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Amazon edition
FADE IN:

INT. AUTOMOBILE FROM LOS ANGELES - DAY

The sun is rising and a journalist, LISA ESPOSITO (23) from a major newspaper is traveling. Focus on her ID. She is traveling to interview the characters at Slab City “Last Free Place in America”. Lisa’s cell phone chimes.

LISA
Hey. I’m sorry I left, you were sleeping still. I got an assignment.
(half beat)
Slab City.
(half beat)
It’s a community of squatters. Out to southeast.
(half beat)
Well technically they aren’t homeless, I understand.
(half beat)
Well, I’m the low reporter on the totem pole, I guess that’s why.
(half beat)
The assignment’s editor.
(half beat)
It’s already hotter than hell. 86º and the sun isn’t up yet.
(half beat)
Interview some people and I’ll see you later in the day.
(half beat)
It shouldn’t take long.
(half beat)
Thanks, I love you too.
(half beat)
Bye.

EXT. SLAB CITY, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Lisa’s car arrives at precisely the same time a florist van. It is seriously out of place and peeks her curiosity.

Lisa follows the florist van around aimlessly. Finally the van stops in the middle of the road. The DELIVERY GUY (21) is looking at a map, or his GPS. Lisa exits her car and
walks up to the driver’s door and motions for him to roll down the window.

LISA
Hi, I’m Lisa Esposito, I work for the Los Angeles newspaper. I’m working on a story? Can I ask you some questions?

DELIVERY GUY
Sure, but I have to find this trailer.

LISA
This is really out of sorts, I didn’t expect to see a flower van making deliveries out here.

DELIVERY GUY
A man died.

LISA
Okay, can you tell me about it?

DELIVERY GUY
Maybe I’m not supported to say, but someone from Los Angeles has sent out a wreath to put on the door of a trailer. You don’t know where it is do you?

LISA
There aren’t any addresses out here?

DELIVERY GUY
Evidently not. I have a picture.

The delivery guy has only a picture of a couple (arm in arm) in front of a trailer. There are big smiles on the man and woman’s face. They are young and in the prime of their life.

LISA
I don’t know. I just followed you in here.

DELIVERY GUY
Well, the lady, I talked to her, she said it was definitely still out here.
LISA
It’s a bit odd isn’t it?

DELIVERY GUY
What?

LISA
Delivering out here.

DRIVER
Never been out here before. But of course I’m getting paid.

LISA
A big tip?

DELIVERY GUY
Let’s just say she wants it done.

LISA
What are you going to do?

DELIVERY GUY
Drive around until I find it.

LISA
Well, do you mind if I follow you.

DELIVERY GUY
I don’t care.

LISA
You gonna to write a story?

DELIVERY GUY
Might.

LISA
Okay, come on.

Lisa returns to her car.

Lisa follows the flower delivery van to the trailer.

EXT. ULTAN’S TRAILER - DAY
The delivery guy gets out and looks at the trailer and then again at the picture. It’s a match. The delivery guy looks closely at the door. There isn’t a mechanism to hang the wreath, so the delivery guys gets out a screw and electric screw driver.

While this is happening, an African American neighbor approaches. It’s OLD CHOCOLATE (63) and he wants to see what is happening.

OLD CHOCOLATE
What’s going on?

LISA
Hello, I’m Lisa Esposito, I work for the Los Angeles newspaper. There was a death?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Ultan. They took his body to town.

LISA
That’s a unique name. You have a last name?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Everyone at the slabs has a street name.

LISA
And no one is called by his or her given name?

OLD CHOCOLATE
I wouldn’t tell you his real name even if I knew it. It’s part of the code.

LISA
Code?

OLD CHOCOLATE
People are out here because they want to be left alone.

LISA
I see. Of course. That makes sense.
OLD CHOCOLATE
His name was “Ultan, the warrior who never smiles”.

LISA
And he lived here? No electricity or water.

OLD CHOCOLATE
We got water last week.

LISA
No sewer?

OLD CHOCOLATE
It’s all composted.

The delivery guy has finishing hanging the wreath; he waves good-bye.

DELIVERY GUY
Good luck!

LISA
Thanks. Going back to L.A.?

DELIVERY GUY
Two hours back.

LISA
Have a good one.

DELIVERY GUY
I’ll look for your story.

The delivery van leaves.

OLD CHOCOLATE
You writing a story about Ultan?

LISA
Thinking about it.

OLD CHOCOLATE
A tragedy?
LISA
Well, a human interest story.

(beat)

Wait. Tragedy?

OLD CHOCOLATE
You want to see something?

LISA
Sure. Can I use this? I helps me later when I sit down to write.

Lisa has a small digital camera that she turns on.

INT. ULTAN’S TRAILER – DAY

Old Chocolate takes her inside the trailer. It is full of remembrances and photos of Ultan’s one true love. There are dried flowers and empty champaign bottles. The same ties from the formal prom photos are hanging on the walls. There are stuffed animals and saved movie ticket stubs. It’s a shrine to this MYSTERY WOMAN.

OLD CHOCOLATE
He always said he would love her until the day he died.

LISA
It would appear he did.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Well let’s see if she shows up to the funeral.

LISA
Who was this woman?

OLD CHOCOLATE
I don’t know; she moved on before I came out here. They call her the “mystery woman”. He never said her name. But I do know she was a year younger than Ultan and she’s in L.A. now; I know that.

LISA
How long have you been out here?
OLD CHOCOLATE
Four years.

LISA
What’s your nick name?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Old Chocolate. But you can call me Chocolate.
(half beat)
You want a tour of Slab City?

LISA
Sure.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Can you spare $10
(half beat)
Or a meal?

LISA
Uhh...

OLD CHOCOLATE
Introductions to everyone that lives out here.

LISA
Uhh... okay. You have a deal.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Great.
(half beat)
You’re ready?

LISA
That’s why I’m here.

They exit the trailer.

Much of this first episode is characterization. We need to maintain a delicate balance – giving the characters an edge but keeping them sympathetic. The characters are all misfits living in the desert. They are drug addicts, alcoholics and former criminals. But they’re endearing.
Each has an appealing trait. However, rough they appear they are for the most part harmless.

EXT. SNAKES’ TRAILER - DAY

Lisa and Old Chocolate walk a bit toward a trailer.

OLD CHOCOLATE
This guy is Snakes. You’ll see why.

LISA
He has snakes?

OLD CHOCOLATE
You’ll see.
  (half beat)
Frankly, I’ve never heard him say anything about anything but snakes. He likes rattlesnakes.

LISA
Oh, my.

INT. SNAKES’ TRAILER - DAY

It’s a very small trailer. Old Chocolate and Lisa are sitting at the table. SNAKES (48) is standing with a rattlesnake in each hand. He has a crazy look in his eye and he is talking very rapidly. He is handling the snake entirely too fast. Bear stands in the doorway smiling.

SNAKES
Ohhh... Awe...

Snakes holds the snake by just behind his jaws. He holds it very close to the camera. It frightens Lisa. Old Chocolate isn’t fazed.

He releases the snake’s neck and it could easily bite him. She doesn’t. In fact he kisses the snake on the lips. He has a second snake around his neck.

SNAKES
(too Bear)
Relax, this is a good girl.

He puts one snake around the neck of his friend, Bear.
SNAKES
(to the rattlesnake)
Remember, you’re Bear’s friend.

Bear actually pets the snake. Very slowly, but still...

Snakes talks to Lisa.

SNAKES
This is a Western Diamond back. It is a neuro-toxic, more than a hemo-toxic snake. It kills more people in the United States than any other reptile.

