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SF PERUSALS

El Paso Blue

Octavio Solis

Music by
Michael "Hawkeye" Herman

A Samuel French Acting Edition

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EL PASO BLUE was first commissioned and produced by Paul Codiga at Intersection for the Arts (Frances Phillips, Executive Director) in San Francisco, California in May 1994. The performance was directed by Octavio Solis, with lights by Greg Tate and sets and costumes created by the company. The Production Stage Manager and Assistant Director was Nina Siegal. The cast was as follows:

AL . . . . . Jesus Mendoza

JEFE . . . . . Luis Saguar

SYLVIE . . . . . Delia MacDougall

DUANE. . . . . Rod Gnapp

CHINA. . . . . Mónica Sanchez

UNDERSTUDY . . . . . Maria Candelaria

CHARACTERS

AL

JEFE

SYLVIE

DUANE

CHINA

SETTING

The play takes place in and around El Paso, Texas.

TIME

Sometime before cell phones.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

El Paso Blue contains a number of songs written in a blues vein, but the entire play itself works like a blues song. With that in mind, please know that the guitarist (or band) should be integrated into the telling of the story. There are many opportunities in which music can underscore scenes or provide segues between scenes. But also the music can provide narrative accents; for instance, the guitar can underscore China's water gun each time it is fired, and it can create tensions within moments. In short, the musician should be as integral to the rehearsal process as the acting company in driving the narrative and creating mood and setting.

Stage movement in *El Paso Blue* is fluid and seamless. Although the characters occupy their own time and space, these sometimes bleed onto the same psychic zone. Staging should facilitate this function in the play through simplified set and props. Driving scenes should contain nothing to represent a car; "driving" simply represents an alternative manner of moving across the stage.

Duane's bracketed text: These lines indicate the transmissions that are being picked up by the metal plate in Duane's head. They jolt him as come out his mouth, along with the static (cgcgccc) but they bear the textures and rhythms of the voices on those transmissions. Like someone in an epileptic fit, he is unaware of the rapid fire collages of frequencies firing through him. Kinda like a person channeling ghosts in a séance.

(Blues guitar. Lights. **AL** *sits on the floor reading a crumpled letter in his prison greys;* **DUANE** *stands apart rubbing the back of his head and gazing upward;* **JEFE** *works the earth with a hoe;* **CHINA** *stands and watches them all with a cunning eye.* **SYLVIE** *appears in a sleek evening gown and tiara, holding a bouquet of roses and radiating charm. She sings her intro soft, slow, and bluesy.)*

[MUSIC NO. 1A : "LOVE ON THE RUN"}

SYLVIE.

I HUNKERED DOWN IN A SWEET SWEET PLACE
BETWEEN YOUR ARMS AND YOUR CHEST
SHELTERED AND SAFE FROM ALL THE TROUBLES
THAT PUT LOVERS TO THE TEST
BUT MY HEART'S MADE A CHANGE NOW
MY FREEDOM HAS BEGUN
AND HONEY, WE'RE BOTH DEALIN'
WITH LOVE ON THE RUN.

(She approaches **AL***, takes off her wedding band and on the last line plops it into the envelope* **AL** *holds in his hands.)*

*(***AL** *cries out. Music rips into an uptempo jag. During the course of the song,* **SYLVIE** *snarls and flings away her bouquet and tiara, kicks off her high heels, rips off her gown, and dresses in her smart jeans and tank top.)*

[MUSIC NO. 1B : "LOVE ON THE RUN PT. 2"}

LOVE ON THE RUN
GET OUTA MY WAY
LOVE ON THE RUN
GOT NOTHIN' TO SAY

GOTTA HIT THE ROAD BEFORE SHIT HITS THE FAN
GOTTA GET GONE OR I MIGHT TAKE A STAND
MOVE ME ALONG, MY TIME HERE IS DONE
GOTTA PUT MY LOVE ON THE RUN

(They speak over the music.)

AL. Sweetheart –

JEFE. *Querida mia* –

DUANE. There be souls on the wave, man, I heard 'em –

AL. My babe –

JEFE. *¡Guerita!* –

DUANE. Pinin' on the frequencies –

CHINA. White chick black heart brown sugar blue moon a night the color of bruise *ese* sing them low-down bruise, *puta*! –

SYLVIE.

LOVE ON THE RUN
NO TIME TO LOSE
LOVE ON THE RUN
I'M YESTERDAY'S NEWS

TIME COMES ALONG WHEN I GOTTA SAY BYE
MY SKIN GETS THICK AS THREE-QUARTER PLY
YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU, HELL, IT'S BEEN FUN
BUT I CAN'T STOP MY LOVE ON THE RUN

AL. I'm gonna find you, Sylvie –

JEFE. I will keep you forever –

DUANE. Comin' through the scratch of my radio head, the signals, the voices, the hearts all breakin' on the downbeat –

AL. I can't live without you –

JEFE. Without you, I cannot die –

CHINA. A night for bad blood, for blood gone astray, *venganza y amor*, two fins on the same Fury rollin' through the night, rollin', rollin', rollin' –

SYLVIE.

