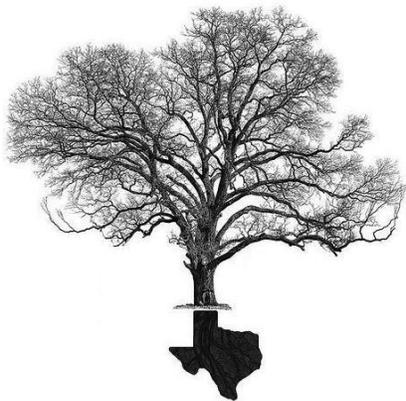


# Slab City

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Pecan Street Press

LUBBOCK • AUSTIN • FORT WORTH

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SLAB CITY

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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. 86° 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 supposed 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 her? 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  
whats 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 115° 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 115°?

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 man 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?

HARVARD

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 a 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

CENTERFOLD (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.

CENTERFOLD

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](http://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 120° 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 simply 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.

MANGER

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 FIDDLE speaks up.

CHEROKEE FIDDLE

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 FIDDLE

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 HIPPIE

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  
Ultrar 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 Ultan'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 staring 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