Snakes holds the snake recklessly upside down by it’s tail. The snake’s head is inches from Snakes’ fat belly. Not only is Snakes insane, but he’s full of shit and totally confused about rattlesnakes and coral snakes. But he is handling the snake roughly without being bitten.

SNAKES
Up north, you see this snake with these black splotches on here. This is part of what I’m trying to tell you. If you go up north and you see a snake that is green, and this is red and there are yellow borders, then there is about a 70% chance you’re gonna die. That’s were they get the red touches yellow kill fellow. It’s called a Mohave green. You’re gonna die if you get bit.

All the while Snakes is playing with the snake, both snakes. Even Bear is petting the snake. Snakes is rambling on like he’s on speed and is fearless of the snakes. He handles them like a pet bird, cat or a dog; only he makes a number of quick and rapid movements.

SNAKES
It’s a neuro-toxic snake. It goes in there and shuts you off. It doesn’t make a big bite, and you don’t think that much about it. But it’s in there shuttin’ you off. I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy. If I hated your guts I
wouldn’t wish that kind of death on you.

(half beat)
If I was trying to exert information from you, I might use a snake. The physiological part, like “Where are the children”. Something like that. I’ll get the information from you; I’ll use your fear. To wish something like this on someone, it would have to be serious.

(half beat)
What happened, was my mom wouldn’t let me have a rattlesnake as a kid. But getting bit and being in hospitals and things, I learned how to catch them and get them out of people back yards, so people don’t get hurt. So I learned a talent from a lot of pain, that I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy, catching them and taking them a mile or two away.

(half beat)
See look at these bombs.

Snakes hold up a photo of an exploding ordinance out in the desert. Lisa is quick to nod her head, preferring to look at the photo from a distance.

SNAKES
See if we get a problem we can’t handle our self, then we get someone who knows what they are doing and they blow the stuff up. There’s a marine base over there and sometimes people go over there and get bombs and sometimes the bombs come over here.

(half beat)
A rattlesnake is like one of those bombs. It’s just waiting to go off. Right there, ready to go off. It can make you into a casualty. So what I’m saying is these snakes aren’t a couple of toys. They are like a hand-grenade that someone pitched in here. A land-mind you are about to step on.
LISA
That makes sense; you’re trying to help people.

Snakes is petting them with affection and kissing them but at the same time…

SNAKES
I don’t have no sympathy for these things. All they are to me is a hors d'oeuvre. When it gets right down to it, I’m starving and trying to survive, I might eat this son of a bitch. I might eat a man’s butt, but not a woman’s butt, cause a woman don’t have as much meat on her butt. I might eat a dog’s butt, if he’ll let me get away with it. Survival. A woman’s butt don’t have no meat.

LISA
So you eat these snakes?

BEAR
Yeah, we do!

SNAKES
Only if they try to bite us. Then we cut them up and yes they taste like chicken. My dog finds them. Sure he does, he finds them and then comes and gets me.

Lisa is awed at this unique character.

LISA
You knew your neighbour?

SNAKES
Ultan?
(half beat)
What a great warrior dude. Never smiled though. His funeral will be sometime.

LISA
What about this mystery woman?
SNAKES
I’m not sure about her. I was a baby when all that happened.

LISA
What do you think will happen? She’ll come to the funeral?

SNAKES
I’m going; the man was my neighbour. But, we really don’t like villains out here. Rich bitches certainly ain’t welcome.
(half beat)
Might turn a snake out on her if she comes out here.

LISA
You wouldn’t do that would you?

SNAKES
(innocent smile)
I might. I’m the most dangerous man you know.

Snakes is unbelievable. You have to figure he’s all talk.

LISA
Can we go now?

SNAKES
Oh, sorry. I don’t want you to feel trapped.

Snakes reaches over and rapidly grabs the snake off the neck of Bear. Snakes takes a big step backward clearing the exit. He steps on a snake that feels threatened and might strike, but Snakes doesn’t put his weight down. He steps off the snake. It’s not harmed but crawls off toward the back of the trailer.

SNAKES
Oh, god; I almost stepped on you. I’m so sorry. You’re my friend. I deserved to be bitten. I’m so sorry.
Bear moves out of doorway. Lisa and Old Chocolate see their chance to leave and are relieved to be out of there.

SNAKES
Bye, come back.

Lisa gives him an apprehensive wave. Snakes waves with one of the snakes.

EXT. SNAKES’ TRAILER - DAY

LISA
Oh, god. I’ve never been so frightened in my life.

OLD CHOCOLATE
He’s a scary dude, for sure.
(half beat)
Let’s go see if Biscuit’s back. Every morning he drives to town and buys a biscuit.

EXT. BISCUIT’S TRAILER - DAY

Biscuit is leaning against his car. Lisa is interviewing him.

BISCUIT
Sure, I run over there every morning. Ten miles. Drink a glass of water, sometimes three and have a biscuit.

LISA
What about the gas?

BISCUIT
I buy it and put it in the car.

LISA
That’s pretty expensive, isn’t it?

BISCUIT
I should stop going. She thinks I still care because I still visits that café’. I heard people making fun of me. But see this is uncivilized territory. Driving into town is like going into
Manhattan. It don’t have nothin’, to do with that waitress.

LISA
You’re from New York?

BISCUIT
Well, yeah.

LISA
How’d you come out here?

Long beat.

BISCUIT
I don’t know.

LISA
When did you come out here?

BISCUIT
I don’t really remember.
(beat)
Oh, I came out here in my car.

LISA
Reliable?

BISCUIT
375,000 miles and still running strong.
I go into town every morning.

LISA
Wow. Well it was nice talking to you.

EXT. DOWN THE ROAD FROM BISCUIT’S TRAILER — DAY

Lisa and Old Chocolate walk down the road.

LISA
What is it gonna be one tragedy after another?

OLD CHOCOLATE
I thought you wanted to talk to people.
LISA
I do.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Well, you can’t get upset then if they talk to you.

LISA
I’m not upset. It’s just different out here.

OLD CHOCOLATE
You always have to take into consideration where you are.

LISA
You’re right.

INT. BABY’S SHACK - DAY

BABY (55) is sitting in tears.

BABY
I feel tears wellin' up again. Deep inside; like my heart's sprung a big leak. I don’t think I’ll ever shake it. You might say that I was takin' it hard; she wrote me off with just a call. But don't you gamble that I'll hide my sorrow; I’ll probably break right down and bawl.

Lisa can’t imagine what question started all the tears.

EXT. BABY’S SHACK - DAY

LISA
What was all that about? I didn’t mean to set the guy off.

OLD CHOCOLATE
He just does that. (half beat)
Ask him “what’s for breakfast?” and you get tears.
LISA
How sad.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Actually, the guy has the best weed out here. He’s very popular. Something about plant genetics.

LISA
There a lot of that out here?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Right now, we’re experiencing a boom.

We have a movie theater now.

LISA
How’s that?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Netflix he went to town bought a generator, a big screen TV and 118 palates. He charges a quarter or a Ramen for admission.

Old Chocolate gestures to a building made from palates.

LISA
Wow, I’d want to talk to him.

OLD CHOCOLATE
He sleeps in the day.
(half beat)
Movies all night

LISA
‘Cause of the heat. I see.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Several people upgraded their RVs. Carpet. Propain refrigerators. Solar panels.
(pointing)
That car, two or three thousand dollars.
(pointing)
That car and that trailer. New. Well used but new to the desert.

LISA
Is that marijuana?

OLD CHOCOLATE
You noticed that, huh?

LISA
It’s something new?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Not entirely but I can testify that production and quality is definitely up.

LISA
(chuckles)
Okay, I’ll take your word on that.

