda and Consuela. An old dog sleeps in the dust; a few chickens peck about. There are brightly colored fresh chilies hanging on lines, strings of garlic, crude bottles of vinegar, a basket of limes and a big vegetable press. Small empty Corona beer bottles are stacked up to one side. Under a rusty sheet metal shed roof, a large kettle is steaming on a camp-style double-burner propane stove. Esmeralda is chopping the jalapeño chilies in half and putting them on an open charcoal fire grill. The scene is cheerful with a slightly mysterious cast. Consuela is pasting labels on the little Corona beer bottles. A farm worker arrives and places a basket of red peppers on the ground next to Esmeralda. He leaves. Conspicuously placed on a side table are stacks of labels. They read *Salsa Infernal* in bold letters and *El Tesoro de Cielo Azúl* in smaller letters. As Esmeralda and Consuela continue to prepare the salsa, an off-screen voice-over dialogue begins.

The credits roll over the salsa-making activities during a voice-over dialogue.

JEFFREY (O.S.)

(Mildly irritated)

Celia, Be reasonable. I know you want to see the museum in Guadalajara, but we just don't have time. Let's be practical and face the REALITY of the situation for once, shall we?

CELIA JAMES (O.S.)

Oh Jeffrey! *Reality* is what you make it. We can fit it in.

(She is mildly impatient with him)

We can take the overnight bus, spend one night, and come right back. Where's your spirit of adventure, anyhow, Mr. Stick-in-the-mud English Professor?

JEFFREY (O.S.)

That's Professor Ph. D. from Yale Stick-in-the-mud if you please. Listen, it won't be an adventure to arrive in a new city with no sleep at high noon. The whole town will be shut down for siesta. You'll be exhausted from the bus ride and you know how you are with no sleep...Ms.

(MORE)

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

Cranky Cathy, herself. Plus we only have one week left of our so-called vacation, and remember, tonight's the big convention and send-off dinner. You KNOW we promised to spend some time with my sister and Alex. I rest my case.

CELIA JAMES (O.S.)

(sighs, deflated)

OK professor Yale, I suppose you're right, as usual. Dr. James, the voice of pure reason prevails. We can visit Guadalajara next time.

(with renewed enthusiasm, rambling)

I don't like musty old museums anyway. They make me sneeze and besides, I can make use of the remaining time here. This dinner is important. Maybe I'll meet the editor of Cuisine or Bon Appétit. Every major food magazine will have a rep there tonight, not to mention every major food chain; AND I have a great idea for a feature article. You want to hear it?

JEFFREY (O.S.)

You are a font of good ideas. I'd love to hear it, my darling.

CELIA JAMES (O.S.)

It's for the magazine--all about salsa, our favorite, *Salsa Infernål*--if I can just convince Janice to let me write it. Your sister is a royal pain in the butt to work for, you know. Too bad she's my boss. I hate having a boss. You're bad enough. Is it a genetic trait that runs in your family?

JEFFREY (O.S.)

Being bossy?

CELIA JAMES (O.S.)

No, being a pain in the butt.

FADE OUT: COURTYARD

FADE IN:

2 EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Their conversation continues from their location, a side street in a Mexican tourist City filled with colorful shops

and vendors and tourists. Radios blast Mexican Mariachi and American Rock and Roll classics (Eagles, Rod Stewart, Credence, etc). It is late afternoon and the sun is just setting. From a tourist POV the sights on the street pass by at eye-level and the voice-over conversation in progress continues without revealing the two speakers.

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)

(Continues rambling
with enthusiasm)

I am going to research our *Salsa Infernal*-- love that name-- and write a fascinating cross-cultural piece about the people who make it, and of course where it's made. We can take lots of pictures and maybe we do a short history of the place. Then we can publish the recipe...

JEFFREY (V.O.)

(Interrupting)

Whoa, slow down, pard'nah. Which "we" are you referring to? You got a mouse in your handbag? And besides, it won't be that easy. So far you've already asked a dozen local people about this salsa and no one seems to know a thing. Where it's produced is a total mystery. Instead, how about writing a feature on a Tequila factory? That would be a practical choice. We could get mildly wasted doing booze research instead of playing private detective. Why is choosing a practical project so difficult?

CELIA JAMES

(Wistfully)

I guess I'm just not a practical girl, Jeffrey. But isn't that why you love me so much? And you said the magic word yourself--*mystery*. I love playing the detective. We can be Nick and Nora Charles, like in the old detective films. And of course, we'll need a cute little dog.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. SAME STREET -- CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON BACK OF JEFFREY AND CELIA'S HEADS

The speakers, CELIA JAMES and JEFFREY JAMES are visible from behind as they walk through the crowded sidewalk. They are dressed in shorts and colorful t-shirts.

Celia has a CORONA BEER logo on the back of hers. They are identified as the speakers by their gestures as their conversation continues.

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

Cute little dog, eh? How about a little Great Dane? We can name it Hamlet. Nick Charles? Isn't he the skinny, pretentious, stuffed shirt detective? I know, I'll be James Bond and we'll enlist Jane Seymour as my assistant.

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)

No, no James Bond, no Jane Seymour. It's Nick Charles unless you prefer Sherlock Holmes or Inspector Clouseau. I know--How about Philip Marlowe? He could get tough on your sister and convince her to let me write the feature article.

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

(faking a tough-guy voice)

Philip Marlowe, yeah, I like that persona better. I've got some Bogart in me, you know. A real tough character, that Marlowe.

(Coming back to reality)

But wait a second. I'm not agreeing to be your co-detective.

CELIA JAMES

We can talk about it at dinner.

JEFFREY JAMES

I do hope we can get through tonight's dinner without you and my sister talking *the magazine* the whole evening. She takes up most of the conversation anyway. She can be quite overbearing at times.

CELIA JAMES

(sarcastically)

You really think so?

JEFFREY JAMES

Really, I sometimes wish you'd never gone to work for her. I think you're too good a writer for her pretentious *Great Lakes Epicure* magazine and besides that, she underpays you.

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)
 (She is accustomed
 to his back-handed
 compliments and
 affectionately
 rebuts his comments)

Of course I'm going to talk shop with her. When she gets a little drunk, it takes the edge off her arrogance; she's easier to deal with. And by the way, I might enjoy writing about food--if I every get the chance. I'll write my great novel after we win the lottery or they make you Chancellor of the University. For now, I want to write about our local mystery salsa. It might be too far out for Janice. You know what she's like. I'll need to bait her into letting me do it. A few piña coladas will help. And you'll need to lean on her too, Mr. Philip Marlowe.

FADE TO:

4 EXT. SAME STREET -- CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON JEFFREY AND CELIA'S FACES

The faces of the speakers are now visible as they walk along. Celia is brunette, pretty, with medium build, in her late-20s. She is perky, quirky, quick-witted and moves through her up-and-down moods quickly. Jeffrey is in his 40s, thin, graying and balding, with the demeanor of a Cary Grant or Gregory Peck college professor. He speaks like an academic, pedantically, and at times verging on pomposity. He wants to be perceived as just a regular guy, but can't quite pull it off.

JEFFREY JAMES
 (In his *Marlowe*
 voice)

Soften her up with booze, eh? You are a clever devil, and a pretty babe too.

(In his normal voice)
 I'd hate to see the last few days of our vacation evaporate into a work project. Your feature story could turn you into the Incredible Invisible Woman who ignored her loving husband.

CELIA JAMES
 Me? Invisible? No way!
 (MORE)

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

How could I ignore you when I'm counting on your help every step of the way. This will be OUR project.

Jeffery gets a worried look and shakes his head on hearing this.

DISSOLVE TO:

5 INT. CONVENTION HALL -- EVENING

The hall is a huge space with high ceilings. Tables are set up with signs designating the firms represented. The signs include: *General Foods, DelMonte, Heinz, World Epicure, Red Book, Cuisine*, etc.

6 INT. CONVENTION HALL JANICE'S TABLE-- CONTINUOUS

Celia's sister-in-law, JANICE LAROUSSE, has a small table with promotional materials and copies of her magazine displayed. She sits at the table in a queen-on-the-throne manner and answers questions as others drift from table to table. She is in her 40's but made up and dressed in an attempt to look younger. She has a slightly aggressive demeanor. She is speaking with ALAN OSMAN, a handsome, well-dressed man in a business suit. Celia is standing near by, shuffling brochures and tidying up the table. There is a sign on a stand that identifies her magazine as *The Great Lakes Epicure*.

ALAN OSMAN

Yes, Mrs. Larousse, I'm one of Allied's junior vice presidents. Quite a title, vice president. It's not a big deal. They gave me the title as a substitute for a raise and to pile on more work. I've heard good things about *The Great Lakes Epicure* and looked at a few issues.

JANICE LAROUSSE

You've read our magazine?
Wonderful! I'm sooo glad you stopped by our booth Mr. Osman. Our reader base is growing steadily and we'd love to run a spot featuring your product line.

ALAN OSMAN

(taking some brochures from her)
We do lots of advertising. *The Great Lakes Epicure* might be just the kind of publication we
(MORE)

ALAN OSMAN (CONT'D)
 need for our mid-west division.
 I'll pass these on to our Chicago
 promotions office.

JANICE LAROUSSE
 Thank you Mr. Osman. We do look
 forward to working with Allied.

ALAN OSMAN
 Please call me Alan.
 (He examines her
 name tag)
 May I call you Janice? And is
 that your assistant?

He indicates Celia, who is across their display table. She
 is chatting with a plump little man with a pineapple-
 decorated shirt.

JANICE LAROUSSE
 Oh yes.
 (She beckons Celia
 into the
 conversation.)
 This is Celia. Celia, this is Mr.
 Osman, from Allied Foods. Celia
 is my research coordinator, co-
 editor and a great feature writer
 to boot.

ALAN OSMAN
 (He finds her
 attractive.)
 I'm very pleased to meet you, Celia.
 I've read a few issues of your
 magazine. Which articles did you
 write?

CELIA JAMES
 (playing up to his
 flirtation)
 Oh I've been on administrative
 leave the last few issues, Mr.
 Osman, doing research on the
 continent for some future feature
 stories, right Janice? Travel can
 be so tedious, but I do love it.
 (Janice gives her a
 stern look)

ALAN OSMAN
 Please, call me Alan. You enjoy
 travel? Me too! That's why I'm
 here at this convention. We need
 good promo writers at Allied.
 Maybe I can steal you away. Who
 knows, they might start you off as
 a Junior Vice President.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(Cutting him off)

Not a chance. I'm afraid Celia is an important part of our family business, right, sis?

She calls her sister-in-law "sis" and Alan assumes they are actually siblings.

CELIA JAMES

Right, of course, the *family business*. But you never can tell; if the right offer came along, I might be tempted, SIS.

(She glares at Janice through a forced smile)

Jeffrey and ALEX LAROUSSE, Janice's husband, have wandered through the crowd and arrive at the table, interrupting the conversation. Alex is a large, awkwardly handsome man wearing a garish tropical shirt. His voice is loud, sincere, and at times overly theatrical. He has a Texas accent.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Hi there Honey bunch. How's my sweet señorita doing? Are you collecting clients like ripe coconuts off a tree?

JANICE LAROUSSE

(trying to conceal her irritation)

Oh hi, sweetie. Have you two boys been behaving? Alan, this is my husband, Alex and my brother, Jeffery.

The crowd becomes aware of an announcement being made over the P.A. system.

ALAN OSMAN

More of the family? Pleased to meet you both. Forgive me Janice. I should get back to my table. I think the big farewell speeches are about to start. We don't want to miss any awe-inspiring messages. And a real pleasure to meet you, Celia,

(he is unaware that Jeffrey is her husband, assuming he is her brother)

I hope we meet again, soon.

CELIA JAMES

(In a sweet voice)

Oh yes. You never know. Pleased to meet you too, Alan.

Jeffrey gives her the mock evil eye. Alan wanders off into the crowd.

JEFFREY JAMES
(mimicking his wife)
You never know. Pleased to meet
you too, Alan.

CELIA JAMES
(hugging Jeffrey)
It's just business and schmoozing,
right, Janice?

JANICE LAROUSSE
That's right, and you with your
"administrative leave, doing research
on the continent". What an
imagination you have--when it suits
you.

(Over the P.A. system
announcements are
being made)
Let's hush up and pay attention.

JEFFREY JAMES
(muttering to Celia
under his breath
and affectionately
pinching her ear)
Just schmoozing indeed. I'll
schmooze you.

7 INT. CONVENTION HALL -- CONTINUOUS

The entire hall is visible. It is a large hall with a podium/platform set up at the far end. The main speaker is starting his speech, as the view wanders from table to table revealing the different products, some unusual (health tonics, jicama jam, radicchio shampoo, aloe vera spaghetti sauce, etc). We see the Allied Foods booth where Alan Osman sits with his colleagues, all of them looking pretty much alike. Other tables are filled with vendors and magazine publishers.

A banner hung from above reads "Specialty Foods of Mexico". Name brand Mexican foods are displayed and there is a large table filled with different award-winning salsas. A closer view reveals the bottles have ribbons tied around them, some yellow, some red, some blue. Prominent among the blue-ribbon salsas is a bottle of *Salsa Infernal*.

8 INT. CONVENTIONS HALL -- JANICE'S TABLE -- CONTINUOUS

Back at their table, Jeffrey and Celia are trying to appear interested but are but not really paying attention. Jeffrey is tickling Celia's waist. Alex looks bored (thinking about dinner and drinks). Janice smiles a phony smile and looks like she is paying complete attention to the speaker.

SPEAKER 1 (O.S.)

Damas y Caballeros, Ladies and Gents. Well it looks like our big food fiesta is finally coming to a close. We've all had fun meeting with each other and evaluating the important fruits of the past week: our sunburns, headaches... visa bills and hangovers.

(laughter)

We gathered in this lovely place to share ideas, make contacts, sign contracts, and have a little fun. I know all of you represent an array of excellent companies and I hope you come away from this year's convention with many new food product ideas and recipes from our wonderful neighbor south of the border.

Jeffrey continues secretly tickling Celia's waist and she is trying not to giggle.

ANGLE ON CELIA AND JEFFREY

CELIA JAMES

(whispering)

Jeffrey, will you stop it?

JEFFREY JAMES

(His voice a little above a whisper)

I'm not Jeffrey, I'm 007 and You're Natasha. Let's skip dinner and go back to the hotel for a little undercover work.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Will you two PLEASE behave.

SPEAKER 1

. . .and so I thank you all again for coming this year, and now I invite you to enjoy one last meal together tonight at Paco Rodriguez's wonderful restaurant. Adios amigos and Buen Provecho and Bon Appétit. *Enjoy, folks!*

Jeffrey, stands close behind Celia. Her expression indicates Jeffrey's tickling has gone out of bounds and she turns and pretends to gently slap his face.

CELIA JAMES

(smiling)

Bad boy!

DISSOLVE TO:

9 INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Within a large Mexican restaurant a neon sign flashes "Casa Rodriguez". It is crowded and noisy. The owner, Paco Rodriguez is behind the bar talking with his waiter, Carlos, who awaits his drink order. They speak in Spanish with English sub-titles.

CARLOS

Lo que una multitud! Me alegraré cuando se hayan ido. [What a crowd! I'll be glad when they are gone]

PACO

Hemos hecho un buen dinero pero necesitamos un descanso. [We've made good money but we need a rest.] Preguntas a las mesas si quieren mas bebidas. [Check on tables and see if they need more drinks.]

He hands Carlos a tray of drinks across the bar.

PACO (CONT'D)

Lleva estas bebidas a la mesa Larousse. [Take these to the Larousse table.] El Señor Larousse es un amigo mio. [Mr. Larousse is a friend of mine.]

CUT TO:

10 INT. PACO'S RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

A small combo plays Latin American music on a stage in the corner. There is a table where Celia, Jeffery, Janice and Alex are finishing dinner and are having drinks. They are all moderately tipsy.

The two women are having a pleasant, but animated discussion. The two men are placidly sitting back sipping drinks and watching their wives with detached disinterest. The waiter, Carlos, has just served them fresh drinks.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Carlos, what a fine dinner! Tell the folks in the kitchen grass-ee-ass.

(carlos leaves)

Let's toast to more leisure time and lots of money; and to my darling wife and her gastronomic magazine that's paying for our spicy vacation. And also to her able and beautiful assistant.

(MORE)

ALEX LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

(He leers at Celia,
then at Jeffery)

And to Jeffery's College for giving
him an escape from his stuffy old
lecturing.

JEFFREY JAMES

(sarcastically)

Thank you too much Alex, I need a
break from the ivy-covered prison
from time to time--away from all
that very stuffy stuff indeed.
And I agree with you, Celia is
beautiful and quite talented too.

He hugs Celia. They toast and drink. Celia picks up a
small bottle of salsa from the table.

CELIA JAMES

Janice, are you up for some shop-
talk? I have an great idea for
the magazine--a feature article.

Janice looks at the two men with a here-we-go-again
expression.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Another great Idea? You and your
great ideas--O.K. what is it this
time?...and I'm not sending you to
Paris.

CELIA JAMES

Will you listen, please. You'll
like this one--it's an exposé--
ready? "Uncovering the Secrets of
Mexico's Mystery Salsa".

JANICE LAROUSSE

(laughing
condescendingly)

Celia, I swear you have ten great
ideas a day for feature articles.
Mystery salsa? Why on earth would
that interest our readers? But go
ahead, tell me what the great idea
is THIS TIME.

CELIA JAMES

(Holding up the
bottle of Salsa
Infernál)

We all agree. This is a great
salsa picante, Salsa Infernál,
one of the best, when you can find
it.

(MORE)

ANGLE ON HOT SAUCE BOTTLE--LABEL READS "SALSA INFERNÁL"
 PASTED OVER A SMALL CORONA BEER BOTTLE

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

(She speaks in the
 tone of one giving
 a formal
 presentation)

Please to note the re-used mini
 Corona bottles--a clever and unique
 marketing feature. This product
 beats the commercial salsas hands
 down. Just a taste convinces you.
 A careful balance of sweetness,
 spices and acidity and hot?...like
 an inferno. But the thing that is
 most intriguing is that it's so
 hard to find--I've only seen it in
 a few out-of-the way markets, the
 little stores--*tiendas*--never in
 the big *supermercados*.