I COULD MAKE EXCUSES BUT EXCUSES ARE LAME
MY LOVE JUST WENT AS FAST AS IT CAME

SOME FOLKS WON'T STAY PUT FOR NO ONE
SO DON'T COME AFTER MY LOVE ON THE RUN!

(vamping) MY LOVE ON THE RUN
MY LOVE ON THE RUN!

(Spoken as the music plays and **SYLVIE** *grabs her suitcase.)*

AL. Sylvie, don't leave me like this. –

DUANE. I hear pain –

JEFE. *¡Ay, Sylvia, como tiembla mi corazón por ti!* –

DUANE. Noises of emotion, the static of a whole lotta need on the open wave –

CHINA. Watch out for these in the blue Texas night: semis, chiggers, border cops, knives, and love. Requited love, especially. –

DUANE. I hear 'em –

AL. I love you so much I could kill you –

JEFE. *Eres mi país* –

DUANE. An' nothin' I can do to stop 'em –

SYLVIE.

ON THE RUN
ON THE RUN
ON THE RUN.

(Blackout. **AL** *appears, sitting against the prison wall.* **DUANE** *enters.)*

AL. Where are they?

DUANE. I dunno. Some people said that he was gonna take her to Mexico City.

AL. What the hell's in Mexico City?

DUANE. A whole mess of things.

AL. Like what?

DUANE. Well, Mexicans, for one thing. It's a big city, Al. People get lost in there.

AL. Then let's get our asses moving.

DUANE. But some people say they're still in town, though. They say the car wasn't packed for no long trip.

AL. What people?

DUANE. I dunno. Bar people. How are you?

AL. Better 'n expected. My skin is pale, my heart's creamin' poison at the seams, but I'm a free man.

DUANE. Goddamn right.

AL. You know what being in jail for a whole year is like, Duane?

DUANE. What's it like?

AL. A lot like being locked up in a room for twelve months.

DUANE. I figured it would be.

AL. An' sometimes instead of feelin' clean and purged, a man can come outa there feelin' a little nastier than he went in. You see what I'm sayin'?

DUANE. Al, I'm sorry. If I knew that things were gonna turn out like this –

AL. Back off, Duane. No sense whippin' yourself over my problems. You had no idea what whores people could be.

DUANE. Say, let's celebrate at Blackjack's and shoot some pool. They got a new woman there who don't know how to pour.

AL. I'm not drinkin' no more, Duane. From now on, I'm touchin' nothin' till I get her ass back.

DUANE. Forget it, buddy. *Olvídalo.*

AL. I got my wrath, I got my fury. You got yours?

DUANE. Yeah. It's parked right over there.

AL. Do me a favor and swing me over by the Sporting Goods store.

DUANE. What for?

AL. Or not. Better yet, I can walk.

DUANE. C'mon, Al. Lissen to me. He's your old man. You are the fruit of his looms.

AL. That's exactly the point, Duane. He's my father.

(Crossfade to **SYLVIE** *and* **JEFE***, who is dragging out a large square chest. The huge deafening roar of a jet flying low overhead.)*

SYLVIE. Where are we?

JEFE. *Jornada del Muerto.* That's the desert this side of White Sands.

SYLVIE. No, I mean, what is this place?

JEFE. *Mi rancho.* When I married Alejandro's mother, I bought twenty acres for her.

SYLVIE. Looks like it's been abandoned for years.

JEFE. She had plans for this place. She put the barbed wire up herself when she was fat with the boy. That's how come he was born with little nicks all over his body. We delivered him right there.

(He points to the darkened stain on the floor.)

SYLVIE. Fuck. I knew it. The whole house is ringing with fate. He's on his way.

JEFE. He doesn't know where we are.

SYLVIE. All wounded soldiers of Venus beeline for their birthplace, Marcelo. Everybody knows that. It's like they can sense the end right where they begun.

JEFE. *(Yanking at the combination lock.)* Don't worry.

SYLVIE. I can feel it. Fate toastin' my old skin right off. Lookit me. Am I the same woman? Do I look like the deadbeat's wife? Uh-uh. I have been overhauled inside and out by Love; I have taken on an awesome power just for these carburetor days.

JEFE. *(Trying the combination.)* "Hear, O Lord and be gracious to me, O Lord be thou my helper…" 19-30-10.

SYLVIE. We are prevailed upon to love. That's what my Daddy always said.

JEFE. *(Trying another combination.)* "Oh my God, Let thy eyes be open and thy ears attentive to the prayer of this place." 14-6-40.