OLD CHOCOLATE
A guy named Digs he just ran water to everyone’s slab.

LISA
Water, that seems to be key?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Can you keep a secret? That well, I’ll take you over there later, it’s a fake. The water is coming from the canal.

LISA
And you can drink it?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Government came out here. Teacher told them not to do it; that water and electricity and sewer would only draw attention.

LISA
And it did?
OLD CHOCOLATE
They tested the water and it tested out better than what they got in town. Digs is smart, he built a filter.

LISA
Digs?

OLD CHOCOLATE
He was some type of engineer like what works for a city.

LISA
A civil engineer?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Yeah, but he got into some kind of trouble. Embezzled money and then lost it. Invested it in the wrong place. I know he won’t let you take his picture.

LISA
Okay, I won’t.

OLD CHOCOLATE
He’ll make you turn off that camera.

LISA
Okay, I will, just tell me.

OLD CHOCOLATE
This is RPG’s space.

EXT. RPG’S TENT – DAY

It’s not really a tent, but about 20 plastic and canvas tarps hung from a dead tree. Under the tarps is a sleeping bag, a lantern, and a battery powered radio.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Now this guy gets check, but I don’t know where he is.

LISA
A check?
OLD CHOCOLATE
Ex-military.

LISA
Don’t all these people get a check.

OLD CHOCOLATE
No. He’s the only one I know that gets one. It ain’t much though.

LISA
Really? He lives in here?

RPG (25) arrives.

RPG
Dude, your in my space.

OLD CHOCOLATE
I’m sorry man. I brought you a visitor.

INT. RPG’S TENT - DAY

RPG pretty clearly has PTSD.

RPG
My mother crying, earthquakes and tornadoes, the bus that took me to the army, and the war of course. I hear those sounds all the time. But you want to know what really breaks me up is sound of that closing door. Fuck it was years ago, forget that. I think that’s just normal.

Evidently his love has left him and that sound resonates “years” later.

EXT. LUCKY’S VAN - DAY

LISA
Who’s next?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Lucky.
LISA
Really out here?

OLD CHOCOLATE
What?

LISA
Someone named Lucky?

OLD CHOCOLATE
I think it might be a name that’s really not...

LISA
Satire?

OLD CHOCOLATE
I think, he’s pretty unlucky, but he might not be aware.

LISA
Ironic?

OLD CHOCOLATE
I don’t know. Let’s go talk to him and you can tell.

INT. LUCKY’S VAN - DAY

LUCKY (59) is Slab City’s most malnourished and hungry resident. But, he’s also the more cheerful and happy.

LUCKY
(to Old Chocolate)
I’ll talk to her for a Ramen noodle.

LISA
I don’t have any noodles on me.

LUCKY
How about money? You have money?

LISA
I know this sounds silly... I mean a soup package, but we don’t pay for interviews.
LUCKY
Come on, it’s just one soup.

LISA
Okay, how about a dollar?

LUCKY
Oh, that would be great. I’ll talk to you all day for a dollar. I can buy a bunch of soups.

LISA
Why are you called Lucky?

LUCKY
I’ve always been lucky out here. I’ve had good luck and bad luck. And no luck, it’s true. But I always get lucky out here.

It’s incredible because no one would say someone in his condition is lucky.

LISA
What do you weigh?

LUCKY
I don’t know.
(half beat)
This nurse was out her once when I first came out here. I weighted 175.

LISA
And now you are down to about what, 130?

LUCKY
Healthy living. Fresh air.
(half beat)
I’ll never die of a heart attack.

LISA
The glass is half full with you?

LUCKY
What glass?
EXT. CAT’S TRAILER - DAY

There are five or six cats hanging around a trailer.

    LISA
    Look at all those cats.

    OLD CHOCOLATE
    Big battle between the snake people and the cat people.

    LISA
    What? They don’t get along.

    OLD CHOCOLATE
    The cats keep the snakes away, pissing on everything. The snakes smell it and leave. And every-once-in-a-while a cat will kill a snake and eat it.

    LISA
    Well, that’s the idea right?

    OLD CHOCOLATE
    It hacks off the people that eat the snakes.

    LISA
    Oh, I see. Man, that’s wild.

    OLD CHOCOLATE
    She’ll tell you what happened. She tells everyone.
    (half beat)
    This isn’t the most peaceful place, you know.

    LISA
    You mean this isn’t Shangri La?

Old Chocolate chuckles.

INT. CAT’S TRAILER - DAY

A woman, CATS (51) tells about the down side of Slab City.
CATS
Well, probably everybody’s telling you what's to right with this place. I was raped out here. Four of 'em. My asshole hurt for a month.

LISA
What’d the sheriff do?

CATS
Sheriffs? The laughed what do you think they’d do?

LISA
Well...

CATS
You should know I’m not liked out here mostly because of my cats, but also because I’m HIV+.
(beat)
I’d leave but where the hell would I go?

EXT. CRIMINAL’S CAMPER - DAY

CRIMINAL (57) is tattooed, old school, retired career criminal. Criminal lives in a camper, designed to be in the bed of a pickup truck. It’s sitting on the ground.

CRIMINAL
My mother tried. But I turned 21 doing 20 to life with parole. The Governor personally released me with a signature.

EXT - OLD HICKORY’S PLACE - DAY

One Slab City resident, OLD HICKORY (34), is named after the whisky, not the president.

OLD CHOCOLATE
This is Old Hickory.
LISA
Oh, after the President. You’re related?

OLD HICKORY
Hardly.

Old Hickory holds up a bottle of whisky.

OLD HICKORY
Old Hickory!
(half beat)
But I’ll tell you this bottle let me down again last night.

LISA
Do you think you have a drinking problem?

OLD HICKORY
Yep, this shit don’t work.

LISA
How’s that?

OLD HICKORY
I just can’t get enough to drown out everything. Life is short but this time it was bigger. I went to war and she went to cheatin’. So every night, I put this bottle to my temple and pull the trigger.

LISA
You’re trying to drink yourself to death?

OLD HICKORY
Why not, she did. This stuff killed her dead.
(half beat)
But it won’t work for me. Ain’t lethal like they advertise.
(half beat)
That doesn’t mean I’ve given up.

Old Hickory takes a swig.
INT. - ASSHOLE’S SHACK - DAY

ASSHOLE (72) is an anti-social who blames the left for all societal ills. He is a very negative character. Old Chocolate reluctantly takes Lisa to see him, but he doesn’t speak with the man and we get the idea there is some bad blood.

ASSHOLE
Peace, Joy and all the hippie shit.

LISA
Really?

ASSHOLE
You’re educated; you know the decline of the nation, economy and for all this poverty!

(half beat)
Every population deserves the standard of living they get; they voted for this place. If we had a limited government and a capitalist economy this place wouldn’t exit. There wouldn’t be any need for it.

(half beat)
How... can you redistribute the wealth to unproductive people and build factories? And these government programs, there isn’t a one that doesn’t harm the country.

LISA
But haven’t you all moved out here to get away from the government.

ASSHOLE
They’re about to bring your Marxism to this community and like you said, “the last free place in the country.”

LISA
Why do you say that?
ASSHOLE
Your type always does. This hippy commune thing, I see right through it. There will be a government out here before the end of the year.
(half beat)
Me and Teach tried to warn them. First comes the water and then the water board and they’re even working on bringing the grid out here. It’s a plot to bring government here and let them into our business. You know what these people dream of at night… post offices!!

EXT. - ASSHOLE’S SHACK - DAY

LISA
I noticed you didn’t introduce me to him, like you did with the others.

OLD CHOCOLATE
I don’t talk to that dude. He’s crazy. A fanatic.