(She is a little
 drunk)

I mean this is really rare stuff,
 I mean *REALLY* rare...and I want to
 write a feature story on it...the
 history, the people, where it's
 made ...even the recipe. Everyone
 with me still? What do you think,
 Janice?

JANICE LAROUSSE

(laughing and shaking
 her head, but
 nevertheless
 interested)

I have to admit, it's not a half
 bad idea. If you were truly a
 seasoned writer, I'd say "go for
 it". A feature on the manufacture
 of a rare Mexican hot sauce in our
 next issue might make an real
 interesting piece.

(now condescendingly)

But really Celia, you don't have
 the experience necessary to tackle
 this kind of thing. I've visited
 Mexico on and off for years and
 I'd say forget it; you'll never
 get the story. It's impossible.
 These people don't like Americans
 in the first place and you don't
 even speak the language.

CELIA JAMES

But Janice...

JANICE LAROUSSE

(Cutting Celia off)

And by the way I already know a thing or two about Salsa Infernal.

(She will continually mispronounce the word *infernal*, placing the accent on the second syllable.)

It's some kind of local joke. The so-called MYSTERY is just a promotional scam. No one seems to know where it comes from, but I'll tell you, they really do. They're just not telling. It's made by some big outfit right here or in Guadalajara.

Carlos, the waiter/bartender comes to the table.

CARLOS

Can I bring you more drinks Señores? Coffee? More Margaritas?

They look at one another waiting for someone to take responsibility for ordering one more round. It falls to Jeffrey.

JEFFREY JAMES

No gracias, Carlos.

(to the others)

Let's not over do it. It's getting late. I think we should call it a night.

CELIA JAMES

(Interrupting her husband)

Oh Jeffy, just relax.

(She shakes her finger at him disparagingly)

Sure, Carlos, one more round. We ARE on vacation aren't we?

The others are grateful, reflected in their expressions, except for Jeffrey who, out-voted, looks away. Carlos starts to leave.

CARLOS

Muy bien.

CELIA JAMES

Wait. *Momentaco* Carlos. We have a question for you.

JEFFREY JAMES

(to himself)

Momentaco?

CARLOS

Yes, señora. How can I help you?

She looks at the others and lifts the bottle of salsa toward Carlos

CELIA JAMES

Do you know where this salsa is made? The label has little information. It says only "El Tesoro de Cielo Azul". This salsa is very hard to find.

Janice smiles a smirky smile and shakes her head. Carlos looks nervously away.

CARLOS

Salsa Infernál is very good salsa, and yes, is hard to find. *El Tesoro de Cielo Azul* means *The Treasure of Blue Sky*. It is only find in very small quantities. Our restaurant is fortunate to have purchased a few bottles.

CELIA JAMES

But Where does it come from? Who makes it?

CARLOS

(looking blank,
shrugs evasively)

Some say it made in a little village in the mountains someplace to the south, Maybe. I am no sure. I don't know this place, *Cielo Azul*.

Alex raises his glass to toast.

ALEX LAROUSSE

There, you see, Janice, Celia is already hot on the trail. She'll find it. I say let her go for it, right Jeff?

JANICE LAROUSSE

(contemptuously)

She certainly is doing better than your law practice, Alex. *Cielo Azuool* indeed. I'll bet it doesn't even exist.

(she picks up the
salsa bottle)

Some local people make it right here in their back yard. Isn't that right, Carlos?

CELIA JAMES

What do you think, Carlos?

Carlos is anxious to remove himself from this dispute and backs away. He is tired of tourists and their questions.

CARLOS

I do not know. It is no make here.

(He laughs nervously)

It is only a bottle of salsa. What is the importance where it is made? I tell you when a little village make such a product it becomes the TREASURE of the community. It is very precious to them. You come later when the owner, Señor Rodriguez, is finish work. Maybe he know more about it. I get you drinks now.

He leaves.

ALEX LAROUSSE

(He is drunk,
slurring his words
slightly and leering
at Celia.)

Rodriguez? Paco Rodriguez? I know Paco well... One of my closest friends. He's owned this joint for years. Before that he ran a string of taco stands. Mystery salsa? The treasure of the community? Ha ha! That's a good one. Ha ha! Hell, we make better salsa than this in Texas. Treasure of the community? Pretty girls and good tequila--those are real treasures down here.

JANICE LAROUSSE

The only treasures in Texas are inflated egos and bragging lawyers.
(sarcastically)
One of your closest friends, ha!

ALEX LAROUSSE

(ignoring his wife)

You know Jeff, your wife likes a challenge and a mystery. She has a bit of sleuth in her. How about it Celia--you want to give up writing to become a food detective? You can specialize in finding missing salsas and delinquent enchiladas. Ha ha ha! Felonious Fajitas.

Celia looks at Alex with affection. She sees his good intentions under the facade of his buffoonery. Jeffrey does not, resenting his boorish manner.

JEFFREY JAMES

(In Celia's defense)

I'm confident that Celia could write a fine mystery novel if she wanted to. Her writing is always insightful and clear and she works hard at it. And by the way Alex, how's your law practice doing these days? You never seem to be very busy with it. That could be a mystery plot for you--The Case of the Missing Clients? Or is it the Missing Attorney?

Alex looks away and sulks

CELIA JAMES

(to Jeffrey)

My hero.

(She kisses him on the cheek and addresses Alex)

Yes, Alex, I'd like being a P.I. In fact all good writers AND lawyers are detectives; you know that. And I'm ready right now to take on the Case of the Mystery Salsa.

(defiantly to Janice)

I'll bet you I can find the source of the mystery salsa and interview the makers and even get the recipe.

Celia has suddenly become very sober and serious. Jeffrey shakes his head and smiles. Janice looks nervous. Alex has withdrawn to avoid confrontation and further discussion of his neglected law practice.

JANICE LAROUSSE

OK sis, what will you bet me?

Carlos returns with a tray of drinks.

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

I bet you won't even find the Cielo *Whatever* town.

The two women are eye-to-eye serious now.

CELIA JAMES

(assertively)

Oh yeah? Before this vacation ends, you'll be eating humble pie.

JEFFREY JAMES

You mean *tamale* pie. Hey you two, this is getting ridiculous. We only have a week left on this so-called vacation and I plan to enjoy myself.

CELIA JAMES
 (ignoring Jeffrey,
 she speaks
 emphatically)

O.K, sis, here's my bet. If I find the village and bring photos of the stuff being made as proof, then you buy us dinner at the swankiest club in the city PLUS you publish my feature article in our next issue and give me one feature per issue from now on. If I fail, then I'll buy dinner and I promise never to whine about writing feature stories again. Deal?

The two men exchange glances with mild astonishment. Janice is trapped. She lifts her glass. She looks at each of them. There is no way for her to back down from the bet.

JANICE LAROUSSE
 You're on honey! Let's drink to it!

Jeffrey looks at Alex, who shrugs. As the two women clink their glasses across the table, the band plays a loud and lively song. The bottle *Salsa Infernal* is dominantly centered on the table.

DISOLVE TO:

11 INT. TOURIST OFFICE -- MORNING

There is a counter with brochures and many travel posters on one wall. The owner of the travel agency, Gerardo, is working with some clients. His daughter, bright-eyed and precocious Inés, age 14, is on her break from a private boarding school in San Diego, California. She is doing some kind of clerical paper work at a desk against the far wall. She keeps an eye on what transpires at the counter. A few tourists mill about. Gerardo is just finishing answering some questions with a younger tourist couple. His name tag says "Jerry". Celia and Jeffrey are waiting their turn.

JEFFREY JAMES
 (To Celia)
 No one has been very helpful so far. You've asked at least twenty people about *Cielo Azul* and all we get is blank stares and vague speculation. Our salsa doesn't seem to be made anywhere. Could it be made in China?

CELIA JAMES

Don't be such a spoilsport.

(she gives him an affectionate hug)

We just haven't asked the right people yet. And two of the people we asked DID have some ideas about where it comes from.

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, one said it was in the north, on the coast, and the other said it was inland to the west and let's not forget Carlos. He said the Southern Mountains. That really pins it to the map.

GERARDO is free and beckons to them.

GERARDO

(Gerardo speaks perfect English, educated at UCLA)

Mr. and Mrs.--James, isn't it? Nice to see you again. How can I help you?

JEFFREY JAMES

Hi, Jerry. I wonder if you could help with a little problem we're having. My lovely wife thinks she can...

CELIA JAMES

(interrupting)

We have heard of a quaint little village in the mountains. It's called *Cielo Azul* and we want to visit there. Could you give us directions?

The agent picks up a large directory and thumbs through it.

GERARDO

Cielo Azúl...are you sure about the name? It sounds familiar. I think I might have heard of such a town, but it is quite far from here--on the Caribbean coast, near Cancún.

CELIA JAMES

(incredulous)

Cancún?

Jeffrey elbows Celia and she elbows him back. Gerardo finds the pages where the town might be listed and shakes his head.

GERARDO

No, it is not listed in our state directory. There is a *Mesa Azul* and a *Playa Azul*. Sometimes smaller neighborhoods--barrios--are given names by the local people. These places may have dirt roads and some can only be reached by foot paths. They are not even on the maps. The people in such areas are not familiar with tourists. It is not wise for outsiders to go to these barrios.

Jeffery gives Celia a knowing I-told-you-so Look.

CELIA JAMES

Do you mean it could be dangerous? We only want to visit. We are trying to find where they make a salsa, our favorite one, *Salsa Infernal*. Surely there are police even in remote villages.

Inés has been listening to the conversation from her table and walks over to join her father at the counter.

INÉS

The police are not always reliable. A few are even dishonest. Would you trust the police in small rural town in Alabama or Mississippi? Remember the movie *Easy Rider*? What about *Mississippi Burning*?

Celia and Jeffrey are surprised by her comments.

GERARDO

(Embarrassed that his young daughter has interrupted)

Inés, please do not interrupt.
(To Jeffrey and Celia)

She attends a private school in San Diego and she thinks she knows everything.

INÉS

Not true, Father, I am learning a great deal at my school, but not everything. I'm still working on the *everything*.

GERARDO

Then go back to the table and learn more about sorting the invoices, please, mi tesoro.

(MORE)

GERARDO (CONT'D)
 (to Jeffrey and
 Celia)

She is just 14, but thinks she is 25. And, to answer your question, there is usually one police official or constable in small villages or an *alcalde*--mayor. They may be the same person. But there are few accommodations with swimming pools and 4-star restaurants.

CELIA JAMES
 What about the Salsa--*Salsa*
Infernál?

GERARDO
 Yes, excellent salsa. It probably is made in small quantities in some village. But you must respect the privacy of these small villages. Sometimes they make art, jewelry, or clothing and even *salsas*. Their products are precious to the town, they are...the *treasures of the community*. It is a tradition with such communities.
 (Celia and Jeffrey
 exchange glances)

Other tourists are waiting for the agent.

CELIA JAMES
 Well thank you for trying.
 (to Jeffrey)
 Looks like another dead end, Mr. Marlowe.

GERARDO
 One moment. I will give you the name of a person who might help you. She is my aunt. Her name is Carmen Luz. She has lived in this area longer than I and she speaks excellent English. You will find her interesting. Her people in Spain were gypsies.

He writes it down and hands them the note.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
 She lives in the house at the end of *Calle Buena Esperanza*. I'm sorry I can't be of more help. Good luck to you. Adios

CELIA JAMES
 Gracias, Jerry, adios.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. OUTSIDE TOURIST OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

They exit into a busy, dusty street outside the travel agency. The sun is high and blinding.

JEFFREY JAMES

The treasure of the community...
How many times have we heard that phrase? Well, what now, kiddo? Do we get to eat lunch in a swanky waterfront bistro or are we off to some dark alley to find the mysterious gypsy woman, Carmen? Think "vacation" will you?

CELIA JAMES

Yes, *vacation* and I'll bet there is a great little restaurant on Calle Buena *Disperanza*. We can eat there and then talk with Carmen.

Inés appears from the travel agency and approaches them.

INÉS

Mr. and Mrs James? I am Inés. I can show you the way to Carmen's house. I have visited her before. She is my great aunt. She actually comes from Spain. She's got a cool house and wait 'til you see her garden. I will be your guide. My rates are reasonable.

Jeffrey and Celia exchange puzzled looks.

JEFFREY JAMES

Rates? We are poor tourists. Thank you, Inés, for the offer. We'll get by with our tourist map.

INÉS

(assertively)

Maps are not accurate. You'll end up getting lost. I know the back streets and the shortcuts. I'll show you for no charge. How 'bout it?

CELIA JAMES

(to Jeffrey)

We can use a little help. Why not?

(to Inés)

Very pleased to meet you Inés. I'm Celia and he is Jeffrey. What about your work? Your father will be angry if you leave your invoices? Don't you attend school?

INÉS

I am on my school break. I need to get away from filing invoices and from my dad. He won't mind. He's used to my wandering. I do what I want to as long as I don't get busted for drugs and thrown in the joint.

JEFFREY JAMES

The Joint? You seem to know quite a few American slang words.

INÉS

You betcha, bub. I watch a lot of American movies--the old black-and-white gangster flicks. I've seen most of them twice. You know the ones I mean--*Public Enemy*, *Petrified Forest*, *Little Caesar*, films with Cagney, Bogey, Edward G...I've seen them all.

CELIA JAMES

Well here we have found the perfect coach for you Mr. Marlowe.

(to Inés)

Jeffrey is also Philip Marlowe, you know, the notorious movie P.I.

JEFFREY JAMES

(taking on an Edward G. persona)

Coach? What are you a wise guy? I work alone see...yeah, alone. The babe can tag along as long as she can throw a mean left hook.

(resuming his normal voice)

What about the restaurant on the beach with the *langostinas*? I was looking forward to an afternoon reading my book with my two girl friends, Margarita One and Margarita Two.

CELIA JAMES

Sorry, the girls have to wait. We can kick back right after we talk to Carmen.

(to Inés, She wants Jeffrey to be outvoted)

Don't you agree, Inés?

INÉS

(She realizes she
can be informal
with them)

Celia's right, Jeffrey-I mean
Marlowe. We should make our move
now.

JEFFREY JAMES

(In a rough Marlowe
voice)

No deal yooze guys! It's late,
I'm hungry, I need a drink and
swim in the surf. I say we meet
here tomorrow at nine.

He looks to Celia for approval. Celia gives a subtle nod to
Inés.

INÉS

O.K. You got it. I'll meet you
here. Don't be late. I'll be
your point man. And remember,
pack a piece.

Jeffrey looks quizzically at Celia as they leave.

JEFFREY JAMES

What do you make of her? She's
quite a character. Pack a piece?
She was kidding, right? I wonder
why she wants to help us?

CELIA JAMES

I wonder the same thing. She seems
a little hardened for her age but
I like her. Maybe she's lonely or
just bored. Who knows? Add her
to our list of mysteries.

FADE TO

13 INT. BEACH PALAPA -- AFTERNOON

Janice and Alex are sitting at the resort in beach chairs
in the shade of the palapa facing the water. A young woman
vender selling jewelry approaches them.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(to Alex)

This stupid bet has me worried.
What if Celia actually pulls it
off?

WOMAN VENDER

You buy some pretty earrings for
your beautiful wife?

ALEX LAROUSSE

(startled, appraising
her appearance)

Oh, yes...I mean...er--maybe.
Let's see what you got there? How
do you know she's my wife anyway?
She could be a girl friend.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(Ignoring the vender)

Why do you have to always start up
with these people, Alex? They
don't have time for your nonsense.
You know damn well I don't need
any more earrings.

The vender, ignoring Janice, stands by patiently, as Alex
and Janice debate.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Why honey, these poor folks love
to chat with us *greeengos*. Isn't
that right, Maria?

He winks at the vender.

WOMAN VENDER

"Chat?" I do not know what is
"Chat" señor. My name is *Nadia*.
(holding out a
necklace)

I have lovely necklace for your
movie-star girl friend. Look, it
is real silver.

ALEX LAROUSSE

There, you see honey. Nah-jah
thinks you are a movie star. We
HAVE to buy something from her.

JANICE LAROUSSE

I'll decide how you spend my money,
honey, if you don't mind. Maybe
she needs some legal advice from a
cracker jack Texas lawyer. Don't
forget to ask her for a large
retainer.

(To the vender)

How about it sweetie, need a lawyer?

The vender frowns in reaction to Janice's rudeness, but
ignores her.

WOMAN VENDER

You are a powerful lawyer, señor?
Then for you, I show you something
special. I have some beautiful
golden earrings for your wife.
They are in the shape of little
salsa bottles.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Salsa bottles? Good God no! No thank you. Please GO AWAY, ciao, adios, au revoiree!

ALEX LAROUSSE

(contrite--to Nadia)

I'm sorry. We don't want any of your beautiful things today. Thank you anyway.

(beat)

Tell me, how do you know she's my wife?

WOMAN VENDER

(With guarded contempt)

I know because she speaks to you with such love and respect as only an American wife has for her husband.

(then with a perfect French accent)

Alors, Au Revoir, à bientôt.

She gives Janice a hard, knowing look and leaves. Janice gets up from the recliner.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Au Revoir? Was she sarcastic just now? Did she insult me? Does she even understand "sarcasm"? Our money puts tortillas on her table. Let's get out of here. We need to work out a plan to torpedo my junior writer/wanabe detective and her over-educated husband.

14 EXT. SAME BEACH --CONTINUOUS--

They walk down the beach. There are children in the water; speed boats tow airborne people on kites; Mexican fishermen are tending their pangas, as Alex and Janice wade along the beach.

JANICE LAROUSSE

We'll have a little fun with them; send them on a wild goose chase. I have a few ideas to trip them up.