SYLVIE. The man's gonna be cruel. He's gonna feel his right to hurt me like I hurt him. Well, be as mean as you want, Al baby, 'cause I know cruelty is a puny lil' dingleberry compared to Fate.

JEFE. "I am about to go the way of all earth. Be strong and show yourself a man." 11-2-2.

(The lock opens. **JEFE** *lifts the trunk lid.)*

SYLVIE. *(Standing over the dark spot on the floor.)* Let him show his damned face. I know my change a heart has left a pack of fools in its wake but I defy any man to change it back!

*(***JEFE** *produces from inside a single gold band.)*

JEFE. Sylvia.

SYLVIE. From a damn robbery a year ago and this is what we come to?

*(***DUANE***'s frantic cries segue to the year before.* **AL** *has long hair.)*

DUANE. AL! AL! Jesus, you gotta do this for me! You gotta! Say yes!

AL. What's going on?

DUANE. Say yes!

AL. Fuck you. Can't you see I'm watching Hogan's Heroes?

DUANE. Al, no, this is important. This is real trouble! Where's Sylvie?

AL. Down at the liquor store. Now chill your ass out. CHILL!

DUANE. Okay, Al. I'm calm, I'm calm. Calm as a clam. You got any potato chips?

AL. All gone, buddy. Now, what's the problem?

DUANE. Okay, remember that Beauty Shop we said we were gonna do sometime?

AL. Which shop?

DUANE. LaShonda's Beauty Emporium, on Pershing. Remember that?

AL. Ah, shit, we talked about that a year ago.

DUANE. Yeah, well, it's been naggin' me, Al, every fuckin' night for the past year. It's been a real bear, man.

AL. Oh no. I know what you're gonna tell me.

DUANE. I did it.

AL. Asshole!

DUANE. I did it! I did it! I did it, Al! I broke in, man! I busted the place!

AL. How?

DUANE. From the video store next door. I got in a side door and then kicked in the sheet rock between them.

AL. You robbed the Video Store too?

DUANE. No, man. Those poor fucks are goin' outa business.

AL. So how much did you take?

DUANE. How much did I take?

AL. The loot. Let's see the loot.

*(***DUANE** *opens his bag. It is filled with hair care products, rollers, bobby pins, etc.)*

DUANE. It was dark and the alarm went off. Tension ruled.

AL. You are one big weenie, Duane.

DUANE. What could I do? My plate set the alarm off! The world was screaming for me! The cops, everyone!

AL. You really piss me off! If you'd asked me, I mighta gone and helped your ass around the deal. Unlike some buttholes, I can tell the difference between wads of bills and hair rollers!

DUANE. I know, Al.

AL. I shoulda been there!

DUANE. You kinda were, Al.

AL. What do you mean? What the fuck you talkin' about?

DUANE. The leather jacket you loaned me?

AL. Yeah?

DUANE. 'Cause I left mine in a bar?

AL. Yeah?

DUANE. You got your name on the inside pocket, right?

AL. That's right. Duane, where's my jacket?

DUANE. That's what I'm saying. Say yes. When they show up, say yes and I swear to you on my mother's fuckin' grave it'll be cool. The jacket don't mean nothin'! Sure it's evidence but a good lawyer'll reduce it to shit!

AL. I'm gonna reduce you to shit!

DUANE. *(Picking up the police radio.)* [Unit 21, reports indicate robbery suspect has been sighted heading south on Mimosa Street, over-cgcgccg –]

AL. OH MAN!

DUANE. Please, Al! I can't go to jail! I'm on probation already.

AL. Duane…

DUANE. If they nail me, man, I go do the big time. I'm way too young to spend my life in prison. I'll die in there!

AL. Well, if you think I'm gonna take the fall for you –

DUANE. They got your jacket, Al.

AL. No way, *ese*! I'm clean, I'm married now! Sylvie and me are squaring up our deal real fine. I'm not gonna lose her now.

DUANE. You won't lose her, Al.

AL. No.

DUANE. What do you mean, no?

AL. No means no.

DUANE. Al, you owe me. We're *camaradas*, and as *camaradas* we do for each other, we sacrifice.

AL. *Yo no te debo ni madre, cabrón!*

DUANE. You owe me! I took that bullet in the head for you. When my old lady aimed that shotgun, you were morgue meat. But who came out and took it point blank in the head and saved your fucking life?

AL. You did.

DUANE. I gotta metal plate right here instead of bone. I can't watch TV on account of it fucks up the reception.

I can't even rob a goddamn beauty store without setting off the alarm. I'm a disabled man, Al.

AL. I guess you are.

DUANE. I'm askin'. Do this one thing for me and I promise I will be your own personal dog, full time, 24-7.

AL. Duane, I don't want you to be my dog. Best friends don't treat each other like dogs. Best friends trade ratchet sets.