LISA
He always like that?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Always. I mean you heard him. Obviously he’s not well liked, but to each his own.

LISA
Free speech?

OLD CHOCOLATE
There’s a down side to that you know. We have to listen to the guy. I think he votes. He hates them and he votes.

LISA
That’s odd. You guys are okay with the government and you don’t vote?
OLD CHOCOLATE
Well, I wouldn’t say we’re okay with the government. Most people don’t like the government but they think water will not bring them out here.

EXT. SKATE PARK - DAY

OLD CHOCOLATE
You want to see the skate park?

LISA
Sure.

OLD CHOCOLATE
It’s the old pool.

LISA
Swimming pool?

OLD CHOCOLATE
This was an Army base back in the day.

LISA
Okay. The slabs were part of that?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Yep.

(half beat)
Now these guys are tweekers.

LISA
You have those out here too?

When they arrive at the edge of the old pool, they can see inside. There are ramps and obstacles and two skateboarders.

TWO TWEEKERS (Dumb and Dumber) are skateboarding in Slab City’s drained swimming pool in the hot sun.

Old Chocolate walks over to the shaded area and looks at the thermometer.

OLD CHOCOLATE
It’s 115º out here and these fools are skateboarding.
(half beat)
That’s Dumb and the other guys he’s
Dumber.

LISA
Apparently, they don’t mind the nick
names?

OLD CHOCOLATE
No, they answer to it fine. Tweekers,
what are you gonna do?

The tweekers are soaked in sweat and they continue skating.

LISA
It’s 115º?

OLD CHOCOLATE
Hey, guys. This is a reporter from
town. She’s writing a story about us in
the newspaper.

The tweekers rides by on their skateboards. With their
hands out to slap five.

DUMB
Nice to meet you.

DUMBER
Welcome to our area.

But, they will not stop even to be interviewed.

They skate until one tweeker collapses. The other takes him
a tree and throws water on him. for the tweekers, it’s like
this is a daily occurrence and they don’t need any help.

Lisa witnesses it and is incredulous for her.

Lisa and Old Chocolate walk away when the collapsed tweeker
regains conciseness.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Don’t worry too much; it’s happened
before.
LISA
No one says anything?

OLD CHOCOLATE
What you do in your space is your own business. That’s what it means to be free.

(beat)
You’re from the city where everything is against the law.

LISA
Oh, I thought it was the last “free” place in America, because there’s no rent.

OLD CHOCOLATE
It’s that kind of free, too.

EXT. ROUTE 66’S TRAILER - DAY

ROUTE 66 (71), regardless of the question asked, he rants about the “good old days”.

ROUTE 66
I wish a dollar was worth something. It was back before Reagan, Reagan turned the country to shit. I liked Carter, when the country was still strong. Before cable TV and when a men wanted to be left alone and still could be.

(half beat)
I came out here when they said the good times were over. And when we started rolling downhill, with no kinda chance for equality or justice.

(half beat)
Yall, want a smoke?

LISA
We gotta go. I want to see some more people.

ROUTE 66
Ask them what happened to this country? Why are the rich getting richer? And why does everyone have to have a
microwave?

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BEAR AND FLOWER’S SHACK – DAY

A young couple, Bear and Flower, have an argument. Flower runs out from their shack to the neighbor’s shack.

BEAR
Well fuck you too, you cunt!!

Flower is crying and running across the street.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Uh-oh, here comes goodbye.

BEAR
I already talked to you fuckers, over at Snakes’. Mind your own business.

Flower visits her friend and she gives her the “stand by your man” speech.

EXT. NEIGHBOR’S AREA – DAY

When Old Chocolate and Lisa arrive at the NEIGHBOR’s area – chairs out under a tree tarp... they want to talk to the neighbor but...

NEIGHBOR
Sometimes it’s hard to be a woman. Giving all your love to just one man. You’ll have bad times, and he’ll have good times. Today’s just a bad day. It’s hot, maybe he’s feeling the heat?

FLOWER
He’s such an asshole.

NEIGHBOR
He’s doin' things that you don't understand?

FLOWER
He put a bugger in my hair.
NEIGHBOR
But if you love him, you'll forgive him.

FLOWER
I don't know why I love him.

NEIGHBOR
Stand by him. I heard plenty worse. Sit here with me for a while.

Lisa and Old Chocolate.

EXT. ANGEL’S TRAILER

ANGEL (38) is a naturally light skinned woman. She is laying out in the sun tanning herself. It’s not working.

(Angel) says “one of these days” in every sentence.

ANGEL
I won't have to cook. I can be bad or I can be good. I can be any way that I feel. One of these days.

LISA
One of these days?

ANGEL
Might be a woman that's dressed in red. Be a fancy call girl in San Fran. Maybe I'll be gone like the wind one of these days. One of these days it’ll soon be all over, cut and dry. One of these days. Cause somewhere for me I know there's peace of mind. Somewhere, one of these days.

LISA
So living out here, is there anything that you need?

ANGEL
All I want for Christmas is a real good tan, and one of these days...
Angel is pale and sun burned.

INT. TUNES’ RV - DAY

TUNES (68) is an old hippy, but in a $100,000 RV.

TUNES
Well, I lived out here when I was a kid for about a month. I was in a band and they broke up. But out here I sort of found myself.

LISA
You made it as a musician?

TUNES
Nope, never did. I was a record producer.

LISA
But you come to Slab City to every year you said?

TUNES
About two weeks is what it takes me to keep it real. You know what I mean?

INT. BELLE’S STORAGE SHED- DAY

SOUTHERN BELLE (42) is an emotional wreck. Lisa listens.

BELLE
The greatest man I ever knew lived right in the same house. We ate breakfast me him and my mom. And her never said I love you.

LISA
But you think he loved you?

BELLE
I think he did. He might have.

Her father never said that he loved her. He might or might not have loved her
BELLE
But I never heard it and it haunts me a little.

INT. HARVARD’S TRAILER – DAY

HARVARD (61) is sitting at his table; he has a yellow legal pad and has been transcribing the television program.

When Lisa and Old Chocolate enter, he puts down the pen but he’s distracted by the TV throughout the interview.

HARVARD
It’s the Oral History of the World.

LISA
Why the “oral” history?

HARVARD
No one writes anything anymore. I think it’s genius. Because they don’t record anything. Now newspapers and magazines they save, but TV and radio? No.

LISA
Without your record, the historians in the future won’t have...

HARVARD
Well they will only have the newspapers and magazines, that no one reads. But don’t you think they should have a record of what is said?

LISA
I see. How many pages?

HARVARD
My publisher says it should be about 30-40 volumes.

It totally consumes his trailer.

LISA
Can I see some of it?
I would let you see it but I’m not done yet. And it’s delicate. Some of the pages are old the cheap ink has faded and the paper has acidified. The first chapters, 1989-1990 especially. Harvard sits in front of the TV in the day and radio at night. Transcribing everything.

LISA
How did you choose this place to write your book... books?

HARVARD
Well, I got getting kicked out of Harvard my senior year and then after a while I was re-admitted. Best years of my life. It’s all recorded for posterity.

LISA
What were the worst years of your life?

HARVARD
I didn’t know it at the time, but looking back the worst job I ever had was with the government.

LISA
What did you do?

HARVARD
My job was measuring the nose length and exact skin color of various Indian tribes, traveled all over helping determine which Indians were reddest.

Harvard might be the least credible of all the characters. His story seem improbable.

EXT. STITCH’S TRAILER - DAY

Stitch is a woman who collects dresses and tuxedo suits. They are stored in a large “Maersk” shipping container. We are talking about 500 discarded formal dresses. And there
are perhaps 200 tuxedo suits. Everything is old and faded and arranged by size.