ALEX LAROUSSE

I don't see what all the fuss is about. Suppose she does find the what-ever-it's-called salsa? Big deal. We take'm out to dinner and she gets to write her story.

JANICE LAROUSSE

You just don't get it. If she wins, it means I lose and she'll gloat. She'll throw it in my face and as you may know after 12 years of being married to me, I hate being wrong. Celia and her Masters Degree in Literature. What does she have to show for it? Like that makes her hot stuff. And I'd have to let her write a feature story every new issue.

ALEX LAROUSSE

But, honey, that's why you hired her in the first place, to write magazine stories. Why not let her do her thing? She may surprise you.

JANICE LAROUSSE

I HATE surprises. I hired her because my brother pestered me into it. I hired her to fetch coffee, empty the waste basket and correct the spelling errors on MY feature stories. Let's get back to my plan. Here's what I want you to do. Go to that travel agent, you know, Jerry, in the main plaza. Celia probably went there first. She knows the he speaks perfect English. Find out if he's told them anything. If they have any real leads, I want to get there first. Then there's your *close friend* Paco Rodriguez. I'm sure they will go back to the restaurant to question him. You get to him first and offer to ...

Their dialogue drifts off as they walk off down the beach, Alex looking uncomfortable with Janice's plan.

DISSOLVE
TO:

15 INT. HOTEL SUITE -- LATE EVENING

Celia is in a sexy robe and Jeffrey wears conservative pajamas. They are in the living room of their resort suite seated on a couch looking out toward their balcony.

CELIA JAMES

I think we're making some progress. Thank you for helping. I know you really aren't into this *salsa* thing. It's a screwy idea.

(MORE)

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

We can call it off if you like.
I'll get another chance for a
feature story eventually.

Jeffrey cuddles up to her

JEFFREY JAMES

Are you kidding? Cealy, if it
wasn't for you I'd be lost in books
for my whole life. You've saved
me from becoming one of the world's
greatest bores. I might have made
the Guinness Book of Records. You
put a little pizzazz in things.
Besides we have *that lead to follow*.
Find Carmen the gypsy lady on what's-
it street. Philip Marlowe is on
the move. Count me in, dollface!

She hugs him. As they continue their dialogue, a montage
of clips reflects the narration.

CUT TO:

16 MONTAGE CELIA'S BACKSTORY -- CONTINUOUS

Series of clips of Jeffrey's college classroom, Jeffrey
trying to lecture, Celia making wisecracks, class responds
by laughter, Jeffrey smiles at his student, Jeffrey kissing
student (Celia) after class. (Insert clips as appropriate
to Celia's speech.)

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)

You are so patient with me. I
know that I'm not the perfect,
demure and reasonable mate.
Remember how I pestered you in the
classroom? You put up with my
interruptions and wise-ass remarks.
And remember that first kiss in
your classroom? I had such a crush
on you, Professor Jeffrey James.
You tolerated all my quirky moods
and arrogance. Why were you even
attracted to me?

CUT TO:

17 BACK TO SCECNE -- CONTINUOUS

JEFFREY JAMES

That's easy--because you were
beautiful and sexy, just like you
are now.

CELIA JAMES

You told me it was my INTELLECT that you admired, you fraud. You were the one person who cheered me on me when I really needed it. I would never have decided to become a writer without your encouragement. I don't think I've ever told you this, but before taking your class, I really lacked self-confidence. Nobody, including my family, expected me to achieve anything grand or wonderful. You had high expectations and pushed me hard. I guess I still haven't done much of anything.

JEFFREY JAMES

My sweet Celia, you have so much talent and energy. You won that award for that great short story...What was the title? *Long Journey, Small Steps*. I loved it and I was very proud of you. You have plenty of time to prove yourself, if that's what you need to do...and I believe you will.

CELIA JAMES

(emphatically)

Prove myself? Yes, but *Long Journey, Short Steps* was suppose to be a complete Novel. The short story was just the first chapter. I simply stalled and couldn't finish it. I just want to follow through on one project to the end; I want to feel like I've actually done something that's meaningful and significant. Is that asking so much? Anyway, for now, I really want to at least show your sister what I am all about and this silly bet is my chance.

They rise to walk out onto their balcony

18 EXT. HOTEL SUITE ON BALCONY -- CONTINUOUS

Seven floors down below are the resort grounds with several swimming pools and palm-covered bars and manicured lawns. Through a giant stucco archway the beach and surf are visible just outside the resort. Soft colored lights illuminate the scene. Jeffery and Celia gaze out over this romantic vista. They are hugging each other tightly.

JEFFREY JAMES

So tomorrow we'll find Carmen and
unravel the mystery AND then find
a good lobster restaurant.

CELIA JAMES

I hope we learn something. And
remember we also need to talk to
the owner of the restaurant. The
waiter said he might be able to
help us find *Cielo Azul*.

JEFFREY JAMES

Right, Paco...Paco Rodriguez.
Let's put it all aside until
tomorrow and enjoy the night.
(he caresses her
hair)

Smell that air--the southern sea
in bloom blessing us with sensuous
scents of passion. How's that for
poetic? Look at this view. What
could possibly be more beautiful?

Celia looks into his eyes, smiles, then looks over her
shoulder back into their suite. Jeffrey raises his eyebrows
and smiles. They leave the balcony, go inside and draw the
shades. The lights inside go dim.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. NARROW STREET -- MID-MORNING NEXT DAY

The street is dark from a lush canopy of trees above and on
both sides are stucco houses, once expensive, now rundown,
overgrown with foliage. Inés is leading Jeffrey and Celia.
They look like the *Lions and Tigers and Bears* scene from
the Wizard of Oz. Celia and Jeffrey are looking at a street
sign that reads "Calle Nueva Esperanza Sin Salida". They
approach a drunken man who lurches into them. His clothes
are torn and grimy and he smells of liquor and urine. He
swears at them in Spanish and blocks their way.

DRUNK

Hey! Gringos! Estrañeros! No
welcome to me street. Get out!

The drunk gestures with his hand that they should go back
in the direction they came from. He staggers forward a few
steps and they move back.

JEFFREY JAMES

(Speaking in a mild,
rational voice)

I beg your pardon. We are on our
way to see someone who lives...

DRUNK
 (Cuts Jeffrey off.
 and moves a step
 toward Jeffrey who
 backs off)
 Quitate! You no pass!

CELIA JAMES
 Inés, what does he want? Talk to
 him.

INÉS
 He's just a drunk, angry at the
 world.

She walks up to the drunk and speaks in a whisper to him.
 He suddenly moves aside and stumbles quickly past them.

CELIA JAMES
 What did you say to him? It sure
 worked.

INÉS
 I told him Jeffrey had a gun and
 would blow his brains out if he
 didn't get out of our way.

JEFFREY JAMES
 Quite a subtle finesse, a very
 good tactic. But you frightened
 the poor fellow. Perhaps he might
 have directed us to *Cielo Azul*.

CELIA JAMES
 (Looking at the
 street sign)
 This is the street. Let's keep
 going. Inés, what does "sin salida"
 mean?

INÉS
 It means the street ends and there
 is no other way out.

JEFFREY JAMES
 (Mumbling to himself)
 Or in other words, "dead end", which
 translates "turn around, get the
 hell out of here and go to the
 great restaurant on the beach and
 forget about the gypsy woman, *Cielo*
Azúl, and the Salsa *Infernál*
 (in a sing-song
 voice)
 and the crazy wager you made with
 my sister".

Celia and Inés have already turned down the dead-end street
 and Jeffrey follows without enthusiasm.

CELIA JAMES

A crazy wager that's going to cost her an expensive dinner...Look at the gorgeous house at the end of the street.

INÉS

That is tía Carmen's place.

They are looking at a densely landscaped two-story Victorian style house painted in muted grays, pinks and beige colors. It is surrounded by thick foliage and a high wrought-iron fence with a locked main gate. The quiet and the shadows create an ominous mood.

CELIA JAMES

There's a pull cord. I'll bet it rings the bell inside.

Celia pulls the bell cord and they wait.

JEFFREY JAMES

You sure love to make bets. The place looks deserted to me. I think we may have reached the DEAD END. We should come back later. Let's go find the great little restaurant, huh?

CELIA JAMES

No way, Marlowe. Inés, give it a couple more pulls.

Inés reaches for the bell cord when suddenly a large black dog barks ferociously through the fence just inches from her hand. Startled, Celia and Jeffrey jump back. Inés extends her hand through the fence and pats the dog, who knows her. AN Off screen a woman's voice is heard.

OFF SCREEN VOICE (O.S.)

Calmate, Oso Negro. Hay alguien alli?

An older women, CARMEN LUZ, appears at the gate. She is dressed in a simple but expensive dark dress with a large silver pendant. Her face is old but radiant. She has jet black hair, white skin and her black eyes sparkle with wisdom. She speaks to Jeffery and Celia through the gate.

CARMEN LUZ

Yes? Can I help you in some way?

CELIA JAMES

Excuse us señora, we are looking for Carmen Luz.

CARMEN LUZ

I am she. What can I do for you
(MORE)

CARMEN LUZ (CONT'D)

(She unlocks the
gate and sees Inés)

Inés, mi sobrina, are these your
friends? Does your papa know you
are here?

She bends down and gets a kiss from Inés.

INÉS

I am their official guide. My father
pays little attention to what I
do.

CARMEN LUZ

(to Jeffrey and
Celia)

Welcome. I seldom have visitors.
Come into the garden.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. CARMEN'S GARDEN -- CONTINUOUS

They enter through the gate and follow her to the side of
the house where there is a lovely patio surrounded by
colorful flowers and shrubs. In the center is a wrought
iron table and chairs. Carmen motions to someone in the
house. The window is dark and we see no one. Carmen
gestures for Jeffrey and Celia to sit at the table.

JEFFREY JAMES

My name is Jeffrey and this is my
wife Celia. We are Americans.
You know our guide.

CARMEN LUZ

Yes, Americans--of course. It is
warm. We will have some cold drinks--
sangria? Can I offer you some
tapas--snacks? I was about to
have a light lunch. You will join
me, yes?

JEFFREY JAMES

That is very kind of you to offer,
señora. We certainly do not want
to impose on you.

CELIA JAMES

Jeffrey, tapas sound wonderful. A
little food would be great...If
it's no trouble.

Carmen slowly moves to the house. She walks with a limp
and carries a cane. The doorway is dark and a vague shadowy
figure of her servant, Lorena, moves about inside. Carmen
speaks into the dark doorway and returns to her guests.

CARMEN LUZ (V.O.)

Lorena, Hay tres otras por almuerzo.
Trae frutas, algunas tapas, sangria,
queso y pan por todos. [Subtitles:
There are three others for lunch.
Bring fruit, snacks, sangria, bread
and cheese for all]

LORENA

(she is clearly put
off by the request)

Esta bien, pero usted no me paga
suficiente para hacer todos
estos.[Subtitles: O.K. but you
don't pay me enough to do all this
work].

CARMEN LUZ

(In English)

If you are unhappy with your work
here you are always free to leave.
Por ahora, you will please bring
the food.

CUT TO:

21 INT. DARK KITCHEN INSIDE HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The dark silhouette of Lorena, the cook/housekeeper moves in front of a window. Through the window, the patio, Jeffrey, Celia and Carmen are visible as they continue their dialogue. Several condiments and small bottles are silhouetted on the window sill. The dark figure of Lorena moves about, preparing lunch as the dialogue outside continues.

CARMEN LUZ (V.O.)

I am glad to have visitors who
speak English. I used to teach
the English language to children.
What is it that brings you to my
home this hot sunny day?

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)

It may sound strange, but we are
looking for a salsa--a salsa that
is hard to find.

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

Gerardo, the travel agent, Inés's
father, gave us your name. He
said you had lived here many years
and that you might know the origin
of the salsa. I, too, am an English
teacher. I teach English at a
university near Chicago.

The dark silhouette of Lorena removes some of the condiments from the window sill.

They cannot be identified in the dark silhouette view. She leaves only one small bottle.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. CARMEN'S GARDEN -- CONTINUOUS

CARMEN LUZ

My family moved from Spain when I was very young. My father was an architect and my mother was a well-known gypsy singer. This has been my home for nearly 30 years. What salsa are you looking for?

Lorena emerges from the house wheeling a cart with a tray of Mexican snack items, glasses and a pitcher of sangria. There is a bottle of salsa on the tray. She looks angry. She speaks to Carmen in Spanish with English subtitles.

LORENA

Me gustaria que La Senora me lo hubieras dicho que los huéspedes estaban comiendo el almuerzo con nosotros. I no can do everything!
(S.T. I wish the Señora would tell me in advance if guests are coming for lunch.)

Carmen looks at Lorena sharply. There is animosity between them.

CARMEN LUZ

Gracias Lorena, I did not expect company. Leave the tray. We will serve ourselves.

Lorena moves behind them and begins pruning the flower garden. She is listening to their conversation.

CELIA JAMES

(sensing the dissonance)

Is there a problem? I hope we are not causing you any trouble.

CARMEN LUZ

The problem is Lorena's. I recently hired her to help me with my daily chores but as you see, she is not happy with her duties.

Carmen places plates of food, the pitcher and glasses on the table and picks up the salsa bottle. The bottle label reads "Salsa Huichól"

CARMEN LUZ (CONT'D)

I like this salsa. Have you tried it? It is a local favorite.

INÉS

No, Tía. They wish to know about Salsa *Infernál*? You know--it comes in little Corona beer bottles. Ellos quieren saber el lugar de origin y los que lo producen.

Carmen does not blink. Her face shows only a trace of interest.

CARMEN LUZ

There are many who make their own salsa picante with a *secret* recipe. I know of this salsa, *Salsa *Infernál**. It is a salsa of quality. Strange you should ask about it. Others were here just yesterday, a man and woman. They also inquired about it.

Celia and Jeffrey exchange glances.

JEFFREY JAMES

Really? That is a strange coincidence. What did they look like?

CARMEN LUZ

The woman was blond--from a bottle--perhaps forty years old, and well dressed. They were also clients of my nephew's travel agency. The man spoke English with a southern accent. The woman was not very pleasant in her manners. Do you know them?

Celia and Jeffrey exchange glances again.

JEFFREY JAMES

(looks to Celia for prompting)

We know them from the resort. I can't IMAGINE why they're looking for the same salsa, can you, darling?

CELIA JAMES

No. I can't imagine.

(to Carmen)

But what about the salsa? Can you help us?

PAN TO:

23 EXT. CARMEN'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

View looking into the window of Carmen's house into kitchen as the conversation in the garden continues. The dark silhouette of the single bottle is visible in the window.

CARMEN LUZ (V.O.)

Yes, the Salsa. I know something about it. I remember some time ago, a few years past...

DISSOLVE TO:

24 MONTAGE OF CARMEN'S ANECDOTE -- CONTINUOUS

A montage/flashback reflects the story as she tells it--the store, the cousin, Consuela and Esmeralda making salsa when they were younger, the pickup truck, the drunken driver, the missing finger.

CARMEN LUZ (V.O.)

...I was at a small store owned by a cousin and he usually had a few bottles of Salsa Infernal to sell. I recall he told me it came from a small village in the mountains to the north. He said it was made by two young women--sisters--and they were from a gypsy family, like myself. They created the original recipe and produced small quantities for a few local tiendas, little grocery stores. Perhaps they are still making it. It is possible that they are very protective of their recipe which would explain the secrecy, It is the tradition in many such small communities.

FLASHBACK ENDS -- BACK TO SCENE

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, we keep hearing about the Treasure of the Community. It is an interesting tradition.

(prompting Carmen
to continue)

CELIA JAMES

So your cousin had the salsa in his store? How was it delivered?

CARMEN LUZ

My memory is unclear. I recall a black truck. I saw it only that one time.

(MORE)

CARMEN LUZ (CONT'D)

The truck came to the store and the driver unloaded several boxes of food items. He was a *borracho*, a heavy drinker and he smelled of tequila. What I remember most was his hand. He had his small finger missing from his hand. It frightened me.

DISOLVE TO:

25 EXT. CARMEN'S GARDEN -- CONTINUOUS

Lorena abandons her pruning and begins to clear the table placing some of the food and dishes on the wheeled cart. Carmen nods approval. She takes her time and is listening with interest to the conversation.

JEFFREY JAMES

A missing pinky finger? Gypsy sisters?"

(He raises an eyebrow
at Celia)

Now the plot thickens, indeed.

INÉS

Hitchcock would love it.

CELIA JAMES

Does your cousin still have the store? Is it in the city?

CARMEN LUZ

No. Fernando has passed on. But his son, Mauricio, he now runs the tienda. The store is near the small fishing village just south of the city. It is in the pueblito across from a big resort there. I will give you the address.

JEFFREY JAMES

You mean *La Joya del Mar*? We know the place well. In fact we are staying there.

CELIA JAMES

Did you give any of this information to the Blonde woman and her companion?

CARMEN LUZ

At my age I have no patience for rudeness. The woman insisted I take her phone number. I told them nothing. I will get you the address of the store.

She disappears into the house with Lorena pushing the cart of food and dishes.

JEFFREY JAMES

So Janice got here first. She must have a crystal ball. Looks like she is trying awfully hard to sabotage our investigation.

CELIA JAMES

Not if we can stay one step ahead of her; we have to cover our tracks from now on. I'm NOT going to lose this bet.

INÉS

Bet? What bet? Have you guys been holding out on me?

JEFFREY JAMES

Ask Celia. I'm sure she will be glad to tell you the whole bizarre story on the way back. But before we go off exploring remote mountain villages, let's check out our other lead, the owner of the restaurant... Rodriguez...Paco Rodriguez.

INÉS

Good idea. Marlowe, you're smarter than you look.

JEFFREY JAMES

(In mock indignation,
making a fist)

You better watch it kiddo. You know what a knuckle sandwich is?

Carmen reappears with a slip of paper containing the address of her nephew's grocery store. They continue chatting out of hearing range.