DUANE. Fuckin' a.

AL. Best friends eat off the same plate.

DUANE. Best friends lie for each other.

AL. They do what it takes.

DUANE. Pals trust each other!

AL. Amen.

DUANE. Listen, pal, don't worry about Sylvie. I'll take good care of her.

AL. If it's all the same to you, Duane, I think I'll find someone else.

(Blues riff. **JEFE** *is hoeing in his garden.* **AL** *approaches.)*

AL. I'm going to jail, Jefe.

JEFE. Have a good trip.

AL. Real jail. *La Tuna.* I'm doing time.

JEFE. How long?

AL. Two years. One with good behavior.

JEFE. Then behave yourself.

AL. I need you to do something.

JEFE. You wanna ride?

AL. No, I got Officer Lujan waiting outside in his car.

JEFE. Don't keep him waiting.

AL. Look, I don't like coming here any more than you do. But for the sake of Mama, you know, I'm willin' to put our shit aside.

JEFE. What do you want from me?

AL. I need you to put up my wife for awhile. Take care of her and watch over her.

JEFE. No.

AL. It'll just be till I get out.

JEFE. No.

AL. She needs a place to stay.

JEFE. She can stay at your house.

AL. We've been evicted.

JEFE. Too bad.

AL. She's no trouble.

JEFE. No.

AL. A fine woman. A remarkable beauty. She's been written about.

JEFE. No.

AL. She was a runner-up for Miss Texas a few years back. She's as good as they come.

JEFE. No.

AL. But she needs care.

JEFE. No.

AL. Dad, *mira.* She's a very frail and delicate woman. She's used to being treated like a moth.

JEFE. Can she cook?

AL. No.

JEFE. Then no.

AL. Listen. Two years max. you don't have to talk to her, you don't have to do her wash or nothin'. Just make sure she's alright. If her singing bothers you, just close the door to her room and she'll pipe down.

JEFE. She sings?

AL. From her guts.

(**JEFE** *turns and continues hoeing.)*

AL. Those rows are too wide for peas.

JEFE. They're not peas. They're tomatoes.

AL. You're gonna need a lotta water.

JEFE. They'll get it.

AL. Remember those big ol' ones I helped you pick?

JEFE. Oh yeah. I still have a picture of you holding up tomatoes as big as your head. That was the best they ever come.

AL. Mom always liked it when we worked on her garden. Quietly but together.

(Pause.)

JEFE. Two years. *Bueno.* Behave yourself.

AL. Her name's Sylvie.

(Blues chord. The present. **DUANE** *steps out, stands waiting for* **AL.** *Then he crackles and hisses. During the following, he receives voices and hisses of various transmissions with a deadpan expression.)*

DUANE. Hello…anyone…

[Hello/what's your handle pardner/lonesome on the kilohurtz/with a regular burger and fries, extra ketchup/on disability 'cause I put my back out/ reporting a domestic dispute in progress here at/ the slow lane on I-10 heading west to Fabens *(Hiss.)* ten four/okay/don't hang up/do you copy *(Hiss.)* AB negative when we bring him in/at the drive-thru window with cash total ready/for take-off once we clear the/frequency/lonely out here on the short wave/ interstate/studio/graveyard shift *(Hiss.)* deliver by ten/ request additional back-up/for all the times I said I love you or/may I take your order ma'am/negative/thanks a lot/I'm beat/oh baby/next call/*adios*/oh baby/fuck you/*(Hiss.)* lonesome on the kilohurtz… *(Hiss.)* my kilohurtz/awful bad…]

Hello?…

(Transmission cut.)

AL. *Órale. ¿Listo?*

DUANE. Yeah? What you got?

AL. This.

DUANE. Lemme see.

*(***AL** *takes out a prodigious hunting knife.)*

DUANE. Bro, are you outa your fuckin' head?

AL. You don't know what I'm gonna do. Nobody knows what I'm gonna do. Why, 'cause I don't know what I'm gonna do.

DUANE. Then what's the hunting knife for?

AL. Hunting.

DUANE. Dude, you're on your own on this one.

AL. I need you, buddy.

DUANE. Naw. I picked you up, I drove you, I paid for your pancakes, but that's it. That's it.

AL. How am I gonna find them? I don't gotta car.

DUANE. That's your big problem. This crate don't even go over fifty.

AL. I don't need it to go fifty.

DUANE. Al, they're gone! They heard you were out and they beat it over the river which frankly I say good riddance! Forget about them and lemme fix us up some fine ass, what do you say? Hookers on my tab.

AL. That's another thing, Duane. I can't fornicate worth a damn. My balls've turned to mush.

The thought of my father spillin' his seed over my bride has dried me up good. You wanna feel?

DUANE. I believe you.

AL. But feel. So you know what barren love is.