STITCH
I wasn’t invited to my prom.

LISA
And I understand you now put on a prom?

STITCH
My husband puts on the prom for the residents here.

LISA
But you loan out the dresses?

STITCH
And the suits.
(half beat)
And for other occasions too.

LISA
Like the funeral tomorrow?

STITCH
Yes, everyone is going to dress for that.

INT. TEACH’S TRAILER — DAY

TEACH (65) and sits to be interviewed.

TEACH
I was a government teacher.

LISA
At a high school?

TEACH
A community college. Back then if you slept with a student, nothing happened to you. Then all of a sudden... well the shit hit the fan.

LISA
You seem disgruntled.
TEACH
They took everything I owned.

LISA
You’re giving the community advice about things?

TEACH
Politics? I hate that crap.

LISA
But you have an idea what is going on?

TEACH
The land is owned by the State of California and these people are making it worth something with all these improvements. We have water now! Sewer! They’re even working on bringing electricity out here. And someday they’ll wonder why someone comes in here to buy it.

(half beat)
These people can’t afford anything. If we pitched in with everything we own and formed a corporation or a non-profit, we wouldn’t even come close to buying this land.

(half beat)
Our only hope is to leave the land worthless.

(half beat)
I say ‘they’, it’s really me. I’ll be the first to lose my place. They’ll fool around and lose the land, and who will lose out? Me!

LISA
Is there a real danger of that?

TEACH
They will only draw attention and cause the state to sell the land. And then next thing I’ll will be forced out.

(half beat)
They asked me to help with the permitting. This jackass, Diggs, he’s
getting permits... and the next thing they start talking about in town is... us!

LISA
He has permits for what he’s doing?

TEACH
Water, electricity, sewer system, the next thing you know we’ll have a government and that will be the end of everything.

LISA
Some would say that it’s odd for a government professor to be so frightened of government.

TEACH
Anyone who knows the nature of government should be afraid. Just hide and watch. It’s just a matter of time.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE INTERNET CAFÉ - DAY

CENTERCOLD (52) owns a digital camera and he’s fiddling with it as he walks from the desert. B.J. (42) is a $2 whore who is dresses up to the nines. B.J. and Centerfold have been out in the desert taking photos. B.J. is returning and headed to the library.

LISA
(to Centerfold)
Hey, do you mind if I ask you some questions? I’m a journalist.

CENTERCOLD
Sure.

LISA
I’m going to upload these pictures.

INT. THE INTERNET CAFÉ - DAY

Lisa and Centerfold enter and sit at a laptop.
CENTERFOLD
You want to buy some of my pictures for your magazine?

LISA
Oh, probably not. It’s a newspaper. And I’ve taken some.

CENTERFOLD
Big internet sensation.

LISA
You post them on the internet?

CENTERFOLD
Pictures of B.J.? Sure do. Average about 30 or 40 hits per day.

LISA
You have your own website?

CENTERFOLD
www.desertbeauty.com

LISA
Really, I’ll have to check that out.

CENTERFOLD
It went viral about six months ago. Only confirmed desert prostitute that has ever happened to.

(half beat)
I’ve been taking pictures for 30 years and never had anything like this happen.

(half beat)
People send me money. They sent me this camera.

LISA
Who?

CENTERFOLD
Just kind people feeling the love and the manufacturer sent the camera. They said “knock yourself out”.
LISA
Good.
    (half beat)
What’s your street name out here?

CENTERFOLD
Centerfold.

LISA
Oh, you worked for a men’s magazine?

CENTERFOLD
I wish. They just call me that. Who knows why? I don’t do nudes.

LISA
The model...

CENTERFOLD
B.J.

LISA
B.J. doesn’t take off her top?

CENTERFOLD
No man, that’s the beauty of it.
There’s no need for that. We’re getting hits without that.

LISA
So, help me out why do you think B.J. is so popular on the internet?

CENTERFOLD
Well she’s not no runway model you know. But I think she is symbolic of the decline of America and I think the site is used as a capitalist propaganda tool. Like socialism created her. How ridiculous.

LISA
Isn’t it. I’ve seen similar political stuff online. Homelessness shouldn’t be politicized should it?

They’re all oblivious to politics.
CENTERFOLD
I’m an artist and B.J. has this inner beauty. It doesn’t matter where we live.

LISA
But obviously you’re okay with it all… right you keep taking pictures.

CENTERFOLD
I’ve been taking photos all my life but never had any recognition, so maybe I’m exploiting the situation. I mean 30 hits per day; that’s incredible. People “crowd fund” me and camera companies send me equipment. So, I don’t give a shit about the politics. Go ask the governor or something; I’m a photographer.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE LIBRARY – DAY

B.J. talks to Lisa about the blowjob business.

LISA
How do you make it out here, I mean economically?

B.J.
Sucky sucky is not something you should love or hate. There are so many factors which influence a blowjob — who, when, how many times you’ve sucked it, where, what time of day, and whether its Ramen or cash involved — that make any kind of generalized statement about the act impossible. In the Buddhist sense, it’s neither good nor bad. A blowjob just is.

Lisa is taken aback and a bit embarrassed.

B.J.
Over the years, I’ve remembered giving more blow jobs more than remembering others. The first one I gave, while
drunk on some satanic tequila mixture at age 14, was not the best introduction to things. But I bounced back once I was out here and pretty soon I was sucking men in 120º plus temperatures like a pro. But out here, all the cocks sucked seem to cancel each other out, leaving me shrugging my shoulders about the whole thing.

LISA
Actually, I wanted to ask you questions about the photography and Ultar?

B.J.
Poor man he had his heart broken, I can’t talk about the pictures. Just that Centerfold it’s important for him and nobody else out here will encourage him and his art. Some of these people hate art unless it’s recycled junk piled up in the shape of a reindeer.

EXT. DIGGS TRAILER - DAY

DIGGS
Hey, hey. Turn off that camera.

LISA
It’s off. I’m with the newspaper.

DIGGS
Put it away.

LISA
We just came by to see your cooling system.

DIGGS
You a reporter?

LISA
Los Angeles, yes.
DIGGS
We passed the water test. They said it’s cleaner than in town. I have the report if you want to see it.

LISA
I just came to see how you deal with the heat. You have some sort of contraption?

DIGGS
Oh, you should have said. Come on.

INT. DIGGS TRAILER - DAY
Diggs opens his trailer up to Lisa. It’s a very small space so Old School remains outside.

DIGGS
You can film my cooling system. But not me. You’re in my space and I say no pictures.

Lisa agrees.

DIGGS
There are six or eight inches of additional insulation and a highly complex evaporative cooler — with water and anti-freeze elements.
(half beat)
I’ve reduced the living space in my trailer by 1/3 or slightly more, but I can control the temperature.

LISA
Oh, yes. This is nice.

DIGGS
It’s 83 inside here.

LISA
And what 115° outside?

DIGGS
That’s about right.
LISA
You’re also working on running water.

DIGGS
I’m done. Those solar panels they pump it out of a well into the filters and then to the people’s slabs.

LISA
Things greening up?

DIGGS
Of course.

LISA
What about electricity, people are talking about that?

DIGGS
We have an application almost ready for the utility commission. There’s some resistance though.

LISA
Lights and air conditioning?

DIGGS
The sewer system is half done. Resistance about that too.

LISA
Who would oppose toilets.

DIGGS
You’d be surprised. Recyclers. They want it composted in their back yard. When if they’ll just consent, it can be composted at one location.

LISA
How are you paying for all this?

DIGGS
Let’s just say we have a benefactor.

LISA
From where?
DIGGS
Here...

LISA
Really?