CUT TO:

26 INT. DARK KITCHEN INSIDE HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The light in the dark kitchen changes, and we see the vague figure of Lorena in the darkness speaking on a cell phone. The silhouettes of the bottles in the window behind her.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(Over-the-phone
voice)

Yes, this is Ms. Larousse...Who? Lorena? Oh yes...I am very interested.. How much? Where do you want to meet?... OK, at the main bus station...

The label on the previously silhouetted bottle comes slowly into focus. It is, of course, *Salsa Infernal*.

DISSOLVE TO:

27 INT. PACO'S RESTAURANT -- LATER

Inside the *Casa Rodriguez*, Alex is seated at the bar. The owner, Paco Rodriguez enters from a swinging door to the side of the bar. He is wearing a showy Cisco Kid-type jacket, black with gold piping down the sleeves.

PACO

Alex, my friend, good to see you again. And how is your charming wife?

ALEX LAROUSSE

Oh, Janice?--still charming as ever, I suppose.

(He winks at Paco knowingly)

I'm glad to see that your restaurant is doing well.

PACO

Looks can be deceiving, but we are getting by. The tourist season will end soon and we need to promote more business. Food costs are high and tourists expect a bargain menu. I made more money with my taco stands. Carlos said you wished to ask me something. What can I do for you?

ALEX LAROUSSE

You know my sister-in-law, Celia and her husband Jeff? They will be coming here to ask you questions about a local salsa.

PACO

Salsa? Ha ha. What is there to know about a salsa?

Alex laughs with him

ALEX LAROUSSE

Yes, it is silly. They want to find out about a particular salsa. Mrs. Larousse and I want to play a little joke on them, a trick. We would like you to help us with the joke.

PACO

(Looking concerned)
Joke? What kind of joke?

ALEX LAROUSSE

They will ask where to find this salsa and I want you send them on a wild goose chase...you know what I mean...give them the address of someplace that will be a funny surprise. We will all laugh together afterwards.

PACO

I don't know, Alex--I would not like to make your friends angry with me. Maybe it is not a wise joke to play on them.

ALEX LAROUSSE

(In a patronizing manner)

Paco, Paco. It will do no harm. It is just for FUN.

Paco looks troubled, but is trapped.

ALEX LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

You know my wife is friends with the editor of the newspaper here in the city, *La Noticia del Oeste*. She would be glad to talk to him about a feature article on your great food here at the restaurant, and she will write some good things-- if you understand what I'm saying?

PACO

(He smiles nervously, reluctant to agreeing to the scheme)

Yes, I understand what you are saying. A story about my good food to help my business...OK, We will play joke. Yes, it will be a funny-- a wild ghost chase--I have an idea of just the funny place to send them...

DISSOLVE
TO:

28 EXT. DUSTY STREET MORNING--MID MORNING

The street is unpaved and the few shops are run-down and closed. A rickety bus lurches left and right through the narrow streets on the outskirts of a dusty outlying district of the city.

INT. BUS--CONTINUOUS

Jeffrey, Celia and Inés are aboard the bus and shouting at each other over the din as it bounces along a rough street. Jeffrey is seated several seats behind Celia and Inés who sit together. He gets up from his seat and stands in the aisle to speak to Inés and Celia.

INÉS

(To Jeffrey)

I have never explored this part of town. I think the syndicate or maybe a drug cartel operates here. Be ready to mix it up, Marlowe.

JEFFREY JAMES

I got it covered, kid. I have a black belt in Kick-Boozing and believe me, I can down a tough Martini fast when I need to.

CELIA JAMES

Jeffery, are you sure about the directions? This place looks unlikely to me. Maybe Paco Rodriguez made a mistake on the address.

JEFFREY JAMES

Who's being negative now? Paco said to take the Number 12 Moreno bus to the end of the line. He said we should go to a red brick building and ask for *El Guapo*. What could be simpler?

(sarcastically)

...besides staying back at the resort, eating jumbo shrimp, drinking cocktails and swimming?

Jeffrey returns to his seat and looks out the bus window.

CELIA JAMES

(To Inés)

How did you get your name? I've never really liked *Celia*. It's short for *Cecile*. She was my grandmother on my father's side.

INÉS

At least you don't get called *Cee Cee*. I don't know how I got stuck with *Inés*. At school they call me *Nez*.

CELIA JAMES

But your father must know who you were named after. Why not ask him?

The faces of Celia and Inés are eclipsed by the landscape passing by outside the bus. As their conversation continues the passing landscape scenes compliment the dialogue. The bus intermittently stops and slows down as it passes different vistas: a rundown school yard with children playing soccer; a motorcycle gang--the faces of the members are tough and hardened. A modern office building stands in contrast to a series of small shabby bodegas and tiendas. They pass a police van where police are in the process of arresting a large man. A woman, also large, is being restrained by two officers as she struggles and shrieks in protest. These vistas have off-setting positive and negative connotations and are keyed to Inés's story.

INÉS (V.O.)

He could tell me if he was alive. Both my parents were killed in a car crash--at least that's the story they told me. I was only four when it happened. Gerardo is actually my godfather. He adopted me after the accident.

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)

I'm so sorry for your loss. What a tragedy for you.

INÉS (V.O.)

Not really. I don't remember much of it. From what I've learned, my parents were into some shady business deals--maybe drugs--or even worse. For all I know their death might have been a mob hit. I'll never know. Anyhow, I'm probably better off with my godfather. He really takes good care of me. I think of him as my real father. Still, I've grown up feeling sort of alone. I hardly ever talk about this stuff to anyone. It feels weird.

CELIA JAMES (V.O.)

Considering the circumstances I'd say you're doing great, Inés. It's none of my business but I'm curious. How does Gerardo, your godfather, afford to send you to a private school in San Diego?

The passing images recede and are replaced by the faces of the speakers.

INÉS

It's O.K. I don't mind telling you. There's something about you...and Jeffrey too.

(MORE)

INÉS (CONT'D)

I feel like I can trust you guys...like we're kind of connected. Gerardo told me that my parents had bank accounts or some sort of insurance or trust fund for me in case they got killed, I guess. So I'm well financed. You need to borrow a few hundred bucks?

CELIA

(smiling)

No thanks, not just yet. Inés, I think you and I are connected. I was the third of three children. I had an older brother and sister. They were both very clever and attractive and they both have been very successful with their careers. My parents had used up most of their affection on my brother and sister by the time I was born. There wasn't much left for me. I was more of an after thought. When I was your age I felt pretty alone too. I grew up feeling like I was an outsider

(She pauses,
wondering if this
information is too
adult for Inés.)

and to tell you the truth, I still struggle with that feeling. You may not understand what I'm talking about.

INÉS

I know exactly what you're talking about.

They look at each other and smile. The bus shudders to a halt and most of the passengers exit. The bus continues on. Jeffrey moves to the seat just behind Inés and Celia. The few remaining passengers eye them suspiciously.

JEFFREY JAMES

Are we close? I need to get off and get a breath of fresh air. I think we may be lost. I want to dive into a cool swimming pool and float quietly.

CELIA JAMES

For once I agree with you. I don't like the feel of this adventure at all. Something's not right. We've been riding for nearly an hour.

(MORE)

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)
 (the bus hits a pot
 hole and bounces)
 I feel like all my fillings are
 about to fall out of my teeth.

Jeffrey pokes his head out the open window next to his seat.

JEFFREY JAMES
 I don't like the SMELL of this
 situation. The air is getting
 awfully ripe.

INÉS
 It smells like a Poo factory--where
 the sewage goes to--not a good
 place for detective work. I vote
 we go back to the resort.

The bus again lurches to a stop.

DRIVER
 Fin de la linea. Todos Salen!

INÉS
 This IS the end of the line.
 (holding her nose)
 I feel sick.

29 EXT. DESERTED TOWN PLAZA -- CONTINUOUS

They exit the bus with a few others. They look about at the dry, desolate plaza with its cracked street and withered palm trees. Across the plaza is a newer official building made of red brick. Adjacent are a few windowless concrete buildings and in the distance is a fenced pool with jets of water spraying into the air and falling back into the pool. The sun is high overhead and there is no one else in sight. The bus door shuts and they are left in a cloud of dust.

CELIA JAMES
 We are here, so we may as well
 check out our lead and ask about
El Guapo. Inés, what is *El Guapo*?

INÉS
 It means *the cute guy*, the *handsome man*. Maybe its a nickname for someone.

CELIA JAMES
 Well at least we can look forward
 to that.

JEFFREY JAMES
 I wonder when the next bus comes?
 I mean LEAVES. The stench is
 unbearable. What is that pool all
 about?

CELIA JAMES

Not a fish hatchery, I assure you
Mr. Marlowe and definitely not the
local swimming hole. There's the
red building. Maybe it's air-
conditioned inside.

INÉS

Are you kidding?

They stumble across the plaza to the front of the building.
A dusty official sign reads "Centro Municipal de Efluentes
Purificación". On the steps leading to the entrance a mangy
old dog sleeps with flies hovering about him.

CELIA JAMES

How sad. Look at that old dog.

INÉS

He's way past pull date. Pobrecito!

The dog lifts its head slightly and attempts a slight tail
wag.

CELIA JAMES

(looking at the
sign)

I'll bet I can translate the sign.

JEFFREY JAMES

Another bet? We could call Las
Vegas and get the odds. Inés, what
would Jimmy Cagney and Edward G.
do now?

INÉS

They would blow out of here fast.
This IS the Poo Factory. If we
start walking we can get out of
the stink zone. Let's go.

JEFFREY JAMES

This is some kind of bad joke.
Wait until I get my hands on Paco
Rodriguez or maybe I should strangle
my sister and her husband.

Jeffrey and Inés turn away from the building to return to
the bus stop.

CELIA JAMES

Hold on you two. What if he was
telling the truth? We can at least
go inside and ask. What do we
have to lose?

JEFFREY JAMES

Our Stomachs?

They climb the steps, stepping around the dog, and enter the building.

30 INT. RED BRICK BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

The interior is a large sparsely furnished office room. A radio is heard playing "Hotel California" in the distance ("Welcome to the Hotel California"). The acoustics of the room cause an inside-the-tunnel echoing effect. On one side is the staff lunch table with a small mini-refrigerator. On the adjacent wall are filing cabinets and an office area. Two women sit behind desks. Behind their desks is a door to an interior office with frosted glass window and a name placard "Hector Flores, Director". The women look up, but ignore the visitors. Jeffery steps up to the first desk.

JEFFREY JAMES

Excuse me. Do either of you speak English?

Both of the women shake their heads 'no'.

CELIA JAMES

If they don't speak English, how do they know to shake their heads "no"?

INÉS

(In Spanish with Subtitles)

Perdón. Estamos buscando un persona que pueda trabajar aqui. [We are looking for a person who might work here]

Subtitles continue throughout Spanish dialogue

CLERK 1

Todos los empleados están en el campo ahora. Solo el directór está aqui y él está demasiado ocupado. [All the employees are in the field. Only the director is here and he is busy].

INÉS

She says only the director is here and he is too busy to see us.

CELIA JAMES

Ask them about *El Guapo*.

INÉS

Conocen un hombre que se llama "El Guapo"? [Do you know a man called "El Guapo"?]

The two women look at each other and break into giggles.

CLERK 2

El Guapo? Ha, ha! Si, si!
 Seguramente conocemos El Guapo.
 {We sure do}

INÉS

They know him.

CELIA JAMES

Ask them where he is. Can we talk
 to him?

The English subtitles cease

INÉS

Ya, donde está él? Quieren hablar
 con él.

The women's grins grow wider. Jeffrey opens his wallet and
 removes a wad of pesos.

CLERK 1

Como no!
 (The women are
 delighted and
 continue to laugh.)
 No queremos su dinero, señor.
 Diga á sus amigos que El Guapo ya
 les recibirá al'otro lado del
 puerta. Èl es el feo perro que
 está dormiendo en las escaldas.

INÉS

They don't want money.

CELIA JAMES

(impatient, irritated)
 Well where is he? Why are they
 laughing at us? Who is he?

INÉS

I don't think you really want to
 know.

CELIA JAMES

We want to know.

INÉS

O.K. We already met him--on the
 way up the stairs just now.

Jeffrey cocks his head and smiles at Celia.

JEFFREY JAMES

Not that old dog? HE is El Guapo?

Inés nods. Celia is on the verge of tears. Jeffrey tries
 to comfort her. Inés looks on sadly.

CELIA JAMES

I can't believe this. I'm so sorry.
It's all my fault. I've wasted
the day, your day! I've ruined our
vacation. I give up! I quit!

JEFFREY JAMES

Now, now, my sweet Nora. We can't
let one little set back discourage
us, right Inés? Come on now. Get
a grip. You don't want to let the
bad guys win, do you?.

INÉS

That's right, And we need to follow
up on Mauricio's store, the salsa
drop. That might be our big break.

The director's door opens and HECTOR FLORES emerges. He is
middle aged, dressed in a sports jacket with no tie. He is
pleasant looking.

DIRECTOR FLORES

Que pasa aqui, Madelena? Are you
Americans? Is there a problem? I
am Hector Flores, the director of
this...er...facility.

JEFFREY JAMES

Forgive the intrusion, Señor Flores.
We were looking for something and
came here by mistake. We are sorry
to trouble you.

DIRECTOR FLORES

No trouble. I'm glad to have
guests. It gets me away from the
pile of paper work on my desk.
Not very rewarding work. You know
I studied Engineering in Arizona.
(He moves closer,
attempting to
promote the
conversation)
I should have stayed there but
instead I returned here to take
this awful job. Forgive the smell.
It is an occupational hazard.

INÉS

It comes with the territory, right?

DIRECTOR FLORES

(Looking quizzically
at Inés's
interjection)
Unfortunately true, chica.
(to Celia and Jeffrey)
What is it you are looking for?
Perhaps I can help you.

JEFFREY JAMES

Oh, I don't think so. It's kind of you to offer. Thank you anyway.

CELIA JAMES

(She is suddenly totally recovered and eager to resume the search)

Wait Jeffrey, it won't hurt to ask. Señor, have you ever heard of *Salsa Infernál*?

DIRECTOR FLORES

Yes I know it. In fact...one moment.

The DIRECTOR FLORES strides across the room to the mini refrigerator. He returns carrying a bottle of salsa--*Salsa Infernál*

DIRECTOR FLORES (CONT'D)

You mean this? One of my favorites, but not easy to find.

CELIA JAMES

Yes, and that's the problem. Do you have some idea where it is made?

DIRECTOR FLORES

I purchase this at a tienda owned by my friend who lives in a resort town just south of the city. It's on a side street in the pueblo.

CELIA JAMES

You mean La Joya del Mar?

DIRECTOR FLORES

Yes. How did you know? There is a small grocery store just across the highway. I, too, was curious about where the salsa comes from. All my friend could tell me was that a delivery man comes every week in an old truck. If you can find the delivery man he will know where it comes from.

JEFFREY JAMES

What is your friend's name?

DIRECTOR FLORES

He is called Zapata, the shoe--like the great hero of the Revolution.

INÉS

Played by the young Marlon Brando
in the movie--what a turkey.

JEFFREY JAMES

Zapata? Mauricio Zapata?

DIRECTOR

Yes, Mauricio. You know him?

JEFFREY JAMES

I heard about his store.

CELIA JAMES

We will look for Mauricio. Thank
you for all your help señor.

DIRECTOR FLORES

You have survived our bad air, so
you have earned your reward, yes?
Be careful you don't trip on the
old dog as you leave. He sometimes
sleeps in the middle of the steps.

JEFFREY JAMES

El Guapo? We will be careful not
to disturb him. Thank you, Señor
Flores.

As they exit, Flores nods a good bye, still holding the
bottle of salsa in his hand

DISSOLVE
TO:

31 EXT. DESERTED TOWN PLAZA -- LATER

The sun is low on the horizon. Inés, Celia and Jeffery
wait for the bus. Celia and Inés are chatting; Jeffery
sits quietly reading a mystery novel. The bus pulls up,
they climb aboard and it roars off, bouncing and lurching,
dust flying.

32 EXT. SMALL CAFE -- AFTERNOON

Seated outside at a table are Janice, Alex and Alan Osman.
They have finished lunch and are sipping drinks.

ALAN OSMAN

I don't know about you guys, but
I'm done with the business end of
this trip. Enough meetings and
presentations. I am ready to just
relax and take in the local sights.

ALEX LAROUSSE

I couldn't agree more, Alan.
(MORE)

ALEX LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

Too much work and no play can make you old before your time. Right honey?

(He looks to his wife for agreement)

JANICE LAROUSSE

You'll stay young forever then. My husband is an expert on leisure time. We still have a few unfinished business items to attend to, but otherwise we're ready to kick back and relax. Do you have any side trips planned?

ALAN OSMAN

I thought It would be fun to drive into the interior and see a bit of the REAL Mexico. I have the use of the company rental car; it's a big convertible. I was hoping we might all go, including your brother and lovely sister, Celia.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Oh Celia isn't...

Janice quickly cuts him off. She wishes to maintain the false impression that Jeffrey and Celia are siblings.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Celia, I'm sure would love to take a little side trip with you. She's such an adventurous girl, you know. Jeffrey's more a stay-at-home type. He might prefer to stay and read his books.

Alex looks disapprovingly but shuts up.

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

I'll see her this evening and try to arrange a little tryst...I mean trip.

Alan is ready to leave. He gathers his beach bag and stands up.

ALAN OSMAN

That sounds like fun to me. I'm up for like a little adventure in my life now and then.

They exchange good byes. Alan leaves.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Honey, what are you up to this time?

(MORE)

ALEX LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

He's got the wrong idea about Celia. He is making romantic moves on her and you are encouraging him. He might get upset when he finds out you've fooled him.

JANICE LAROUSSE

What's wrong with a little joke on my sister-in-law? Alan has a good sense of humor. He'll just laugh it off. Plus It will distract Celia from her salsa search.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Sweetie Pie, you have such a strange sense of humor. It just might get you into hot water one day. You may need an attorney or a body guard before this bet thing is all over.. Ha, ha.

JANICE LAROUSSE

An attorney? Do you know any good ones?