*(***DUANE** *touches his crotch.)*

Help me find 'em, Duane. That's the only thing I require back of you, seein' as how I wore your stripes, ate your bad food, and did your time.

DUANE. Hey, now, don't blame that shit on me –

AL. I'm not blamin' you. I went into this of my own free will. How could anyone guess what would happen? It was a inconceivable thing, a situation that broke every

fuckin' law of the heart. But it's done. They got the cruel shoes trodding on my face, buddy. I gotta do somethin' about it. The very least you could do for a man who paid your debt to society is drive.

*(***DUANE** *thinks.)*

DUANE. You pay for gas.

AL. I'll flip you for it.

DUANE. I'll flip you off.

AL. *Bueno.* I pay for gas.

*(***JEFE** *comes on as* **AL** *and* **DUANE** *leave. He stands, staring at the floor. Slams his keys down hard. He turns and shouts.)*

JEFE. YOU GONNA SIT IN THE TRUCK ALL DAY OR WHAT! …*vieja condenada…*

*(***SYLVIE** *staggers in, drunk out of her skull. Mussed hair, slept-in clothes. She surveys the house.)*

SYLVIE. I must have the wrong house.

JEFE. Shut up.

SYLVIE. This can't be where I'm stayin' –

JEFE. Shut up. Sit down.

SYLVIE. Hey, who do you dare talk to me –

JEFE. *(Shoving her into a chair.) ¡Cállate el hosico!*

SYLVIE. Better watch it, I cuss in Spanish too. *Pinchi cabrón pendejo bastardo señor fucko boca de caca*!

JEFE. You're a pig.

SYLVIE. Is that the best you can do, Daddy?

JEFE. I ain't your daddy.

SYLVIE. Ain't Alejandro your *hijo*? Am I not wedded to him by the El Paso Municipal Court an' before the sight a God? Then I guess I am yer daughter-in-law. An' you are my daddy, Daddy. Mind if I smoke?

(She takes the auto-lighter out of her purse.)

JEFE. That's from my truck.

SYLVIE. *(Tossing it.)* Don't work anyhow. Jesus, I'm parched. You got any juice in them cabinets, Daddy?

(No response.)

How 'bout some a yer home brew?

(No response.)

SYLVIE. Just nod if there's a minimart on the corner.

(No response.)

Ah, you're all the same. Tight-lipped old farts. You should see my father. Tight-lipped old fart just like you. I gotta pitture of him somewhere in here. He don't look much like he usta. His hair is parted different. Oh, lookie.

(She gets her glasses.)

Muh peepers.

(She puts them on.)

Oh my my my. I was blind but now I see. What a stinkin' rat's ass shithole you call a home, Pops. A bonafide eyesore. Horsefly heaven. Are those stains on the wallpaper or do roaches really grow that big?

(She throws her shoe at it. Roach goes splat.)

Yep. I guess they do. *(Laughs.)* Sorry, I know them *cucarachas* are central to your culture.

(Horse laugh.) Bet your son didn't tell you I was a real card, huh? An' you thought you were just gettin' beauty.

JEFE. You? A beauty?

SYLVIE. Up yours, goatman. I don't have to take none of yer crassness. I'm outa here.

*(***SYLVIE** *starts to leave.* **JEFE** *shoves her back down.)*

JEFE. Sit down. You're drunk.

SYLVIE. Lissen, *abuelito*. I'm freein' you of yer obligation. I'll arrange mah own bed an' board, thank you. I ain't this hard up.

JEFE. Sylvia.

SYLVIE. Don't call me that. My name is Sylvie. Didn't your boy tell you that or was he a little pressed for time? My friends call me Sylvie. An' I ain't drunk. Watch this. I can touch muh nose.

(She stands, spreads her arms apart and closes her eyes. She stays in this stance as the stop-time blues rhythm plays slowly on the guitar to her speech.)

None a this makes sense. None of it. We're watchin' TV over nuts and whiskey an' I step out to the Liquor Barn for ten minutes an' when I come back, Al's ripped off some store an' the police are runnin' him in. He don't explain nothin', he just gives me a kiss and some conditioner…

(The stop-time tempo increases as she gets herself all worked up.)

– an' here I am, with a man I don't hardly know in a house I don't hardly like. I don't fit in my jeans no more an' I got blotches on my skin an' my husband's in *La Tuna* Penitentiary an' ain't no spirit in my trees.

(The guitar abruptly stops and she sucks in a good toke of despair.)

Does any a that make sense to you?

(Slowly, she brings her hands to her face and weeps.)

My man is gone. My *Tejano*. Only man who ever knew the unfiltered Sylvie Townsend. Gawddamn his sorry ass, I love him. I love my Alejandro. I hurt fer nothin' in this world like I hurt fer him!

(She opens her teary eyes. He offers his rag.)

Thanks. I've had my oil changed.

(She starts to stagger out.)