DIGGS
Oh, no. Actually, that’s not right. They’re from... Washington.

LISA
D.C.?

DIGGS
No, Washington State.

LISA
Well, let’s go see this miracle well you dug.

Diggs and Lisa walk out to the bogus well, which is actually supplying water. There is a hand painted sign, “Miracle Well”. There is a small water filtration system and even chlorination system. It’s very crude but it’s just enough to get the job done. Soon they are joined by B.J. at the well. It’s all solar powered.

EXT. OUT ON THE HIGHWAY - DAY

The engine on a custom van seems to have seized up only miles from the slabs. CHRISTIAN PEOPLE tow the van out to the slabs.

EXT. IN THE STREET AT THE SLABS - DAY

A couple with kids, dirt pour arrive. There seems to be some debate about where to park the van. Diggs points them to an open space where there is a lonely water spout sticking out of the ground.

EXT. THE WATER WELL - DAY

Lisa is intrigued by the new residents and abandons the water well. B.J. and Centerfold remain at the well.
B.J. reaches into her pants and pulls out a wad of cash, $20 bills. She hands them to Diggs. He quickly stashes him out of site. B.J. is the source of all the money for the water and sewer works.

It’s “magical realism” and it’s needed to propel the community into a situation that will force them to react to even a small amount of progress. If you didn’t study magical realism in school, please DO NOT produce this film. Put this script down immediately.

Diggs looks around to see if anyone can hear. The coast is clear.

DIGGS
B.J., let me ask you a question.
(half beat)
I know how this is working, but can you clear up a few things?

B.J.
But I don’t want anyone else to know.

DIGGS
Does Centerfold know?

B.J.
Nope. He just likes taking photos.

DIGGS
Okay, I’m not talking. You know that.

B.J.
Okay. I trust you.

DIGGS
Okay, here’s my question. When did you know that was happening?

B.J.
I didn’t really until back, well when I gave you the money for the well.

DIGGS
When was the first time?
B.J.
My mother said when I was a newborn baby.
    (half beat)
She took me to the mall and had my picture taken and a $20 bill magically appears in my diapers.

DIGGS
What did your mother do?

B.J.
She said she washed it pretty good and bought some drugs with it.

DIGGS
Your mother didn’t tell you that. Did she?

B.J.
You don’t know my mother. I loves her but she was the worst dope fiend I ever saw.

DIGGS
I’m sorry.
    (half beat)
So every time you have your photo taken $20 shows up, in your...

B.J.
Panties. Yep.

DIGGS
Just one particular pair or any.

B.J.
I only have two.

DIGGS
When was the next time that happened?

B.J.
Well, I was sucking a guy up against the side of his car and some smart-ass kid sneaks up and has a flash camera.
DIGGS
That was the second time you had your photo taken?
    (half beat)
What about at school?

B.J.
I don’t remember any $20 bills; we moved around a lot.

DIGGS
So, if you knew how to make money like this. What are you doing out here?

B.J.
I didn’t know. It was just a picture and $20. I thought I was just fucked up so bad I didn’t remember putting it down there.

DIGGS
You never got arrested?

B.J.
Oh, yes I did. I forgot.
    (half beat)
They charged me with contraband in the jail. Shakedown and they found a two twenties.

DIGGS
So, when did you put two and two together?

B.J.
Prom. Our prom out here last year.

DIGGS
Centerfold, took all those pictures.

B.J.
Yep. Man, I made a huge haul that night. And I figured it out.

DIGGS
Wow. It’s so hard to believe.
B.J.
You got the proof there in your water project don’t ya? It ain’t coming out of my pussy naturally.

DIGGS
Well, you know you’re alright.

B.J.
Wait.
(beat)
I don’t know where they’re coming from.

DIGGS
Well it doesn’t matter, look what you’ve made possible.

Diggs gestures to someone washing their face at a water faucet. Others are growing nice healthy looking marijuana plants.

B.J.
You can’t tell anybody. Half of them are against the water. You know who.

DIGGS
I won’t say a word.

It’s a tragedy but the Slab City prom is the fourth time B.J. ever has her photo taken. It’s emblematic of the sad life the woman has endured - rape, neglect, and prostitution. However, she has a heart of gold and when she discovers every time she has her photo taken, a $20 bill appears, she could take this phenomenon to L.A. and live the “good life”, but instead she remains and funds the Slab City civil works projects.

EXT. NEWBY’S PLACE - DAY

Old Chocolate helps direct the backing operation. Several slabbers help push the van into its final resting place. Old Chocolate is seen welcoming the new family and seems to be pointing out the library and the internet café.

EXT. IN THE STREET - DAY
A STRANGE WOMAN exits the Slab City library appears and speaks with Lisa?

STRANGE WOMAN
Chocolate helping show you around?
   (Lisa nods yes)
He’s a good man.

LISA
What can you tell me about him?

STRANGE WOMAN
He helps everyone, you know.

LISA
He seems to be pretty popular around here.
   (half beat)
You guys are so blunt with your nick names… Doesn’t anyone ever get upset about their names? The racism, sexism, etc. B.J. and Chocolate?

Beat.

STRANGE WOMAN
Oh, “the Chocolate” he’s not called that because he’s black. We named him that because he gave an old box of chocolate to a lady that lived over there.

The woman points to an empty place out in the desert.

LISA
She’s gone?

STRANGE WOMAN
Hell, yea. People are in and out of here all the time. Just us hardy types can handle it year round you know.

LISA
What happened to her?

STRANGE WOMAN
Snowbird, she’s gone now.
LISA
Hey, can I ask you a question?

STRANGE WOMAN
Sure.

Old Chocolate arrives and hears most of the question or perhaps only the answer.

LISA
Just talking with the people out here, it’s like a broken hearts club. No? (half beat) Most people are here because of broken hearts?

STRANGE WOMAN
All that physiological lovey-dovey shit don’t weigh nothing with me. It’s economics. They don’t have any money. The economy is shit and these people would be the last to get hired if there ever were any jobs. So they make due with whatever and however they can.

OLD CHOCOLATE
My philosophy is that it’s two things. It’s the mental illness, drugs, including alcohol. If a man...

STRANGE WOMAN
Or woman...

OLD CHOCOLATE
...is crazy, it’s okay here. Nobody will even notice and he... or she can just be free with that out there. But also, the drugs and alcoholism. Economically, these people can’t afford to kill themselves with drugs... they just can’t buy enough. So in reality this is something like a refuge. In the city, most of these people would be O.D. dead.
LISA
But some people are out here because they chose this lifestyle?

OLD CHOCOLATE
True, people hiding from the law. Other people just want a simple life.

LISA
It’s a little bit of everything? (half beat)
But you think unrequited love is the root of it all?

STRANGE WOMAN
It’s sweet to think that but, nope.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Nope.

STRANGE WOMAN
Basically it’s the vice.

EXT. VAN - DAY

NEWBY (28) and NEWBIE (24) and the NEWETTES (young kids) are totally out of sorts. Newby, distraught, speaks to Lisa.

LISA
Where are you guys from?

NEWBY
Michigan.

LISA
Wow, you came a long way.

NEWBY
Our van crapped out only miles from here. I thought if we made it though December we’d be okay. We made it through December. And I thought everything was gonna be all right I thought. It was the coldest time of winter and now I’m here and fuck it’s hot.
EXT. THE STAGE AREA – LATE AFTERNOON

A luxury RV pulls up. A second bus pulls up. Musicians.

Also making a huge cloud of dust are eight SHERIFF’S DEPUTY’S cars. A sheriff’s truck and a county van pulls up.

Sheriff’s deputies (pigs) want to shut down a concert.