She looks at her watch and gets up abruptly.

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

I've got to get going.

ALEX LAROUSSE

To the hair dresser's again?

JANICE LAROUSSE

I've got an appointment with someone who's selling me some information we need.

Alex shakes his head and sips his drink.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. SMALL GROCERY STORE--SAME AFTERNOON

A man is outside sweeping as Celia and Jeffery approach and enter. There is no one in the store.

34 INT. SMALL GROCERY STORE--CONTINUOUS

They walk down a narrow aisle with produce stacked in open wooden crates on one side and cans and bottles on the other. Celia points to an empty spot on the shelf.

CELIA JAMES

I don't see our salsa. Maybe this is the wrong store.

JEFFREY JAMES

Let's take a good look around.
This is the salsa section alright,
but no Salsa Infernál.

The STORE OWNER, Mauricio Zapata, enters the isle holding a broom and startles them.

STORE OWNER

Hello, señores, I am close now.
What you need?

CELIA JAMES

Por favor, the Salsa Infernál--
donde está? You have some? Are
you the owner?

STORE OWNER

Yes, I am Mauricio. Sorry, no
Salsa Infernál today. Maybe
tomorrow I get delivery.

Celia glances at Jeffrey and nods.

CELIA JAMES

Where does your driver come from?

STORE OWNER

He lives near a farm town in the
mountains, Tomatlán. You come
tomorrow, afternoon--three o'clock.
Maybe, we have salsa.

JEFFREY JAMES

Tomatlán? Is that where the
salsa...

CELIA JAMES

(She cuts him off,
Pointing to the
empty space on the
shelf)

We will find the salsa here?

STORE OWNER

Yes, on the shelf, there.

CELIA JAMES

Muchas gracias, Maurico. Hasta las
tres, mañana.

They exit back to the street.

35 EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

JEFFREY JAMES

You're Spanish is improving. I
nearly blew it in there.

(MORE)

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

He would have stone-walled us like everyone else if I asked him the fatal question. Sorry.

CELIA JAMES

You're forgiven--this time.

JEFFREY JAMES

Where to now Ms. Super-sleuth? Shall we search for the drunk man, the gypsies or return to the poo factory? Or can the detectives take the rest of the day off?

CELIA JAMES

Day off? Sure. It's getting late. But first thing in the morning you need to rent us that cool Jeep 4-by-4, the red one. We'll need it for tomorrow's big adventure. Our best bet is to follow the delivery guy back to Tommy-land or what ever it's called.

Celia skips off briskly down street. Jeffrey tries skipping along but gives up and jogs after her.

JEFFREY JAMES

(huffing as he jogs)

Big adventure?...Oh oh... Rent a Jeep?... What ever for?... Tomatlán? Hey slow down... Wait for me...What if the delivery guy doesn't show up, or he decides to drive to Mazatlán? Then what?

CELIA JAMES

Then we have a neat little red jeep for the day. We'll ride up into the hills. We might get lucky.

36 INT. JEFFREY AND CELIA'S RESORT LIVING ROOM -- NEXT MORNING

Jeffrey and Celia are in morning clothes, drinking coffee. The room phone rings. Jeffrey gets up and answers it.

JEFFREY JAMES

Hello...Excuse me...Who?... Alan?...I'm fine, thank you...Oh yes, she's here. I'll put her on.

He covers the phone with his hand. "Just schmoozing" huh? It's your good buddy, Mr. Allied Foods. He hands her the phone. Celia looks genuinely puzzled.

CELIA JAMES

Hello, Alan...yes, having a great time, and you?...Go where?.... Today? No, I'm sorry, I'm booked up. Maybe we could ALL get together later tonight for drinks?...That's very flattering. O.K...Thanks for calling...bye.

JEFFREY JAMES

Since I am a detective, I know why he called. He asked you to go out with him.

Celia plops down on the couch next to Jeffery.

CELIA JAMES

I don't get it. He seemed so normal, but maybe he's a nut case. Why ask me out? Didn't he know your voice when you answered? We don't need another mystery right now. You should have a gentleman-to-gentleman talk with this guy.

JEFFREY JAMES

Philip Marlowe knows how to handle characters who try to muscle in on his gal. I will have a polite chat with the fellow when next we meet.

CELIA JAMES

Right now you'd better reserve our beautiful red jeep. While you're there see if they have any maps of the Tomatlán and the areas nearby. I think we're on to something.

JEFFREY JAMES

(stretching his arms out and yawning)

You know it is still pretty early. The rental office may not be open yet. Do we really need to be in such a rush?

He glances over at the door to their bedroom and raises his eyebrows slightly. She puts her arms around him.

CELIA JAMES

You have a point, Marlowe. No need to rush. It is a vacation.

37 EXT. PRIMITIVE COURTYARD RURAL MEXICO -- LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

[Jeffery and the car rental clerk's dialog is heard V.O. during the below scene description]

At the original first scene setting (a rural courtyard) a beat up pickup truck is being loaded with several boxes. They are open at the top, and bottles of Salsa Infernal are visible. The two women, Esmeralda and Consuela are helping the driver. He is an older man with faded coveralls and a ragged Yankee baseball cap. He is unshaven and missing some teeth. He loads the boxes into the truck bed. His walk indicates he is slightly drunk. They exchange good byes and he enters the truck and grinding the gears, takes off down a very narrow dirt alley which turns into a dirt street in a primitive mountain village and then on to a winding paved road. (Jeffrey and the car RENTAL CLERK's voices are heard V.O. the scene.)

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

I would like to rent the Red Jeep.

RENTAL CLERK (V.O.)

(in a robot-like
voice, speaking in
generic phrases)

I'm awfully sorry sir, the red
jeep has been rented.

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

OK, any color jeep will do.

RENTAL CLERK (V.O.)

I am awfully sorry, we have no
jeeps left. They were all rented
earlier today.

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

But this is very important. I'll
take a car then, any car. Surely
you must have something you can
rent me.

RENTAL CLERK (V.O.)

I'm awfully sorry sir. All the
cars are rented. I can check our
other lots. I might be able to
get a car for you in an hour or
so.

JEFFREY JAMES (V.O.)

An hour?

(Jeffrey is
frustrated)

Look, I need some form of
transportation, right now! How
about three motor scooters? Surely
you can find something. And PLEASE
don't say "I'm awfully sorry" again.

RENTAL CLERK (V.O.)

OK, there is one possibility.
Would you mind if it's an older
vehicle? I will check on it.

JEFFREY JAMES

No, I don't mind as long as it drives.

38 EXT. STREET -- MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Celia and Inés are waiting outside of the resort. A loud engine noise is heard and a badly dented orange and tan Volkswagon bus comes around the corner and pulls to the curb, smoke coming from the exhaust; Jeffrey is driving. He looks out at them with an maniacal grin. They approach the VW. Celia lugs a large suitcase. Inés, on seeing the vehicle, shakes her head.

JEFFREY JAMES

Love and Peace, brothers and sisters!

(He makes a Peace Sign with his fingers out the window at them. Celia and Inés look askance at the vehicle)

It's really a cool Jeep 4-by-4 but in disguise. If you like amusement park rides, you'll love this.

(He points to the large suitcase.)

Did you have to pack up ALL of our things?

CELIA JAMES

We might have to spend the night so I brought a few essential items.

JEFFREY JAMES

Hmmm, essential ones, I'm sure. Inés, do you have permission from your father for an overnight excursion?

INÉS

I told him I was going with you. I'll call him later. It's OK.

(she moves toward the passenger seat)

I call 'shot gun'.

CELIA JAMES

Hold on! Age, wisdom and beauty before youth. In the back please.

Celia opens the back hatch and hefts the bag in, then assumes the front passenger seat. Inés grumbles as she gets in the back seat.

INÉS

What kind of rig is this? We need
a big black sedan, not an old hippy
van.

They drive off to find Zapata at the grocery store. Jeffery
starts singing "La Cucaracha".

JEFFREY JAMES

*La cucaracha, la cucaracha; It's
the car we drive today;
(He pauses a moment
to think)
I want a scotch-a, on-the-rocks-a;
That would chase my blues away.*

CUT TO:

39 TIENDA --FIVE MINUTES LATER

They pull over to curb and park next to Mauricio's small
tienda.

JEFFREY JAMES

We've arrived, please pay the driver
as you exit. I'm hungry. Bring
me a pastrami on rye with a side
of slaw and a garlic dill pickle.

CELIA JAMES

The hippie chauffeur needs to stop
complaining. Today we're going to
get our big break. Just wait.
You'll thank me when we're eating
a extravagant meal on your sister's
pesos.

A beat-up black pickup truck passes the VW and pulls up in
front of Zapata's grocery store.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

Look, that might be the truck.
Quick, let's go take a look.

JEFFREY JAMES

How about you go take a look.
We'll stay here and be ready for a
quick get away.

Celia has slammed the door, leaving Jeffrey and Inés sitting
in the car. She disappears into the grocery store. Jeffrey
slouches uncomfortably in his seat and looks at a paperback
novel.

CUT TO: CAR RENTAL AGENCY

40 INT. RENTAL OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Alex and Janice are trying to find out Jeffrey and Celia's destination.

ALEX LAROUSSE
(to the same robot
rental agent)
I just missed my brother-in-law.
Jeffrey James. Was he here?

RENTAL CLERK
Yes sir. He took our last vehicle.
Did you want to rent a car? I can
check availability at our other
offices.

JANICE LAROUSSE
We were supposed to meet them for
lunch, but I guess they forgot.
Did they say where they were going?

RENTAL CLERK
They asked me about the mountain
farm town on state Route 213, to
Tomatlán. They also inquired about
some small village--Cielo Azul.
I'm pretty sure it's a barrio a
few miles west of Tomatlán on a
dirt road. Here, look on the map.
It's not even marked.

He pulls out a well-worn map of the region and points to
the spot. Janice gives Alex a knowing look.

RENTAL CLERK (CONT'D)
Shall I reserve a car for you at
our other office?

JANICE LAROUSSE
No, we don't need a car. We'll
see them when they get back.
(To Alex)
Route 213? Tomatlán? Alex can
you remember that?
(To rental agent)
Thank you for your help.

They exit the rental office.

ALEX LAROUSSE
Are we going to follow them? This
is getting out of hand.

JANICE LAROUSSE
Don't be foolish.
(MORE)

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)
 We're not driving into the boonies.
 But I know who is.

CUT TO:

41 INT. SMALL GROCERY STORE CONTINUOUS

Through the glass window of the store Celia is visible. She walks down the narrow aisles of the tienda pretending to be shopping. She watches as the driver brings in a crate of salsa. As she strains to see, The store owner, Zapata, greets her from behind. She jumps with surprise and they exchange a few words and he leaves. She watches the delivery man as he sorts the bottles of salsa on the floor. There are several different brands. Finally he reveals some bottles of Salsa Infernál and places them on the shelf. He glances over at Celia, catching her staring. She quickly looks away. He resumes stocking the salsa. She notices his hand; he is missing a pinky finger. She moves into the isle, picks out a bottle of Salsa Infernál, and he heads to the counter to pay. Mauricio Zapaata, the STORE OWNER, takes his time making change.

STORE OWNER
 You find your salsa. Good.

CELIA JAMES
 (In a hurry)
 Yes, yes, gracias, adios.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. SMALL GROCERY STORE CONTINUOUS

The truck is pulling away. Celia runs toward the VW and jumps in.

CELIA JAMES
 (Excited)
 That's it--the missing pinkie finger
 guy--the Salsa connection. Follow
 that truck Marlowe!

JEFFREY JAMES
 (with a phony English
 accent)
 Not Marlowe, darling, Bond, James
 Bond. Right-o. They can't escape
 Double-O-Seven's Aston Martin.
 Hang on amigos.

The VW launches off in a cloud of dust as they follow the truck.

CUT TO:

43 MONTAGE OF SHOTS--ROUGH MOUNTAIN ROAD--LATE AFTERNOON

VW bus on main highway following truck

Jeffery rolls his eyes up

Cattle block road

Inés screaming out the window at farmers

VW passing cattle on road, trying to stay with truck

Celia pointing at departing truck

VW teetering around sharp curve

VW passes through rough farm city (Tomatlán)

Truck is way ahead

VW fords stream, splashing mud

Inés grimaces

Jeffery with grim expression

VW struggles to avoid rocks

Steep winding dirt road

Sharp bend in road

Jeffrey's tense knuckles hold steering wheel

Jeffrey's look of panic

Celia and Inés cover their eyes

Sound of screeching tires

DISSOLVE TO:

44 EXT. DITCH, SAME ROAD -- MOMENTS LATER

The three stand outside the VW bus. One of the rear wheels is off the road in a deep rut. They are stuck. Inés is stooped over, casually examining the wheel. Jeffrey stands behind her. Celia paces impatiently behind him.

CELIA JAMES

(In an angry tone)

Now you've lost the truck. Great driving. 007! Why weren't you watching the road? I don't suppose our cell phones will work here? You've blown our only lead.

JEFFREY JAMES

(responding
atypically, with
equal anger)

Look here, Celia, I didn't see
damned the hole. It was the sudden
bend in the road, I couldn't stop
in time. Blaming me won't solve
our problem!

(He regains his
composure and mild
demeanor)

Let's calm down and try to get out
of the ditch.

CELIA JAMES

You're right. I'm sorry.

JEFFREY JAMES

Forgiven--this time. Let's get
the jack and try and lift the wheel
out. Where is the jack? There
must be a jack. Help me look.

Inés joins them as they search the van. They look under
the engine and in the rear cargo space.

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

It must be here somewhere.

CELIA JAMES

Look in the glove compartment.

JEFFREY JAMES

A jack won't fit in the glove
compartment.

CELIA JAMES

Really? But the owner's manual
might, wise guy. Inés See if it's
there.

Inés opens the glove box. She looks inside and shakes her
head.

INÉS

Nope. Just an old bottle opener
and the papers for the van.

CELIA JAMES

(She finds the jack
under the rear
seat)

Is this it?

They move to the ravine side of the van where the left rear
wheel is jammed in a deep rut. Beyond the rut, the hill
falls away into the steep ravine. Jeffery fumbles with
the jack; Celia and Inés look over his shoulder.

45 EXT. VW VAN, RAVINE SIDE VIEW--MOMENTS LATER

The van is partially jacked up. The base of the jack is precariously placed a few inches from the edge of the steep ravine. Jeffrey admires his work.

JEFFREY JAMES

There, you see. Not bad for an English professor. A bit higher and we can shove some rocks under the wheel.

Inés and Celia watch as Jeffrey proceeds to slowly jack up the van click-by-click. On the third click the rocks under the jack give way and the jack springs gayly away, down into the ravine, disappearing in the heavy brush. It is irretrievable. Jeffrey looks at them with a sheepish smile.

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

Wow!

CELIA JAMES

Not bad, for a professor! Quite a trick!

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, my dear, just one of many. Look, someone will be driving by any minute. We can get a tow truck.

Inés gets up and walks over to the side of the road where there are a few trees. She examines a fallen tree.

CELIA JAMES

Everything is ruined! We'll have to start walking--and I brought that damned heavy suitcase. There won't be any cars on this road for hours.

The sound of an engine is heard and a motorcycle approaches from the direction they were headed. Jeffrey smirks at her.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

OK, I'm wrong--again. Let's ask them to send a tow truck.

She waves wildly for the motorcycle to stop. The driver with his girlfriend behind him pull the over. He raises his shaded visor as they roll slowly past them.

JEFFREY JAMES

(Shouting to the driver)

Could you help us? We are stuck and we need a tow truck.

MOTORCYCLE DRIVER

(He shakes his head
and and smiles
blankly at Jeffrey)
No English...Korean...we
tourists...you good luck!. Very
Sorry...We say goodbye.

Jeffrey looks on helplessly as they buzz off down the road.

JEFFREY JAMES

(to himself)
And Good luck to you. Ciao!
Sayonara! Tootle-loo!

CELIA JAMES

What now?

JEFFREY JAMES

I'll carry the suitcase. It's
going to be a long hike back down.

INÉS

(Walking back across
the road) *
Hold on! I saw a movie once where
the car was stuck, just like that.
(She indicates the
VW bus)

CELIA JAMES

(She snaps at Inés)
This is NOT the time for any old
movie stories.
(changing her tone)
Sorry, Inés, I'm completely
frazzled! I didn't mean to yell.

INÉS

No problem. My dad does it all
the the time. In the movie they
got the car out of the ditch using
a big board to lift it. If we can
drag that tree over there across
the road it might work like a see-
saw to lift the wheel up.

CELIA JAMES

A see-saw?

JEFFREY JAMES

Young Archimedes is suggesting we
use the tree as a big lever. It
might work.

INÉS

Archi-who? Was he a famous gang
leader?

They cross the road. The pine tree has only a few branches and resembles a long pole. They drag it across the road and place one end under the WV frame near the trapped wheel. Using the edge of the ditch as a fulcrum, Celia and Jeffrey push down on the longer end of the tree, prying the VW up. Inés places rocks under the wheel. They add a big rock to raise up the fulcrum point and repeat the process, raising the van a little each time. After the third time, the wheel has reached the same level as the road.

CELIA JAMES

Inés you are a genius! It's a good thing you remember your old movies.

JEFFREY JAMES

O.K. Let's give it a try.

They enter the van and slowly drive back onto the road surface. They continue on, passing a few humble houses.

CELIA JAMES

We've lost the truck. How will we even know if we find the village? It's hopeless. We may as well turn around and go back.

Jeffrey slows the van to a stop on the side of the road, and stares out his window into the trees.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

What now? Are you going to turn around?

(He continues staring out his window.)

Is there a new problem? Are there an aliens from outer space in the trees?

Jeffrey says nothing. He beckons her over toward the driver's window and points toward the trees. She struggles to lean past him to see what he is pointing at. There is a tiny faded hand-painted sign nailed to a tree on which is written "Bienvenito a Cielo Azul" .