JEFE. Sylvie.

(She stops at the doorway.)

You're my…daughter.

SYLVIE. So?

JEFE. *Dos pinchis años.*

SYLVIE. Good point. What's two fuckin' years.

(They gaze at each other. **AL** *enters and faces her. The roar of a jet. Lights out.* **DUANE** *and* **AL.** **DUANE** *picks up a voice on his plate.)*

DUANE. [this song to my baby I miss her I love you come home or I'm blowing my brains cgcgcgc]

AL. Why are you slowin' down?

DUANE. It's after ten, dude. What do you say to some pork chops?

AL. *No tengo hambre.*

DUANE. C'mon, Al. We been over this town all night. We've checked Ysleta, Bel Air, the Upper Valley, Lower Valley, Rudy Valley, ever fuckin' valley there is. We're not gonna find them. Moonless night, man.

AL. They're out there.

DUANE. So are ten kajillion other losers.

AL. Only two look like Sylvie y mi Jefe.

DUANE. Fact is, man, we're ridin' on fumes in *El Segundo* with nothin' but a damn hunting knife to keep the gangbangers off. I'm headin' home.

AL. Duane, so help me God –

DUANE. We're outa gas, you dumb shit!

*(***AL** *thrusts the hunting knife against his throat.)*

AL. Keep the car on the road. Or So Help Me God.

DUANE. She mean that much to you?

AL. Everything. My Sylvie is pure grace. Perfume inna bottle. All I gotta do is think beautiful and she's…she's there…

*(***SYLVIE** *comes out, reeling, and returns* **AL***'s gaze with soused affection.)*

AL. This impossible blonde with impossible blue eyes and skin like the felt on a brand new regulation pool table, and sheer American legs longer than you can spit and that voice that was born to sing. My Sylvie walkin' arm in arm with me, two-bit spic bum from the Lower Valley and she got her hand on my ass and she got her red Republican lips on my mouth, and out the corner of my eye I see them large-mouth honky fucks wettin' their 501s with pure envy 'cause I got me the purtiest songbird west of the Pecos.

JEFE. *(Offstage.)* HEY! YOU! WHERE ARE YOU!

SYLVIE. WHUT!

JEFE. You use my bathroom, you flush my toilet.

SYLVIE. I did!

JEFE. Flush.

SYLVIE. Awright, awright…

*(***SYLVIE** *goes.)*

DUANE. You're right, Al. She's a class act.

AL. She pierces my heart like some people pierce ears, Duane. I gotta find her.

DUANE. Still, can't we take a breather and get some chow?

AL. Pull over.

DUANE. What.

AL. There.

DUANE. Son of a bitch. Is that her?

AL. Pull over.

DUANE. I don't even recognize her.

AL. Stop the car.

(They pounce on a figure in the darkness they think is **SYLVIE***. A hideous animal shriek. They back off.* **CHINA** *flares her oversized parka and wool cap pulled down over her eyes. She aims a pistol at them.)*

CHINA. *Wassa ese, wassa*! Who cools you, slowboy!
Aquí no hay trespassing, *papacito!*
Ni tú, cabrón, keep a *distancia,*
A mi you no fuckee, you dig, *ese!*

Tengo mi superwater *pistola*
Fill *con pinchi* ammonia
For the dirty whites of your eyes!
You wanna try me, try me, come try,
Try and I burn you mothafukkahs blind!
This china girl be the last bitch you see
So think it twice, think it good,
An' hassle me none, *papacito!*

DUANE. Mother a God! What a toad!

CHINA. Who you callin' toad, *vato*!

(She sprays them. They cover their faces.)

AL. Okay, okay! *¡Chingao!* Forget you, girl! Our mistake.

CHINA. Damn right your mistake. I fully armed for the big war!

DUANE. Let's book, Al. Sorry. We thought you were this white chick.

CHINA. Whoa, muthafukkah! Who you callin' white! What kinda jive *pendejada* you talkin' about? *La China Golondrina* ain't no white chick. I be *puro* chocolate, *cuate*!

AL. Look, it's no big deal. It's dark out here, we mistook you.

CHINA. You got one thing right. Some jack dyed my night black. It's a *noche* very very *negra.*

DUANE. What the hell is that supposed to be?

CHINA. Pest control. My form a pest control.

AL. We won't waste no more a your time. Duane.

CHINA. Who you prowlin' for?

AL. None a yer business.

DUANE. His wife.

CHINA. Your old lady? You lost your old lady?

DUANE. We been searchin' all night for her and his father, but no sight of them yet. This guy, oh man, this guy is in some pain. Ain't you in pain, Al?

AL. Shut up.

CHINA. How come this pain?

DUANE. 'Cause his Sylvie dumped him for –

AL. You talkin' yourself out of a pint of blood, carnal, you know that?