A CONCERT PROMOTER (21) leaves the deputies and approaches Lisa.

PROMOTER
I’m the promoter. Let me tell you what happened. I wrestled with the county for over a year about getting a filming permit.

SNAKES
Well that was your mistake.

ROUTE 66
You should have just done it.

PROMOTER
So, anyway. We went through a bunch of red tape. After spending thousands of dollars and pulling people’s fingers back. And now they are telling us we need a festival permit, because it’s live music.

RPG
What horse shit?! They don’t want live music!

LISA
What are you wanting to do?

PROMOTER
We’re making a concert video. We aren’t making a concert video.
(half beat)
We have five bands and some local talent as well. But you can see what’s
going on. We didn’t think it was that big of a deal.

Old Chocolate walks over to the deputies and from a long shot. He might be arguing with them. The deputies make a threatening move toward him and he backs off. The deputies simple stand by.

OLD CHOCOLATE
There are eight Johnny on the spots. I guess they think we got it going on, so they are going to shut us down. They brought all these cop cars with them. Ha-ha-ha, you know what I mean? I think we are good people and it’s not a big deal.
(half beat)
We can probably take care of ourselves like we have the last twenty-five years.

A third luxury bus, containing a band, drives up. The deputies almost run over before they can disembark from the bus.

OLD CHOCOLATE
The officers, they don’t want to let anyone get off of the bus. Afraid they will get outnumbered out here.

Digg is almost hiding under a tree, watching but staying clear of the brewing conflict. Harvard is just near enough and scribbling (transcribing) everything down on a yellow legal pad. Most of the community has gathered around Lisa and Old Chocolate.

ASSHOLE
Worst scenario for these pigs, is they become outnumbered here in the desert by freedom loving people. That’s why they wouldn’t let people off the busses.

BISCUIT
They can’t arrest us all.
SNAKES
I’m ready to go to jail, what about you all.

TEACH
They might just arrest us slabbers and let the bands go.

OLD HICKORY
Depends if they find drugs on that bus. In that case, they will seize it for the county.

ASSHOLE
Like this county needs another commend center.

CATS
Haha. Like if ISIS blows up the Salton Sea.

ROUTE 66
How many buses they already got? The county.

LUCKY
Two or three at least.

We can see the deputies motioning with their hand gestures not to get off the bus. Someone (the MANAGER) does step off the bus. He is immediately handcuffed and taken to a patrol car.

The producer walks over near enough to the bus he can hear the conversation.

DEPUTY
Sir, we told you not to get off the bus.

MANAGER
I’m the manager. Can you tell me what is going on?

DEPUTY
Sir, we’re going to place you over here in this car until we decide what to do.
Four deputies instruct the passengers to now exit the bus. They are placed outside of the bus and told to place their hands on the bus. Everyone is searched. Then four other deputies enter the bus and begin a thorough search of the bus.

The producer walks over to the group of slabbers with Lisa.

**PRODUCER**
Well, they stopped the bus. What a reception right? So there are at least 9 cop cars here now. And no one can get back on the bus until they say it’s okay.

**STITCH**
Let’s have a big party.

**PRODUCER**
Yeah, right. The most expensive party ever. Hey, it’s on me.
  (gestures to the empty stage)
  Go party your ass off.

**RPG**
Burn their cars.

He’s ignored.

**PRODUCER**
He said, you almost snuck it past us. He said not a single band that was advertised on the site can play.

**TEACH**
So we use pseudonyms. Different names.

**PRODUCER**
No, he said no one is playing here tonight.

**BABY**
So, we just go out in the desert and play.
PRODUCER
No, he told me they would be here until every single person leaves.
(half beat)
He said if they see even an acoustic guitar playing next to a fire, we’re all going to jail.

OLD CHOCOLATE
Then we’re all going to jail.

The search of the buses ends, unproductively. The bands all leave in their buses leaving only the community and Lisa remain.

CHEROKEE FIDDLER speaks up.

CHEROKEE FIDDLER
You know what? I’ll go out in the desert and play… when they come out there after me, you guys jam.

Everyone chuckles. It’s not a serious idea at the time. But they don’t want to hurt the fiddle player’s feelings.

PRODUCER
That’s a good idea, man. (half an idea)
You live out here?

CHEROKEE FIDDLER
Sure do.

PRODUCER
Thanks for your input. But I think we’re fucked.

EXT. THE STAGE – NIGHT

Later, there are three deputies just standing on the stage. Everyone in the community are just milling about like it’s a fair. But then they hear distant fiddle music.

The deputies all get on their radios. Their eyes are darting out in every direction like there are known subversives about.
The three deputies on the stage remain. The community gathers around them, watching.

Five deputies walk out in the desert.

Three get in their cars and rush out into the desert. It’s rough on the cars and puts a thick haze of dust in the air.

The music stops.

The deputies all return in their cars and on foot back to the stage area. The music begins again.

The deputies now all look enraged and now run into the desert in force. A helicopter arrives and shines a search lamp down. The music might have stopped. The helicopter can’t seem to locate anything with the spotlight. The deputy’s cars are all over the place. We see deputies on foot trying to use their flashlights. Still nothing.

EXT. THE STAGE – MORNING

Lisa has slept in her car.

The Sheriff’s department cars are gone.

Old Chocolate and most others have not returned to their places for the night. Basically, everyone has crashed on the sofas at the stage. Everyone is sleeping, but still out in the desert, there is a faint hint of fiddle music.

Old Chocolate is the first to wake up he sits up and cocks his head, listening. Lisa wakes up and exits the car.

The sound of the fiddle is interrupted by…

A bulldozer arrives and begins work digging a lake/pond that will become a water treatment plant.

They have a short debate before rising for the day. They were up half the night listening to the fiddler’s dual with the sheriff’s posse.

TEACH
What the fuck is that noise?!
Someone wakes up Harvard... He immediately takes up the transcription.

TEACH
Diggs you fucking asshole, if you run the grid out here, I’m going to kill your fuckin’ ass.

STITCH
Hey, calm down.

BELLE
No one is going to do anything without a vote.

B.J.
It’s sewer.

OLD HICKORY
Oh, okay.

FLOWER
Hey, what about compost for the weed?

LUCKY
Buy fertilizer.

FLOWER
Fuck no.

BISCUIT
Well, shit in a bucket for all I care. I vote for toilets.

TEACH
Did we vote on the sewer?

ANGEL
I think you were in town?

TEACH
Well that sucks.

STITCH
Everybody knew; you didn’t have to go into town.
TEACH
Man, you have to legally post a notice
of shit like that.
(half beat)
I guess you also snuck in a vote on the
grid?

STITCH
Nope. That’s way out. But you might
want to show up and be heard, if you
know what I mean.

TEACH
I’m telling you people hooking up to
the grid is suicide.

Everyone remains laying out on couches. No one sits up in
this conversation, EXCEPT B.J. who looks hopefully,
dreamily, at the dozer work.

Everyone returns to sleep. Until...

EXT. THE STAGE – MORNING

A California land office agent arrives and when he begins
to talk, everyone rises.

LAND AGENT
Hello, can I ask you folks a question
or two?
(half beat)
There’s a resident’s association? If
not can we form one.

TEACH
Wouldn’t be legal.

LAND AGENT
Well, maybe we can legally form one?

ASSHOLE
Not a chance. You can leave the way you
came in.

LUCKY
Wait a minute...
STITCH
Listen to the man.

TEACH
Why do we have to do anything?

LAND AGENT
I can maybe make you an offer today. As you know the lands you are squatting on are owned by the state. I’m from the State Land Commission. If you don’t or can’t purchase the land in a reasonable amount of time, there will probably be an auction.