DISSOLVE TO:

46 EXT. DESERTED TOWN PLAZA -- MOMENTS LATER

The VW passes the sign and they enter a village. Just before reaching the central plaza, they pass an old concrete building with bars on the windows. There is a dry fountain in the middle of the plaza with some scrubby landscaping around it. On the cobblestone street that surrounds the fountain is a restaurant/cantina. Just across the plaza is a small hotel, a church and several other small buildings. It is a picture-postcard Mexican mountain village. The VW pulls up in front of the Cantina and parks. Chickens are running about and a burro is tied to a tree.

A few children play, a food vender sells tacos from a cart. There are no other tourists. They exit the car and Jeffery stretches and walks over toward the plaza. Celia joins him. They sit on a bench. Inés starts to wander away.

CELIA JAMES

Where are you off to? We might need a translator.

INÉS

I'm going to scope out the town. I'll be right back.

She walks across the plaza leaving Jeffery and Celia on the bench.

JEFFREY JAMES

Where do we start?

(MORE)

We can't go house-to-house. Maybe it's the Cielo Azul in Cancún after all. The only treasure here is heat and lethargy.

CELIA JAMES

Don't be so negative. This must be it. I'm sure this is the right *Cielo Azul*. Remember, the missing pinky guy in the truck?

JEFFREY JAMES

Oh yes, the truck--The little truck that got away.

CELIA JAMES

We should at least ask a few questions about the salsa.

JEFFREY JAMES

And get put in front of a firing squad? How do you propose to ask questions? Your 10 word vocabulary won't turn the trick. Nobody speaks English in this thriving metropolis. Where is Inés?

CELIA JAMES

She'll be back. Look, here comes someone. He looks official. Maybe he speaks some English.

A tall paunchy man, CAPITÁN PERÓN, walks up to them in a military manner. He sports a gray mustache and wears a uniform jacket with a law enforcement badge pinned on it. He eyes the strangers suspiciously.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

(He has heard Celia's
remark about
English. He speaks
in a cold, official
voice)

I speck English. Good Days, Mister
and Misses. You are Americans,
yes? You know you park you car in
no-park zone? You can no read the
sign?

(he points at a
small faded sign)

I could give you a big fine.

Celia and Jeffrey look toward the car. There are only a
few other cars and plenty of empty parking spaces.

JEFFREY JAMES

We're sorry. I didn't understand
the sign. I'll move the car. Are
you really the police?

CAPITÁN PERÓN

I am the Capitán of Police, Capitán
Gustavo Perón. You may leave the
car for now. Why do you visit
Cielo Azul? You are from the real
estate company. There is no land
for sale here.

CELIA JAMES

No Señor Capitán. We are just
tourists. We wanted to escape the
big tourist city and visit the
REAL Mexico.

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, and we are looking for the
REAL people who make REAL Salsa
Infernál.

Celia gives Jeffery a hard stare of disapproval

CAPITÁN PERÓN

(agitated)

What? Salsa?...Infernál? Who
told you it is made here? I don't
know about salsa. I think you should
get back in your limousine

(he looks at the VW
and smiles)

And return down the mountain and
drink margaritas.

(He puts his hand
on his pistol)

If salsa is make here--and I do
not say it is--it would be the
treasure of our pueblito.

(MORE)

CAPITÁN PERÓN (CONT'D)

Anyone who would try to steal our
treasure would find big troubles.
Here, we put lobbers and banditos
into Yale.

He laughs out loud at his own words. He points down the street at a small rundown stucco building with bars on the window, the one they had passed. Celia and Jeffery look at the jail and then look at each other in mock horror.

JEFFREY JAMES

Please, any place but Yale.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

May I see you passports please?

Celia reaches into her beach bag and produces the passports.

CELIA JAMES

(smiling and trying
to charm Perón)

Do we really look like lobbers,
Capitán? My husband was only
curious because we enjoy this fine
salsa so much. We will not steal
any treasures.

Perón examines the passports carefully.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

So, you are Mr. And Mrs. James--
the James Gang, yes?

(Again, he laughs
at his own joke)

And I see your first name is Jessie,
señor?

JEFFREY JAMES

No, it's *Jeffrey*.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Yes, Jessie, Jessie James
(He laughs)

JEFFREY JAMES

No, No. It's Jeff-er-ee. Please,
we only want to eat diner and enjoy
your beautiful little pueblo, drink
some cervezas. We will stay in
the hotel and leave tomorrow.

Jeffrey motions across the street at the hotel. The sign on the outside reads "Posada de Paris. Hay Cuartos." A woman is standing in the doorway watching them.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Hotel? You want to stay at our
hotel?

(MORE)

CAPITÁN PERÓN (CONT'D)

(He becomes more
cordial)

Why didn't you say so? You stay
for a week if you like.

(Yelling with
authority at the
woman in the doorway)

Elena, Ellos quieren un cuarto por
la noche, una limpia, y con un
alto precio.

He returns their passports. His demeanor has gone from *bad cop* to *good cop*. He is now their host. His command of English is suddenly improved.

CAPITÁN PERÓN (CONT'D)

(cordially)

These appear to be in order. You
may park in front of the hotel or
on the side street behind it. In
front is easier for you. The
restaurant is open for drinks and
food. Please to enjoy our mountain
air and the REAL Mexico. I now
must attend to my duties.

He nods and smiles, salutes, turns and leaves them standing there. They are surprised at his quick attitude turnabout. They walk toward the van.

JEFFREY JAMES

What on earth do you make of him?
I admire his candor and simplicity.
He is a not a very complex fellow.
I thought for a minute he was going
to throw us in the Yale.

CELIA JAMES

Right...after you blurted out about
us looking for the infernal salsa.
Every time we mention the name
Salsa Infernál we seem to get the
cold shoulder or worse. I almost
told him you'd already been to
Yale.

47 EXT. POSADA DE PARIS -- MOMENTS LATER

Jeffrey and Celia climb the few steps to the exterior porch of the hotel. The woman, ELENA, greets them. She has sharp features and apparently speaks better English than Captain Perón. She is warm and sincere.

ELENA

Welcome to the Posada de Paris. I
am Elena. You are the only guests,
so we have 5 rooms to choose.

(MORE)

ELENA (CONT'D)

I give you the big room with the view of the plaza. How long you will stay?

CELIA JAMES

Just one night I guess. Pleased to meet you Elena, I'm Celia and this guapo man is my husband, Jeffery. We have a young friend traveling with us. She is off exploring. Do you own the hotel?

ELENA

(approves Jeffrey's appearance)

Qué Guapo! And he has a beautiful wife! Yes, I own it with my husband, but I do most of the work. He is so busy with other things.

CELIA JAMES

Capitán Perón recommended your hotel and suggested we eat at the Cantina. He was not very friendly when we arrived. Does he dislike foreigners?

ELENA

Gustavo is a good and generous man-- once you get to know him. Sometimes he tries to act like a big shot sheriff, but he is really a pussy cat and very well-educated.

JEFFREY JAMES

(Glancing at Celia)

I'm glad to hear that. I was afraid we might spend the night there.

(He points at the jail)

ELENA

No, no. He rather you pay for a nice room in his hotel. I know him very well. I am married to him for 15 years. You bring in your bags now?

Inés rejoins them, and has a new friend. A boy about her age. She chatters with Elena in Spanish. They seem to have a good rapport.

JEFFREY JAMES

(to Inés)

What's that all about?

INÉS

I was bargaining.

(MORE)

INÉS (CONT'D)

I get my own small room in the back and it's free if I don't make a mess.

CELIA JAMES

Who's your friend?
(teasing Inés)
Is he the real *El Guapo*?

INÉS

He is Gonzalo. He lives here. I thought we could interrogate him about the you-know-what.

Gonzalo waves at them, disinterested.

CELIA JAMES

(to Jeffrey)

You see, she knows better than to name the treasure of the community; it's much safer not to.

(to Inés and)

Good job! You can give Gonzalo the 3rd degree later. First, let's get settled in our rooms, then we can check out the cantina.

INÉS

(to Gonzalo)

Come on, Venga conmigo para ver mi cuarto.

They run off to see her room.

CUT TO:

48 INT. POSADA DE PARIS -- CONTINUOUS

Jeffery and Celia are surprised to find their room is nicely furnished, with copies of Impressionist paintings on the walls, an antique bureau with a hardbound book on it, a colorful ceramic water pitcher and glasses. There is no TV. A door opens to a small balcony. Jeffrey stretches out on the bed examining the book. Celia is on balcony looking out across plaza at the church and cantina. From Celia's POV. A new red convertible car with the top down pulls up in front of the cantina across from the hotel. The lone driver, a man, parks in the same "no parking" space where the VW van had been previously parked. Perón comes out of the Cantina and is pointing to the 'No Parking' sign. The driver is not identifiable from Celia's view. Perón talks to the driver as he stands next to the car.

JEFFREY JAMES

(still lying on the
bed with the book)

What an odd book to be in this
Real Mexico Hotel. Its about the
history of astronomy. Must have
been left by a previous guest...I
wonder if this bed squeaks?

CELIA JAMES

(Smiling back into
the room from the
balcony)

I'm sure we'll test it.

(She points from
the balcony)

It looks like Cielo Azul has another
tourist. El Capitán is giving him
the town welcoming speech.

JEFFREY JAMES

El Capitán indeed! More like
Capitán Zero. He doesn't strike
me as being a very sharp fellow,
maybe a bit unbalanced.

(He joins her on
balcony)

Another tourist?

What an unlikely coincidence.

It's probably a just travel writer
doing a feature on Mexican Towns
to avoid.

The driver exits the car, his back to Jeffery and Celia.
He and Perón continue speaking. Perón points to the hotel
and the VW van. The driver turns and walks toward the hotel.
Seeing his face, Celia and Jeffrey look at each other with
astonished expressions. It is Alan Osman.

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

(quoting Celia's
parting comment to
Alan Osman at the
convention)

"Pleased to meet you too. Alan" It
looks like you schmoozed him pretty
good.

CELIA JAMES

He certainly can't be following
me. How could he even know we're
here? I'm sure there's an
explanation.

JEFFREY JAMES

Why don't we go down and greet our
fellow traveler and ask him...and
I still need to have a little talk
with him. I have my suspicions
about who put him up to this.

49 INT. LOBBY OF ELENA'S HOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Alan Osman walks in as Celia comes down the stairs without Jeffrey.

ALAN OSMAN

Hello there, Celia. I'll bet you're surprised to see me here in REAL Mexico.

He takes Celia's hand and holds it a little too long.

CELIA JAMES

(curtly)

It's a surprise alright.

(She withdraws her hand)

You are a bit off the beaten track. Did you wander up here by chance or did you have some kind of divine guidance?

ALAN OSMAN

Oh, I had a little help. I hope you're not angry. I don't mean to intrude. But we ARE all on vacation now and I'd really enjoy having some company. I have a proposition for you.

Celia has trouble concealing her irritation.

CELIA JAMES

A proposition? I'm afraid I can't leave my current position, Alan. You know, the family business and all that.

ALAN OSMAN

No, it's not about a job. I am making a side trip to Guadalajara and wondered if you'd like to come along.

CELIA JAMES

(taken aback)

Your asking ME to go with you? ... Without Jeffrey? Really Alan, what ARE you suggesting?

Jeffrey is walking down the stairs behind them into the lobby

ALAN OSMAN

I just thought you and I could hang out together. Surely your brother can get along without you for a few days.

CELIA JAMES
 (almost shouting)
 My brother? Hold on--you think
 he's my brother?

ALAN OSMAN
 Your sister Janice said...

Jeffrey arrives, overhearing the conversation.

CELIA JAMES
 Stop! My sister? No way, José.
 She's my sister-in-law!

JEFFREY JAMES
 (In a pleasant tone)
 Excuse me, Did I come at a bad
 moment?

ALAN OSMAN
 (stammering, confused
 and embarrassed)
 No, No, er...sit down
 (there are no chairs
 near by)
 ...I think ...there's been a
 misunderstanding...I was
 misinformed...I thought...
 (to Celia)
 So you're NOT her sister? You two
 are husband and wife? Oh my God...
 I'm so sorry. I can't apologize
 enough...I never would have...

Jeffrey smiles and is enjoying the moment. He cuts Alan
 off.

JEFFREY JAMES
 Now, now, no harm done. Janice is
 MY real sister and she can be very
 devious. I'm glad you think my
 wife is so attractive. I think so
 too.

CELIA JAMES
 Your sister is despicable! She set
 us all up. We owe her one. What
 do you say we enlist Alan in our
 investigation?

JEFFREY JAMES
 Why not, we can use another ally.
 Alan, no hard feelings. Are you
 interested in hearing about our
 current odyssey? Maybe you can
 give us a hand.

ALAN OSMAN
 Count me in.
 (MORE)

ALAN OSMAN (CONT'D)

I'd love to join your team--
especially if your sister, Janice,
is on the other side. She really
took me in. First things, first;
at the moment I'm pretty dry. I
need a beer. Why don't we meet
for drinks at the cantina and you
can fill me in.

JEFFREY JAMES

Glad to have you aboard, Alan.
We'll meet you there in a few
minutes.

Alan exits. Jeffrey and Celia walk back up the stairs.

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

(Marlowe speaks)

You know sweetheart, we can use
another agent. Is this guy CIA or
KGB?

CELIA JAMES

Neither! He's FBI you big lug!

DISSOLVE
TO:

50 EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF ELENA'S HOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Consuela and Esmeralda are pushing two old rusty shopping
baskets loaded with groceries. They pass in front of Alan,
who nearly bumps into them as he crosses to the Cantina.
They turn up an alley that winds up hill away from the plaza
then disappear around a corner. Angle back down alley into
the plaza where Jeffrey and Celia join Alan at an outdoor
table. Perón takes their order and leaves.

ALAN OSMAN

I'm all ears. What exactly is
going on here?

CELIA JAMES

Where to begin? ... My job at the
magazine. I've been having a battle
with Janice ever since she hired
me. I want to write features and
she simply refuses to give me a
chance. We were all a little drunk
when I made her a bet...

[COMIC MONTAGE]Celia's voice drifts off into a summary of
the highlights of the bet, the search for the salsa,
alternately intercut with Celia explaining at the table and
Alan's reactions. Perón arrives with their drinks. [MONTAGE
ENDS]

ALAN OSMAN

...Well that's quite a story...in quest of a mystery salsa. And you think the answer might be right here in this little village?

Celia waits for Perón to leave.

CELIA JAMES

This is our last chance. We are going home to the states the day after tomorrow. I'll win or lose my bet depending on what we find here.

Inés jogs across the plaza toward them.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

Our scout has just arrived bearing news.

Inés drags a chair over to the table

INÉS

Hi everyone. I got a date with Gonzolo later on and I'm going to grill him for info. I'm sure he knows something.

(She looks at Alan)

Who's he? Can he be trusted?

JEFFREY JAMES

(In a hushed voice)

With your life. We just briefed him on our mission. He is an FBI agent from the states. Code Name, J. Edgar. He's offered to help us, right, Alan?

Alan has no idea what's going on but goes along with Jeffrey.

ALAN OSMAN

That's right, Once I get the dope from these guys I'll fax it over to my crime lab back in D.C. and we'll get some fast answers.

Celia and Jeffrey nod their approval of Alan's reply.

INÉS

FBI agent, huh? Great disguise. I saw you at my dad's travel agency. You're part of the food convention. Are those your wheels, J. Edgar?

She points at the rental red convertible.

INÉS (CONT'D)

Not the standard issue for a FBI agent.

ALAN OSMAN

I'm a special agent, not standard. The car is part of my tourist disguise--or at least it is until I return it to the rental agency. Pretty hot rig, huh? Want to go for a spin?

INÉS

You bet I do. Now that's what I'm talk'n 'bout. Edgar, you got fine taste.

CELIA JAMES

I've been thinking.

JEFFREY JAMES

Oh Oh...here it comes.

CELIA JAMES

Even if I lose the bet, we owe Janice and Alex some sort of a payback.

INÉS

(disinterested)

I'm going to find Gonzolo.

She runs off.

CELIA JAMES

I know a way we can get our revenge on Janice. Here's my idea...

Perón is wiping nearby tables. He wears a white apron. Jeffrey looks at him with an expression of curiosity. They continue the conversation as the scene ends.

DISSOLVE
TO:

51 EXT. BEACH PALAPA -- CONTINUOUS

Alex and Janice are having drinks.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Honey, I'm not sure your latest caper was a good idea. You lied to him. We might lose Alan as a potential customer.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Caper? It's not a caper, it's a strategy. Jeffrey and Celia must be close to finding something, and sending Alan after them will screw up their plan. I didn't actually lie to Alan.

ALEX LAROUSSE

You let him believe Celia is your sister and encouraged him to chase after her. You don't have to be a lawyer to recognize *malitiae intentionis*, Malice of Intent.

JANICE LAROUSSE

I don't think Alan will sue me for a silly prank. He seems like the sort of man who can take a little poke in the ego without crying-- unlike others I know.`

ALEX LAROUSSE

Your little prank could seriously upset Celia and Jeffrey. What if Jeffrey gets jealous and slugs the guy?

JANICE LAROUSSE

(laughing out loud)

My brother? That wimp? He doesn't have it in him. If Celia actually was unfaithful, Jeffrey would probably shrug, yawn and walk away and read a book.

ALEX LAROUSSE

You know, Janice, usually I go along with you, but I think you're over the line this time. I want to go on record...

JANICE LAROUSSE

(cuts him off)

Thank you for the concern, dear. I know where the line is and I have everything under control.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF ELENA'S HOTEL -- LATER

It is late afternoon same day. Alan sits in the convertible car with Inés as a passenger. They are about to leave Cielo Azul. Jeffery and Celia are standing next to car.

INÉS

Lucky for me Big Al here is willing to drive me back. My dad was not happy about me staying over night. And I get to ride back to town in real style.

JEFFREY JAMES

Can I come along too?
(MORE)

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

I have an important meeting with a swimming pool CEO, an Executive lobster and some Cocktail VIPs.