CHINA. OOOH! *Doble-doble* heartache with extra cheese! *Vato papacito*, I get your picture and it is vile. Your papa was a rollin' stone and he laid his hat on your *gringa* home.

AL. What you open your big mouth for?

DUANE. She mighta seen them, pal.

AL. She ain't seen shit. Let's go.

CHINA. I have seen 'em.

(They stop.)

AL. Horseshit.

CHINA. Don't believe me.

AL. What do they look like?

CHINA. The old guy looks like you, except older and more used up. Whitey looks like whitey, an aspiring blonde.

DUANE. Aw, you ain't seen them.

AL. She is blonde, an' she happens to be white, and she happens to hold the lien on my heart.

You gotta problem with that, slick?

CHINA. Not if you don't.

DUANE. Where'd you see them?

CHINA. In this old dive, doin' the borrachera bop.

DUANE. How was she?

CHINA. Intense. She either hated the dude or loved him, dependin' on where you sat.

DUANE. It's her, Al.

AL. Name of the bar.

CHINA. I'll take you *vatos* there.

DUANE. No way. NO WAY. She ain't ridin' in my car! This chick is fatal.

CHINA. Then get lost. I got thangs to do.

AL. What for you wanna come along?

CHINA. I like a good hunt.

AL. That's not good enough.

CHINA. I wanna be there when you kill 'er.

AL. Make room for her in the back seat.

CHINA. Uh-uh, *papacito*. Shotgun!

[MUSIC NO. 2: "BABY I DO MISS YOU"]

(They go. Blues guitar on **SYLVIE** *scribbling on a ragged page between swigs of bourbon. She sings as she writes.)*

SYLVIE.

BABY, I DO MISS YOU
YOU'RE THE KEEPER OF MY HEART,
IF YOU DON'T COME BACK TO ME,
I'M GONNA RIP YUR ASS APART.

*(***JEFE** *enters.)*

SYLVIE. How long's it been now.

JEFE. *Dos meses*.

SYLVIE. Feels like ten.

JEFE. What are you doin'?

SYLVIE. I'm writin' mah husband a letter. Tellin' him what a shit you are.

JEFE. He already knows that.

SYLVIE. What do you want?

JEFE. Dinner's ready.

SYLVIE. I'm busy. Bring it.

(He takes a hard boiled egg from his pocket and drops it on the table. **SYLVIE** *starts peeling the egg.)*

I bet he eats better in prison.

JEFE. Then he should stay there.

SYLVIE. You don't like Alejandro much, do ya?

JEFE. He's not the son I expected.

SYLVIE. What'd you expect?

JEFE. A man of character. A man who would make his mother proud.

SYLVIE. Where's she?

JEFE. Dead.

SYLVIE. Then what's the point of impressin' her? I mean, who cares anymore what he does with his life? He's a grown *caballero*.

JEFE. What do you people know? What! Nothing.

SYLVIE. I know I need some salt.

(He takes a salt shaker from his pocket and slams it on the table. **SYLVIE** *begins to eat the egg.)*

JEFE. *Mariana y yo,* we came from Mexico where we had real lives. I was a bank teller and she was a *cantante*. A singer like you. *Cantaba muy bonito*. But coming here, we had to give all that up and be dishwashers and maids. We lived hard, but we saved what we could for the baby. *Mi* Alejandro. He would make everything worth it. His life would be better than ours. We bought a parcel of land in the desert. It was to be *nuestro rancho*. But she died when her diabetes got bad and I left the rancho and since then Alejandro's taken one long miserable piss on our dreams.

SYLVIE. Can I put that in my letter? "P.S. Quit pissin' on yer daddy's dreams."

JEFE. How come you're with him? What do you see in him?

SYLVIE. Well, shit, he's a Latin Boy. Latin boys are supposed to come on with this fire. Passion under the cover of shyness. He treats me like I'm somethin' special too, which the fair boys next door never learnt to do. See, I come from Dallas, where the cultivation of feminine beauty is a art form, Momma's words. I was a beauty

queen. All my life I been trained to be prim, perky, an' purty, to walk the Pageants like I own them. But beauty queens are a dime a dozen in Big D and beauty is a awesome sham. It don't solve nothin', it don't serve nothin' but the needs of liars. I need somethin' true. Alejandro keeps me honest.

JEFE. He's an honest mistake.

SYLVIE. *(Folding the letter into the envelope.)* That's yer opinion, Daddy. "Baby I do miss you…"

JEFE. Where did you learn to sing like that?

SYLVIE. My pa. Thought I should sing in the pageants. He'd pitch a fit if he knew I'm singin' for drunks now. You ever seen my father? I got his pitture somewhere.

JEFE. You sing okay.

[MUSIC NO. 3 : "THAT KIND OF NIGHT}

(She sweeps the egg shells into the envelope and seals it.)

SYLVIE. Uh huh. Gotta stamp?