STITCH
What do we have to do?

TEACH
These people are libertarians and anarchists, we ought to run you out of town on a rail.

OLD HICKORY
Anarchists what exactly does that mean?

TEACH
It’s anti-government and people think it means “no rules” but it actually means everyone controls their space and “they” make up the rules for inside their space.

ROUTE 66
If you go with this, you will be suckered into just another government.

TEACH
This is exactly how government gets started. A few of you will be able to oppress the rest of us. And it will all be perfectly legal.

OLD HIPPY
If you want to get rich, in America you get your hands on the government and you chow down on the others.
TEACH
It’s that way everywhere in America but here. This is the last free place in America and you’re about to piss it away.

STITCH
Please, listen to the man.

LAND AGENT
If you can create a non-profit residents association, the commission will help you find a loan. There are non-profit sources of capital available.

(half beat)
I have some paperwork that will create an association.

STITCH
What do we need to do?

LAND AGENT
You just need to form a board of directors.

Three people step forward to form a board of directors—Flower, Bear and Stitch.

STITCH
Okay, that’s three. We’ll do it.

FLOWER
That was simple.

LAND AGENT
I’m sorry; the law that requires a board of five.

STITCH
Okay, people all we need are two more patriots to “save the slabs”.

BEAR
Newby, you’re newly arrived, you have kids and a family.
FLOWER
A really nice family.

Someone in the crowd chuckles.

TEACH
Sycophants.

ROUTE 66
You people just need board members but also one’s your can control.

Newby is happy to be asked...

SLABBERS
Booo! Hiss...

There is a long beat... and Newby contemplates... and finally agrees. He moves over to the group of three. Now there are four. The four sign the document.

BEAR
Ultar would have stepped up.

OLD CHHOCOLATE
No, he wouldn’t.

ASSHOLE
You bunch of Nazi’s, you will just say anything to control and trick people.

As the Newby signs the document, the rest of the community disbands in disgust. It’s almost like they know “government” is inevitable. They grumble and look at the other community members with hate.

LAND AGENT
If you can’t get this done today, I can come back. The Land Commission isn’t in any rush. You have friends and aren’t in this alone. I’ll just come back, take your time.

The land agent shakes hands with the four signed board members.
LAND AGENT
The issue will remain open for now. Maybe you can get another to participate.

The issue clearly threatens to divide the previously harmonious community. There is some doubt if everyone will attend the funeral later.

STITCH
Wait, wait. This shouldn’t divide us. We can take it up later.

OLD CHOCOLATE
It’s time to go over to Ultan’s. We always do.

Everyone stops contemplates and change directions as they start for Ultan’s trailer.

OLD CHOCOLATE
You probably know that Ultan wasn’t our friend’s real name. What was his name anyway?

No one seems to know. Everyone looks around but there isn’t an answer. Well they’ll know at the funeral.

DIGGS
That medical examiner will know. I have his card here somewhere. He said to call if there’s anything.

OLD CHOCOLATE
I’m not going to ask anyone from the god damn government what my friend’s name was. I’m only bringing it up because we need to find a place for these comic books, “Ultan: the Ultimate Irish Folk Hero and Warrior.”

SLABBERS
Library!

The strange woman steps up and takes the comic books.
OLD CHOCOLATE  
Okay, that makes sense.  
(half beat)  
What about the other stuff? The solar panels and batteries.

FLOWER  
Give them to someone who needs them.

Long beat as people consider.

BISCUIT  
The Newby’s in a van.

OLD CHOCOLATE  
Agreed?

Several slabbers have screw drivers and they take off the solar equipment and the Newby family takes it.

Cooking utensils and a mini-stove, bowls, cups and plates all are divvied up. It’s orderly and peaceful. Everyone takes a part of the estate.

OLD CHOCOLATE  
The trailer?

Ultan’s trailer, now contains nothing but his remembrances of the mystery woman.

Everyone is about to walk away. No one wants the trailer which is in bad condition. Basically, it’s unlivable and more work than it’s worth.

OLD CHOCOLATE  
Last chance on Ultar’s trailer. It’s a vintage, Airfloat Navigator. I little beat up but…

Old Chocolate ceremonially throws a cup of gasoline inside and then a book of lit matches.

It’s burns. It’ is mournful and almost like a funeral pyre.

INT. VARIOUS SLABS - DAY
Everyone goes home to dress for the funeral and everyone puts on his or her best. They get out the faded black dresses and mismatched suits.

B.J. wears a bright color and sexy dress. Stitch has to send her back for another dress. Apparently Stitch has loaned her a black dress, more appropriate. B.J. has tears at this mistake in etiquette, but recovers when Stitch hugs her.

Many of the clothes have been borrowed from Stitch’s dress collection. The mood is still mournful, even after a good length of time.

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

The Slab City residents load up and share rides into town. Political opponents ride in the same car like nothing happened previously.

As they are leaving the community, a fire truck arrives. The funeral fire is basically over and there isn’t anything around to burn, so the fire has contained itself. The location is so remote, the fires extinguish themselves before any firemen have time to arrive.

There isn’t really any particular look that the community gives the firemen as they depart. It appears like the entire community is leaving for the funeral, just as the fire department arrives.

Nothing is said while driving into the town, everyone just looks out at the desert or mountains. One or two have their head in their hands and are starring down at the floorboard.

EXT. RIVERSIDE COUNTY COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A county coroner’s vehicle is parked outside, backed up to the door of the community center.

There’s a lone new (or almost new) Mercedes in the parking lot. New and polished, it’s sticks out like a sore thumb.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER IN TOWN - DAY

At the front is a very simple casket.
Cherokee Fiddle has left Slab City early for the funeral and he is already there, playing songs beside the coffin – “I’m Ready To Go”.

In the seats, there is the MYSTERY LADY, well, dressed and looking younger than her age. Ultar looks 102-years-old in the coffin. The mystery lady looks only 60 at the most.

She is NOT sitting in the front row.

The slabbers might be late, the county official glances at his watch, its 2:35 pm.

Old Chocolate rises and walks to the front of the room.

Snakes exits rather than listen to the elegy. The cameras follow Snakes into the parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Snakes tries to get in the driver’s side of the Mercedes, the door is locked. He reaches into a rucksack and pulls out a rattlesnake. He puts it in the passenger-side floorboard and it crawls under the seat.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER IN TOWN - DAY

Snakes reenters the hall and Cherokee Fiddle is playing, “The Soul of Man Never Dies”.

People rise and file by the open casket. Again we are reminded that Ultar looks 30 years older than the mystery woman, who we know is only a year younger.

Cherokee Fiddle plays “Amazing Grace” as people file by the casket, paying their last respects.

The mystery woman remains in her chair.

Standing in the back of the room, Old Chocolate motions for everyone to leave, to give the mystery woman some privacy. Cherokee Fiddle remains playing.

Finally the community goes ahead and leaves for outside.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER IN TOWN - DAY
Everyone stands around. Maybe the woman will exit. They all wait in the hot sun.

OLD CHOCOLATE
(to Lisa others also hear)
First time I've seen him smile in years.

Lisa gets in her car to wait. She starts the engine and turns on the air-conditioning.

Finally, the heat wins out. The community drives back to Slab city.

Lisa remains in the parking lot; her car air conditioner working perfectly.

Amazing Grace remains the music as the woman exits to her Mercedes. And, Lisa follows on the highway back into Los Angeles.

The mystery woman doesn’t discover the snake until the air conditioning brings it out from under the seat.

She and Lisa are half-way back to L.A. when the woman slams on her brakes and slide over onto the shoulder. She exits the car rapidly.

FADE TO BLACK