CELIA JAMES

Cancel the meetings! No ducking out now Marlowe. You got *paid* in advance, remember. Now let's synchronize our brains. Inés, you say your friend told you that he knew about about the *treasure of the village* and we're supposed to meet him here at sunrise?

INÉS

Yep. You got it. I paid him the 100 pesos you gave me and he agreed to show you the secret place where it all happens. He wants another 100 pesos tomorrow.

CELIA JAMES

That's about eight bucks total--a bargain. Excellent work! And Alan, thank you for driving our assistant home. We'll see you tomorrow at our rooms for our dress rehearsal.

ALAN OSMAN

I'll be there. I have never been on stage before. It'll be an exciting debut for me. See you both mañana.

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, thank you Alan. I'm glad to have you on our side. See you tomorrow.

Alan drives off and they wave good byes. Inés stands up in her seat and gives the peace sign to them.

CELIA JAMES

What now? Any brilliant ideas?

JEFFREY JAMES

How about a nap before dinner?

CELIA JAMES

Brilliant!

They enter the Posada de Paris.

DISSOLVE TO:

53 INT. HOTEL SUITE ON BALCONY -- LATER SAME NIGHT

Jeffrey is alone looking out into the plaza. He sees something going on outside the cantina. Celia's voice is heard from within.

CELIA JAMES

Do you plan to sleep tonight? I'm tired and we'll need all our energy for tomorrow's big event, whatever that might be.

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, bedtime soon. Perón is down there. He's up to something. I'm curious. I'm going to stroll down and chat with him. I won't be long.

CELIA JAMES

Better hurry or I'll be sound asleep, Marlowe.

Jeffrey leaves the balcony and exits the room.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF ELENA'S HOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Jeffrey walks across plaza toward the cantina. He looks up at an intense black sky filled with many stars. Perón is adjusting a complex high-tech telescope in his restaurant courtyard.

JEFFREY JAMES

Excuse me. I don't wish to interrupt you. I see you have the heavens under close surveillance. That is quite a gadget... the telescope. Your hobby, Capitán?

Perón looks up and smiles.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Please call me Gustavo or Gus if you prefer. I'm off duty now. Just relaxing.

Perón's voice is different, more relaxed and his English is improved.

CAPITÁN PERÓN (CONT'D)

I find many things of interest outside of our small planet. Watching the stars is more than a hobby...It's enlightening.

JEFFREY JAMES

Enlightening? Yes. I guess I'm surprised at your interest..

(Jeffrey realizes
he is giving wrong
impression)

I mean very few people have a knowledge of astronomy. It's very technical.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

You are surprised because of my police Capitán act? I put it on for tourists. It seems to be what tourists expect--the broken English, a backwoods sheriff mentality. They enjoy it. Then I become a bartender and hotel owner besides. It is humorous, yes?

JEFFREY JAMES

(taken aback)

It is, quite. You certainly were convincing. Things are not always as they seem.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Like the stars in the sky. Are they bright or dim? Near or far? It is hard to tell at first glance. You see the bright star over the roof of the cantina?

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, from its brightness, I'd judge it to be a planet.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

I would think so too, but It is not a planet. It is Aldebaran, named by an ancient Egyptian, Ptolomy. It is many light-years far away and is very old. It will become a Black Rogue in a million years or so.

JEFFREY JAMES

It makes me feel like a very small element in such a vast scheme of things.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Yes, there you see...enlightening for you also.

JEFFREY JAME

True. How did you learn so much about the stars?

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Me? I have a degree in Astronomy from the University of Oaxaca. I used to lecture there, but gave up teaching. I prefer this more simple life.

JEFFREY JAMES

You say you gave up teaching?

(beat)

I don't think you did.
I'll say buenas noches. My wife is waiting.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Good night to you Jessie James...I mean Jeffrey.

(He chuckles)

JEFFREY JAMES

Good night to you, Gus.

Jeffrey's expression is one of mild awe as he walks across the plaza. Perón peers into his telescope. It reveals a black sky filled with shining stars.

FADE OUT: COURTYARD

FADE TO:

55 EXT. DESERTED TOWN PLAZA -- MORNING

A rooster crows. The sun is not yet up. Celia walks energetically down the steps of the hotel into the dark plaza. Jeffrey follows slowly, looking half asleep.

JEFFREY JAMES

(Yawning)

So where is our whistle blower, our little informer? He's taken our 100 pesos and run off.

CELIA JAMES

If he doesn't show I will quit writing forever and be a lackey for Janice for the rest of my life.

As they wait in the dark plaza, a voice from behind them startles them. It is Capitán Perón.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

You are the oily birds, yes? After a good sleep, you go for a morning jog?

JEFFREY JAMES

No, just a morning walk to see the sun rise, Gustavo.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

Enjoy your walking. Later on you can rob the treasure.

(He looks for their reaction. They don't know how to take the remark.)

I am joking.

(Celia and Jeffrey smile and nod.)

CAPITÁN PERÓN (CONT'D)

See you later.

Perón goes about his business, leaving them standing in the empty plaza.

CELIA JAMES

I thought we were busted. He's quite a character. Where's that kid?

They look about the plaza. Perón is across the plaza polishing his patrol car, an older Ford Bronco. Jeffrey and Celia look bewildered.

JEFFREY JAMES

How long are we going to wait? We look suspicious just standing here.

From the side in the alley next to the hotel they hear a hissing sound. Gonzolo is in the shadow of the porch. He whispers.

GONZOLO

Sssh!...No police...You come.

Celia and Jeffrey try to look casual as they turn and walk back into the shadows of the dark alley

56 EXT. PATH UP HILL -- MOMENTS LATER

They pass behind the hotel into a smaller back street. A few dogs bark and a distant radio is playing. The street seems to end, becoming a dirt path. They pass through what appears to be the small back yards of humble private stucco homes. They look over their shoulders to see if they are being followed. It becomes totally quiet. They pass close to an open window and suddenly it slams shut, startling them. They reach a rusty fence and must squeeze through a small opening into some dense underbrush. They pause, listening, as an iguana skitters past. They struggle to keep up with Gonzolo. Jeffrey and Celia whisper to each other along the way. Gonzolo slows his pace. The three of them tiptoe up the path.

CELIA JAMES

Marlowe, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore.

JEFFREY JAMES

Right you are. Keep a look out for lions and tigers...

GONZOLO

(turns his head,
recognizing the
OZ reference and
interjects)

And bears.

CELIA JAMES

(Jeffrey and Celia
look at each other
and speak
simultaneously)

Oh my!

They struggle as the path narrows and seems to disappear

JEFFREY JAMES

How are we going to get through here? Where's the salsa crew? I think I can see some wild geese we can chase up ahead.

CELIA JAMES

The operation must be up the hill in a secret clearing.

JEFFREY JAMES

What secret clearing?

GONZOLO

Shush! No hablan.

The path widens. Gozolo stops and indicates silence. They listen. There is a faint sound of chopping farther up the hill. From behind them a rustling and footsteps get their attention. A farm worker with a machete comes up the path in the same direction and passes them. Celia and Jeffrey wave a silent greeting, but he frowns and ignores them, continuing uphill ahead on the same path. Gonzolo frowns and stops. He senses trouble and will go no further. He points to the palm of his hand.

GONZOLO (CONT'D)

Pay now. Cien pesos...money for me.

CELIA JAMES

You're the bagman, Marlowe, Pay him off.

Jeffery takes a 100 peso note from his wallet and hands it to Gonzolo. Gozolo examines it as though it might be counterfeit, then he points up the path.

GONZOLO

You go! Treasure there.

Without a sound, Gonzolo spins around and vanishes back down the path toward the village. Celia and Jeffery are like two deer caught in the headlights of a car. They stand mute staring up the path ahead.

JEFFREY JAMES

Well? Shall we?

CELIA JAMES

This is it, I hope. We are about to reach the Holy Grail. I can picture the gypsies harvesting chile peppers for the salsa.

JEFFREY JAMES

Where's the guitars and flamenco?

They continue up the path and suddenly Jeffery stops. He wrinkles his nose, sniffing the air. The sound of the chopping stops. A few men's voices can be heard shouting.

MALE VOICES (O.S.)

(From up the hill)

Hay personas abajo! Están llegando!
Vamos a asustarlos! Vamos!

Jeffrey is examining a tall leafy plant next to him on the path.

CELIA JAMES

This is no time to take up botany,
Marlowe.

JEFFREY JAMES

(whispers in ironic
tone)

Honey, I don't think they are
harvesting chilies. Take a whiff
of the air. Smell familiar?

Celia recognizes the plants around them--cannabis. Her eyes widen and reflect fear.

CELIA JAMES

Oh my God! We've uncovered the
wrong treasure! It's a marijuana
field.

The male voices sound hostile and are getting louder.

CUT TO:

57 EXT. CLEARING IN THE HILLS -- CONTINUOUS

A group of farm workers who had been harvesting marijuana plants are shouting, waving machetes and running helter-skelter across the field in many different directions.

JEFFREY JAMES

Is this our cue to exit, Nora?

CELIA JAMES

Nick, It's time to beat feet!

They take off running down the path, the sound of running feet following. Weeds and tree branches whip their faces and they struggle to stay ahead of their pursuers.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

(Shouting as she runs)

You just became Captain Kirk.
Beam us out of here... Jeffrey,
I'm scared.

JEFFREY JAMES

Me too! Give us warp ten Scottie!

They reach the opening in the fence and squeeze through. Celia is stuck and is struggling to free herself. Jeffrey untangles her shirt from the fence. She starts to continue running but Jeffrey stops her.

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

Hold on!... Listen.

All they hear is their own heavy breathing.

CELIA JAMES

I think they gave up the chase...or
we out-ran them. Maybe they were
only trying to scare us.

JEFFREY JAMES

Trying? Well done, hombres!

CUT TO:

58 EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF ELENA'S HOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

Celia and Jeffrey are back in the village approaching the plaza. Celia has realized that their hopes of finding the source of the salsa have evaporated. She is depressed.

CELIA JAMES

So that was the treasure of Cielo
Azul--ganja. I think it's all
over for me, Jeffrey. Let's throw
in the towel and head back to the
resort. A swim in the pool and a
margarita--two or three margaritas--
and maybe I can forget what a loser
I am.

Jeffrey attempts to stave off her depression and pump her back up.

JEFFREY JAMES

Throw in the towel? Celie, you're no loser. Come on now. We have two more days left. We're in this together, dollface. How about it?

CELIA JAMES

Jeffrey, you are the most wonderful husband and friend.

(she takes his hand)

But it's time to be realistic and practical. I've ruined part of our vacation with my selfish whim; it's time to move on. Let's kick back and enjoy our last days.

They have reached the plaza. Celia looks totally dejected. There are now a few people milling about. Elena is on the porch of the hotel shaking out a blanket, Perón is tending to the tables in the cantina.

JEFFREY JAMES

Listen to me. I have thoroughly enjoyed our adventures and furthermore it's hardly a *selfish whim* to want to write a feature article. Let's not give up quite yet. How about it?

She begins to cry, but makes a valiant attempt to rebound in her usual fashion.

CELIA JAMES

No, it's over and that's that. I'm sick of the whole thing...and I admit, I really did enjoy our detective work. It was fun. And we'll have more adventures in the future and someday I'll be writing my novel. For now let's pack up and get out of here.

(She wipes her eyes)

We still have a little surprise cooked up for your sister.

DISSOLVE TO:

59 INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT -- LATER

Alan sits at table with Janice and Alex. They are having snacks and drinking cocktails.

ALEX LAROUSSE

(He is bored with
the conversation)

Would you-all mind if I wandered over to the bar. I haven't had time to really chat with Paco.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(Glad he is leaving)

No honey, go ahead and visit with
your friend.

Alex drifts off to the bar across the dinning room.

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

I guess you got a taste of the
real Mexico up there in the hills.
When you left, what were Jeffrey
and Celia up to? I'm surprised
you didn't spend the night there.

ALAN OSMAN

I wanted to, but your brother was
angry with me--in fact he ordered
me to leave. He is so protective
of his sister. She and I took a
walk alone together and Jeffrey
really got bent out of shape. He
went ballistic. I thought it best
to leave. I plan to see her this
afternoon when they return.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(She is very curious)

You're going to meet with Celia?
What about Jeffrey?

ALAN OSMAN

Oh, he's going to some mariachi
folk concert in a nearby town. He
won't be back until evening.

(He looks at his
watch)

In fact it's getting late. I should
be on my way.

He gets up to leave. There is a hint of duplicity in his
voice.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Alan, wait! There's something I
need to talk with you about--
something important.

ALAN OSMAN

Sorry, Janice. Not just now.
Gotta run. Later. Say goodbye to
Alex for me.

He leaves abruptly.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(She is visibly
perplexed. She
yells after him)

Yes, later, Alan.

CUT TO:

60 EXT. PLAZA IN FRONT OF ELENA'S HOTEL -- AFTERNOON

Jeffrey puts the baggage in the back seat of the VW van.
Celia sits in van, trying to look chipper. Elena and Capitán
Perón are there. Jeffrey shakes hands with Perón and Elena.

JEFFREY JAMES

Thank you for all your hospitality,
Good luck with the stars. Muchas
Gracias por todos.

Celia leans out of the van window.

CELIA JAMES

We both enjoyed our visit to the
REAL Mexico.

CAPITÁN PERÓN

You come back again. I'll always
be on lookout for the *James Gang*.

They all smile as the van pulls away and turns the corner.

JEFFREY JAMES

Well that's that. Wild times in
old Cielo Azul. We nearly get
hacked to pieces by the pot cartel
but it was fun, even if the bet is
lost

CELIA JAMES

Yes, you are right, it was worth
it after all. And I am feeling
much better.

(she smiles at
Jeffrey)

Do you think they were making
cannabis salsa?

As they turn the corner they are forced to stop by a few
people crossing the street. As they are waiting, Consuela
and Esmeralda pass in front of them with the shopping carts
full of chilies and little Corona beer bottles. Celia looks
at Jeffrey. He stares back at her. The women pass by and
head down an alley. Jeffrey pulls the van over abruptly
and parks. Celia looks stunned.

JEFFREY JAMES

What are you waiting for? GO!

Celia grabs her camera bag, bolts from the van and begins shadowing the two women up the narrow back streets, toward the marijuana fields. Jeffrey has a satisfied smile and leans back in his seat, closing his eyes.

CUT TO:

61 EXT: PRIMITIVE COURTYARD RURAL MEXICO -- MOMENTS LATER

The two women turn into a path which leads into their courtyard (the one in the opening scene). They begin to unload their baskets. Consuela goes into the house, leaving Esmeralda unloading the groceries. Celia enters the courtyard. Esmeralda, noticing her, confronts her.

CELIA JAMES

(It's the big moment
and Celia tries
not to appear
nervous)

Hola! Yo me llamo Celia. Do you
speak English?

Esmeralda holds up a hand, indicating wait. Celia does not know what to expect. Esmeralda goes into the house and returns with Consuela.

CONSUELA

(She gives Celia
the once over)

Why do you come here? This a
private home. No tourist place.

CELIA JAMES

(Smiling and in her
warmest voice)

I am a writer, I write articles
for a magazine. My name is Celia.
I write all about food. Recipes?
You know like in Bon Appétit?

CONSUELA

(with some hostility)

I know what a writer is. I know
magazines, recipes.

(To Esmeralda)

Trae aqui algunas de nuestras
revisas.

(To Celia)

I show you.

Esmeralda walks a few steps to the shed and returns with a stack of magazines--which include Bon Appétit and Gourmet, etc. Celia looks at them and nods approval at Consuela and Esmeralda.

CONSUELA (CONT'D)

I ask again. Why you come here?

(MORE)

CONSUELA (CONT'D)

You follow us from plaza? I see you. You work for big U.S. food company? Our recipe is not for sale.

It is evident that Consuela is not simply a provincial stereotype. She knows quite a bit about urban life.

CELIA JAMES

(Choosing her words
carefully)

No, I work for a food magazine.

She removes a copy of *Great Lakes Epicure* from her bag and gives it to Consuela.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

My magazine is about very fine foods from places like Mexico. I visit Mexico to find the best foods and recipes. And the best salsa I have found is yours--Salsa Infern al. I want to write about the best salsa in Mexico.

CONSUELA

You want to write story about Salsa Infern al?

(She rapidly explains
in Spanish to
Esmeralda)

CELIA JAMES

Yes, your salsa will be in a magazine in the United States with pictures of you and your sister and your wonderful kitchen.

(She indicates the
entire courtyard
with a gesture of
her hand.)

You will be famous!

CONSUELA

Famous? Being Famous is no always a good thing. Big salsa company will steal our recipe. Our little business will die. I must talk with my sister.

Consuela and Esmeralda step aside and whisper to each other. Consuela returns to Celia.

CONSUELA (CONT'D)

She say "no". Our salsa is very important to our little village.

(She pauses, thinking)

You say we have our pictures in your magazine?

Celia sees an opening and goes for it

CELIA JAMES

Yes, color pictures of you and your sister. You can keep the recipe a secret. And you will get paid money by the magazine. It will be a great gift to you and to Cielo Azul.

Consuela turns to Esmeralda. They huddle aside again and have a short animated conversation. Celia watches hopefully.

CONSUELA

OK, we will share our treasure with your magazine...a gift...for good of our community. We give to you some of recipe, but no all. You wait now. First we go inside house. Please wait.

Celia is dumbfounded. Consuela and Esmeralda abruptly disappear into their house. A radio is switched on and lively music suddenly comes from within the house. Celia removes the camera from her bag and begins taking photos of the courtyard, the stove, the bottles, the strings of chilies, the Corona Bottles, the labels. As she takes each shot her grin broadens. She's actually done it! The two women return totally transformed. They wear colorful dresses, their hair is fixed and they wear some rouge and eye makeup. Celia motions to them to stand in front of the strings of chilies. With no further prompting the women link arms. Celia focuses the camera.

CELIA JAMES

Smile!

The two sisters beam radiantly as they pose for the photos.

DISSOLVE TO:

62 EXT. VW BUS -- LATER

Jeffrey is napping in the van as Celia approaches. He wakes up as she opens the passenger door. She sits holding back her desire to tell him the news of her success.