(He takes a stamp from his pocket, licks it, and slams it on the envelope. **SYLVIE** *folds the letter into a paper plane and flings it across the room as the shearing zoom of a jet turns into the growl of the Blues Guitar. Everyone steps out.* **SYLVIE** *sings. The others speak in the rhythm of the song.)*

SYLVIE. Gun your motor, baby, buckle down for the heat
SLAP A LITTLE ROAD RASH ON YOUR COMMON LAW MEAT
RUN DOWN ANY SUCKER THAT COME IN YOUR SIGHT
IT LOOKS LIKE ITS GONNA BE THAT KINDA NIGHT
THAT KINDA NIGHT, THAT KINDA NIGHT…

AL.
WE GOT IN THE CAR AND FOUND A PUMP STATION

CHINA.
ME SITTING BETWEEN TWO SLABS OF BACON

DUANE.
THEN CRUISED RIGHT BACK TO THE STREETS OF EL PASO

AL.

IN SEARCH OF A BAR A BROAD AND AN ASSHOLE

SYLVIE.

RAW ON THE OUTSIDE AND INSIDE YOU'RE WORSE
YOUR CRUMMY LITTLE LIFE JUST GOTTA BE CURSED
IF YOU WANNA KISS, BETTER TURN OUT THE LIGHT
'CAUSE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN ON THAT KINDA NIGHT
THAT KINDA NIGHT, THAT KINDA NIGHT…

JEFE.

SHE DRINKS, SHE SLEEPS, THEN WAKES UP TO DRINK
SHE SPENDS A LOT OF TIME OVER THE SINK
ONE MONTH, TWO MONTHS, THREE MONTHS GO BY
SHE'S WASTIN' HERSELF AND I DON'T KNOW WHY.

SYLVIE.

ON THAT KINDA NIGHT
ALL BETS ARE OFF
ANY MAN'S LOVE
AIN'T NEVER ENOUGH
ON THAT KINDA NIGHT
YOU BETTER BE SMART
DON'T MESS AROUND
WITH THAT KINDA HEART
ON THAT KINDA NIGHT.

AL.

DOWN ALAMEDA, UP TO PAISANO

DUANE.

RIDIN' THE ROADS FOR THIS *POBRE TEJANO*

CHINA.

THE WIND IN OUR FACES HITS WITH A THUD

AL.

WE GOIN IN THE DIRECTION, THE DIRECTION OF BLOOD

SYLVIE.

THAT CIGARETTE BURN THAT YOU CALL AN EYE
WATCHES A WORLD DON'T KNOW HOW TO CRY
BABY, WE'RE BLEEDIN' BUT WE'LL BE ALRIGHT
WHAT CAN I SAY, SHIT, THAT KINDA NIGHT
PATTY CAKE, PATTY CAKE, BAKER WENT SOUTH
AN' OLD MOTHER HUBBARD IS DOWN IN THE MOUTH

NOBODY'S SLEEPIN', DON'T THINK THAT YOU MIGHT
NOT WHEN THERE'S ACTION ON THAT KINDA NIGHT.

JEFE.

SHE SINGS IN THE SHOWER WHEN SHE'S ALONE
SINGING AND DRINKING MY ONLY COLOGNE
I'D THROW HER OUT FOR WASTING HOT WATER
BUT SHE SINGS REAL GOOD AND HELL SHE'S MY
DAUGHTER.

SYLVIE.

IF YOU'RE EVER HURT FROM A HURT DEEP WITHIN
AN' FEVER'S DANCIN' ON YOUR DELICATE SKIN
JUST BITE DOWN, HONEY, HOLD YOURSELF TIGHT
YOU FUCKIN' LIVIN' THROUGH THAT KINDA NIGHT
YOU FUCKIN' LIVIN' THROUGH THAT KINDA NIGHT
AIN'T NO FORGIVIN' THAT KINDA NIGHT.

(Blackout. The loud smack of billiard balls. **JEFE** *and* **SYLVIE** *are gone.* **AL, DUANE,** *and* **CHINA** *are standing inside a bar.)*

AL. This the place?

CHINA. I think so.

DUANE. You think so?

CHINA. That Miller sign look familiar. Look familiar to you?

AL. Yeah, it's familiar.

DUANE. But is it the place? Thass the question. Is this where they were?

CHINA. Who cares? I'm thirsty. Buy me a chevre.

(She sits at a table. They join her.)

DUANE. Al, I think this chick, notwithstanding her taste in bars, is fulla shit. She's lyin', man.

CHINA. I ain't lyin'. I seen them.

DUANE. When did you see them? What hour of the day?

CHINA. Happy hour! Get me a brew, inbred!

DUANE. You don't need a brew. How old are you, anyway?

CHINA. Old enough to kick your ass!

DUANE. Don't make me laugh.

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