JEFFREY JAMES

Mission accomplished? How'd it go? I trust they weren't just running a restaurant. Come on, let's have it!

CELIA JAMES

(Trying to sound off-handed and nonchalant)

It was a piece of cake.

(MORE)

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

I used my innate charm and persuasive skills and they were glad to cooperate.

(losing her cool
composure, bubbling
over)

Jeffrey, I did it! I mean WE did it. I got it all, the pictures, the interview, the recipe. One lady spoke English and they had stacks of food magazines and wait until you see the photos of their operation, chilies, bottles. It was more than I hoped for.

She reaches across the seat and hugs Jeffrey tightly. He struggles to free himself.

JEFFREY JAMES

I expected no less from you. I knew you'd win. My confidence was never shaken.

CELIA JAMES

Never?

JEFFREY JAMES

Well maybe for just a instant when we met *El Guapo* and the Machete gang.

He starts up the van and they set off back to the resort.

JEFFREY JAMES (CONT'D)

And let's not forget, we still have a little gift to give my sister. And then you can collect the bet.

DISSOLVE TO:

63 INT. BEACH PALAPA -- LATER

Celia walks along the beach and finds her sister-in-law sitting in her usual chair in the shade of a palapa.

CELIA JAMES

Hi Janice. You look comfy. We're back from our excursion and it was interesting. Guess who showed up out of the blue? Our new friend, Alan Osman...Where's Alex?

JANICE LAROUSSE

My hubby, Lazy Larousse? He's napping back at our room. So Alan was there?

(MORE)

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

I couldn't help but notice--Alan seems to have taken quite an interest in you. I hope you're not leading him on. Does he know you're married to Jeffrey?

CELIA JAMES

(In a confidential tone)

I'm not sure what he knows, but what a scene we had. I just took a little walk with Alan--I do like him, maybe a little too much--as we walked, he took my hand. I was about to explain that I was married when Jeffrey came around the corner, saw us, and started yelling.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Jeffrey, yelling? You're kidding!

CELIA JAMES

No, he was furious. Can I confide in you?

Janice motions Celia to sit in the chair next to her.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Of course you can. You know you can trust me. I'm a good listener.

CELIA JAMES

He told Alan to beat it. He wouldn't let me explain anything. And said he needed some time to himself. He wouldn't even talk to me at all on the drive back. I was afraid he'd hit me.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Where is he now?

CELIA JAMES

He's sulking. He left a few minutes ago to go by himself to a concert in Rio Plata. I wasn't invited. I don't know what to do. Jeffrey had no right to act like that. I feel very distant from him.

JANICE LAROUSSE

That's how you left it? This sounds serious. Where is Alan now? He mentioned something about meeting you at your suite.

CELIA JAMES

Janice, I've let your brother rule my life. I just this once feel like doing something daring, something wild. Do you know what I mean?

JANICE LAROUSSE

I don't know what your thinking. Don't do anything crazy. Jeffrey will get over his jealous fit. Just hang in there.

CELIA JAMES

Your right, maybe he'll calm down by tonight. We'll see what happens.

JANICE LAROUSSE

By the way, what about our bet? We leave day after tomorrow.

CELIA JAMES

Oh yes, the bet. I'll reveal the news at dinner tonight at Paco's--- depending on what happens with...

Celia looks at her watch.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh dear, I've got to run or I'll be late.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Late? Late for what? Wait a second. We need to have a serious talk. Where are you off to in such a hurry?

Celia does not want to give Janice a chance to own up to her chicanery. She, like Alan before, runs off.

CELIA JAMES

See you at dinner. Bye!

Celia jogs off down the beach leaving Janice with a worried expression.

FADE TO:

64 INT. ELEVATOR IN HOTEL SUITE -- MOMENTS LATER

Janice steps out and cautiously slinks down the hallway to the door of Jeffrey and Celia's suite. She is about to knock, but sees the door is slightly ajar. She enters the living room quietly and listens. Voices can be heard coming from the bedroom. Janice's facial expressions reflect her reaction to the off-screen conversation that she overhears.

ALAN OSMAN (O.S.)

Celia, you know how much I want you. I did from the very first moment. I'm leaving tomorrow. You must come with me.

CELIA JAMES (O.S.)

Alan, I adore you. But I'm so torn up inside. I don't want to hurt poor Jeffrey. He's been good to me. But I can't live a sheltered life forever. I need to strike out on my own. If you ask me to go with you, I can't say no.

Janice listens, horrified. She is perspiring, and has a sick expression on her face. She is startled when Jeffrey strides into the room from the hallway.

JEFFREY JAMES

Janice, what on earth are you doing here?

Janice positions herself between Jeffrey and the bedroom door.

JANICE LAROUSSE

I need to have a serious talk with you. Come, let's go to the bar for a drink. I'll buy.

She takes his arm and steers him toward the door.

JEFFREY JAMES

Wait a moment. I thought I heard voices in the bedroom.

JANICE LAROUSSE

The maid must have left the TV on. Let's go.

JEFFREY JAMES

I'll go turn it off.

65 INT. BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Before she can stop him he marches into the bedroom. Janice follows him in. Alan has his arms around Celia. They look trapped and stare fearfully at Jeffrey, who cocks his head to one side with a 'what in the world' expression. Celia breaks away from Alan and approaches Jeffery.

CELIA JAMES

I am so sorry Jeffrey. Alan and I...

JEFFREY JAMES

(interrupting angrily)

Spare me. I can see what's going on here. I knew you two you were up to something. Don't worry, fortunately, I don't have a gun. I won't make a big fuss. It is what it is.

(He looks at Janice)

Janice, you're my sister. Help me. What should I do?

Janice, in a zombie-like state and remains mute. Jeffrey turns and walks across the room towards Alan with clenched fists. Alan cowers. Jeffery offers Alan his hand to shake.

JANICE LAROUSSE

(bewildered)

Jeffrey, you can't be serious?

JEFFREY JAMES

(To Alan in a pitiful tone)

All I ask is that you take good care of her. Be patient with her. She can be quite a stubborn ass.

They shake hands. Jeffrey has started to smile and Celia turns away to hide her suppressed laughter.

ALAN OSMAN

(Indignantly)

Hold on a minute! A stubborn ass, you say? Well I don't want her then! Not me! You can KEEP her!

He has difficulty keeping a straight face. Janice looks like she will faint.

JEFFREY JAMES

(beginning to choke on his own laughter)

Alan, you're taking her and that's that, damn it!

Alan starts to laugh openly, followed by Celia. Janice takes a few moments to re-process the scene and she breaks into a smile.

JANICE LAROUSSE

What on earth?... All right, all right. I've been had. And I guess I deserved it. Bravo!

She applauds their performance.

FADE OUT:

66 INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Sitting at a table at Paco Rodriguez's are the four principles. They already have their drinks. Jeffrey has a slight smirk of expectation. Janice tries to look relaxed but signs of tension show through and Alex is indifferent as he ponders the menu. Celia is self-confident. Carlos appears to take their orders.

ALEX LAROUSSE

I can never decide between the Jimmy Chongos and the *Encheeladas de polo*.

JEFFREY JAMES

Go for the polo. Aren't you wearing a polo shirt?

Alex looks down at his shirt quizzically.

ALEX LAROUSSE

OK, I'll have the Polo *Encheeladas*.

JANICE LAROUSSE

I'd like the Veracruz fish,
(she struggles with
pronunciation)
the wha-chee-ning-go.

Carlos smiles at her attempt. She gives him a dirty look.

CARLOS

Very good try, señora Is pronounced Wha-chee-NANG-go. You are good with languages yes? You speak French.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Who told you I speak French?

CARLOS

You say "au revoir" to my wife, Nadia, at the beach. Nadia speaks good French.

Carlos smiles knowingly at Janice, who becomes suddenly silent.

JEFFREY JAMES

Celia and I will have the little grilled lobster tails, *los langostinos asados, por favor*.

Carlos leaves with their orders.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Shall we proceed with the business of the evening?

She looks at each of them, Celia last.

CELIA JAMES

(Using her official
presentation voice)

Yes, it's time to reveal the outcome of our investigation. I am prepared to give you a full report. But first, I'd like to thank my assistant private eye, Jeffrey Marlowe for his help and support. Without his help I ...

At this moment Alan and Inés approach the table.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

Hola, you guys. Grab a chair and join us. I was just about to give them full Salsa Infernál report.

INÉS

Sorry, no time for that. I've got to get home. My dad is on my case. He has a stack of invoices a mile high for me to file. I haven't helped him much the last few days.

ALAN OSMAN

I'll have to beg off too. I'm having dinner with new gal I met. She's a rep for Bird's Eye and specializes in frozen food products.

JEFFREY JAMES

Frozen? I'm sure you'll figure a way to thaw her out.

Jeffrey and Alan exchange glances.

ALAN OSMAN

Jeffrey, this time it's all just business. Celia and Janice know what I mean--just schmoozing. We're going to Guadalajara tomorrow morning to evaluate the Jalisco Frozen Foods facility.

CELIA JAMES

(addressing both
Inés and Alan)

I'm sad to see you go--both of you. We'll have to keep in touch. Inés, you have been a great guide and help with our investigation. And you cheered me up when I was feeling down. Your godfather has our address in Chicago, so plan on visiting us. I'm serious. We have mysteries to solve in Chicago too.

INÉS

Yeah, like finding Jimmy Hoffa's
body.

Inés goes over to Celia, they hug each other. Inés has
tears in her eyes. Celia does too.

INÉS (CONT'D)

I'll come to visit for sure. And
if I can twist his arm, Alan will
drive me in his convertible.
(She fights off her
tears)

There are handshakes all around and good byes. Alan shakes
hands with everyone.

ALAN OSMAN

(to Janice)

No hard feelings. It has been
fun. I may see you next time
around.

(to Jeffrey)

Thank you for not murdering me.
May I give your wife a friendly
hug?

JEFFREY JAMES

Just a friendly one.
(He laughs)

They finish their goodbyes. Alan and Inés leave.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Fine folks, fine folks. That Alan
reminds me of a client I once had.
He was a real playboy. He could
pitch a line to any woman...

JANICE LAROUSSE

(Cuts him off)

Save your story for dessert. We
want to hear Celia's report.

JEFFREY JAMES

Yes, Celia, it's time to settle
the bet for once and for all. Go
on, my darling, give them the big
news.

CELIA JAMES

Ready, everyone? You all know the
terms of the bet. One of us will
buy dinner tomorrow night. And I
may or may not be writing feature
stories. So at this time I'd like
to present the results of...

Paco Rodriguez arrives at the table and interrupts her.

PACO

Amigos, so you are leaving? I am sorry. You have been special guests. My old friend Alex, I hope you will return soon, and with your family and I do hope you are not angry about the joke? El Guapo? We all laugh, yes.

JEFFREY JAMES

(holding his nose)

We all laughed.

He looks over at Celia, who also holds her nose.

CELIA JAMES

Yes, funny. A memorable experience. Ha ha!

PACO

Tonight, for you, all drinks are on the house--my goodbye gift to you.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Thank you, Paco. I promise we'll be back.

They all shake hands, Paco leaves. All eyes turn to Celia.

CELIA JAMES

(She hurries her
speech)

OK, before I'm interrupted again, let's get this over. Janice, first, I want to thank you sincerely for helping me along in my writing career. I've finally realized that it's time to do my own thing. So I am giving you my notice. I am quitting my position with the magazine. I'll hang around and help out until you find a suitable replacement.

Janice is stunned by the news. Jeffrey tries not to look surprised, but he is. Alex is pleased.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Good for you, honey! It's a smart move.

CELIA JAMES

Thank you Alex.

JANICE LAROUSSE

So you want to quit? Is this all about writing feature stories?

(MORE)

JANICE LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

Hell, if it's that important to you, I give in. Go for it. You can write the lead story for the new issue. Write your salsa article. You can write one a month from now on.

CELIA JAMES

Thank you Janice. It's a tempting offer, but no, I'm moving on. The truth is I never really wanted to write about food. I have too many other ideas I want to work on. You know me, always full of great ideas.

Janice accepts the situation but still wants to know about the bet.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Alright Celia, so be it. I respect your decision to leave the magazine. That's fine. Congratulations, I guess. I'll miss your energy and your company, and your great ideas, too. But what about the Infernal Salsa? YOU must have won the bet. Tell me what you found.

Celia gives a long look to Jeffrey. He gives her the *Go-on-and-tell-her-you-won* look

CELIA JAMES

There's nothing really to tell. YOU win the bet. I couldn't find a thing about the salsa--no recipe, no factory, no photos, no story. The whole thing was a bust. Where it's made is still a mystery. Choose your restaurant. Dinner's on me...and of course I'll never pester you again about writing a feature article.

ALEX LAROUSSE

Janice wins? You're kidding! What a surprise!

(to Janice)

You've won...

(He looks over at
Celia)

And you've won too.

JANICE LAROUSSE

Enough! I've had my fill of surprises today. Get Carlos. Since the drinks are free, let's party!

CELIA JAMES

(Raising her glass)

This all started with a toast.
Let's finish with one. Here's to
Janice and the continued success
of her magazine...

(looking at Jeffrey)

And to writing my first novel.

They all take a sip from their drinks except for Jeffrey,
who, atypically, downs his entire drink.

JEFFREY JAMES

(He has been quiet
and reserved,
listening to the
recent revelations.
He suddenly is
animated, bursting
with enthusiasm)

Yes, get Carlos. This is indeed a
time for a real celebration.

(He hugs Celia.)

ALEX LAROUSSE

You know Celia, you've inspired
me. I'm going to do a make-over
on my law practice and get myself
back on the right track.

Janice looks scornfully at him and resumes her regular M.O.

JANICE LAROUSSE

On the right track? He means a
chaise lounge and a martini. That's
his track. Make-over, ha! He'll
never do it.

ALEX LAROUSSE

(Winking at Celia)

You want to make a bet?

DISSOLVE TO:

67 INT. HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT

Jeffery and Celia are snuggled up on the couch in their
suite of rooms.

JEFFREY JAMES

Well you certainly surprised
everyone tonight, myself included.
I am very proud of you.
(He kisses her)

CELIA JAMES

I really didn't know myself what I
was going to do.

(MORE)

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

It sort of came over me like a wave...almost like magic. You really should get most of the credit.

JEFFREY JAMES

Me? You're the one who kept us going. I only prodded you a little like a cheer leader on the sidelines. But I'm a little disappointed that you didn't collect your bet with my sister. You won, after all. You had the photos, the interview, the recipe. I was looking forward to seeing my sister's mouth drop open. What changed your mind?

CELIA JAMES

Remember when we drove away from Cielo Azul. I felt so down. You said something that hit home. You said it was *fun*; that even though the bet was lost, we'd had *fun*. I suddenly realized that I didn't care about winning the bet. It was all just an ego trip to one-up your sister. And why should I humiliate her? I was looking for something else and I found it--courage---the courage to move on.

JEFFREY JAMES

A fantastic discovery!
(he apes a frown)
But I'm still a little disappointed about the bet.

CELIA JAMES

There is another reason I didn't want to collect on my bet. And you, I'm certain, know exactly what it is.

Jeffrey and Celia pause the conversation. He thinks about it, smiles and nods.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

The other reason was that I did not want to...

Jeffrey holds up a hand, interrupting her. They both finish her sentence speaking in unison and slowly pronouncing each syllable.

CELIA JAMES (CONT'D)

...steal-the-trea-sure-of-the-com-mu-ni-ty.

JEFFREY JAMES

(simultaneously
with Celia)

...Steal-the-trea-sure-of-the-com-
mu-ni-ty.

(beat)

But what about writing the salsa
story? Consuela and what's-her-
name are expecting their moment of
fame.

CELIA JAMES

I'm not abandoning them. I just
need a little time to catch my
breath, give it some thought, and
then we'll see about the salsa
story.

They embrace and walk to the balcony. Our view descends
into the festive scene below. We can see the guests swimming
in the pools and musicians playing on stage, people are
seated at many outdoor tables. We see an anonymous group
at a table and at a closer look, we can make out the dishes
on the table. Among the dishes is a small Corona beer bottle
with a label revealing its identity--*Salsa Infernal*.

DISSOLVE TO:

68 INT. MODERN OFFICE BUILDING -- MANY WEEKS LATER

The final credits scroll over the following scene.

In the hallway of an office building is a door to an office
with a glass pane on which is written *Alexander Larousse
Attorney-at-Law*. The door opens and Alex steps out looking
sharp in a dark 3-piece suit. He has a briefcase in one
hand and carries a hard-bound book and magazine in the other.
He walks down a hallway to another office identified on the
door as *Great Lakes Epicure Publications*.

CUT TO:

69 INT. MAGAZINE OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Alex enters the office of Janice's food magazine. She looks
up from her desk. Placing the briefcase on the floor, he
conceals the magazine behind his back and places the book
on his wife's desk. He has a big smile. She looks at him
with annoyance.

ALEX LAROUSSE

(smugly)

It's a present from Celia. She
asked me to give it to you.

Janice looks at the cover. The title reads "*Long Journey,
Small Steps* by Celia James".

ALEX LAROUSSE (CONT'D)

There's a dedication to you on the
inside cover.

Janice opens the cover, reads the note and plops the book
back on her desk.

JANICE LAROUSSE

So she finished her book. Big deal!

Alex produces the magazine from behind his back. The cover
is folded, obscuring the front page.

ALEX LAROUSSE

She thought you might also enjoy
this.

(He reveals the
magazine from behind
his back)

Janice makes a grab for the magazine, but Alex teases her,
pulling the magazine aside. Finally he gives it to her. On
the cover is a full page picture of a bottle of Salsa
Infernál and under it the caption: *Mexico's Secret Salsa
Discovered!*

JANICE LAROUSSE

The little traitor! How could
she?

Janice stands up and paces about her office gesturing wildly
and angrily leafing through the magazine with Alex looking
on.

ROLL CREDITS

THE END