

THROAT

By Mando Alvarado

CHARACTERS

MAGGIE MORGAN- Late 20's. She has the mind of a scientist but the mouth of a sailor. She comes off as abrasive but under that facade lies a woman who's only fear is that she will end up alone.

CESAR RODRIGUEZ- early 20's. He has the heart of a poet but the demeanor of a sulking adolescent. He wants only want one thing, to walk the cold concrete steps of New York City one foot at a time, not looking up, not looking back, staring at the ground, hoping to find himself again.

JACK MORGAN - Late 20's. He's learned that what you do in the past does not always define who you are. Mistakes will happen, but how you deal with them makes you the man you are.

SETTING

NY
Warehouse
Bar
Office

TIME

Present

"People don't want to know the Marlboro Man has PTSD."
-Jessica Miller, married to a Marine

"I talk to plants so I don't kill motherfuckers here in the US."
-Jesus Bocanegra, US MARINE

SCENE 1

FUGUE STATE

*CESAR RODRIGUEZ stands alone.
Light appears through the broken windows of an
empty warehouse.*

CESAR

It begins with an impulse. Neurons fire causing a domino effect. And each neuron receives the impulse and passes it on to the next neuron making sure the correct impulse continues on its path. Through a chain of chemical events, the dendrites - part of a neuron - pick up an impulse that's shuttled through the axon and transmitted to the next neuron. The entire impulse passes through a neuron in about seven milliseconds — faster than a lightning strike. And in that moment, one human being looks at another human being in the face. Your heart rate goes up - it's a fear-induced heart rate that creates a vasal constriction. Your body shuts down the blood flow to the outer layer of your body that becomes like a layer of armor, but the price you pay... The shut down of the blood flow means the muscles are not getting blood. If the muscles aren't getting blood, that means they stopped working. So you begin to lose fine motor control. And the mammalian brain, the mid-brain part of your brain that's the same as a dog, begins to take over. And you lose the resistance to killing your own kind. Because you train and train and train and train and train to create a new path, a new road in your mental map and you learn to remain, calm, cool, and calculating, taking slow breaths, till you fire without a conscious thought. But what if you refuse to go down that road, and you just tricked yourself into killing, and your body, your impulses tell you that what you did was not right, that what your body felt was not right. But you already killed and it shocks you back to who you really are. And everyone tells you that it was right, everything is peachy keen, and you find yourself in the same situation again, on that road, but this time something blocks that impulse from completing its action. Your body shakes. You feel the twitch shoot down your neck into your shoulder, down your arm into your finger. But, for whatever reason, you don't shoot. You stand there. Seeing all the roads that lead you to this moment and the only road you should take to go forward. But you don't move. And the impulse dies.

*He stands there for a long time as the events play
out in his head. A single light comes up on the other
side of the stage. Standing there is MAGGIE
MORGAN.*

MAGGIE

Back in the 1950's, there was this guy, this plastic surgeon named Mandy, no, Max...something Max, Max, Max? Matt? No. Max, Maxwell, Maxwell, Maxwell. Yes. Maxwell. Miller. No. Malt, Maltz. Maxwell Maltz. His name was Maxwell Maltz. God, I hate it when I can't get something right. It drives me crazy. Here I am telling you a story and I can't even get the name right. Why tell the story if you can't get the fucking name right? Jesus. Anyway. Maxwell Maltz, with a Z not an S, noticed that after an operation where he did a new nose job or chin job or facelift that it would take the patient about 21 days to get used to seeing their new face. The same thing happened to a person who lost an arm or leg. Maltz observed that the patient would sense a phantom limb for about 21 days. Then, they would come to terms with the loss and see their new selves.

So, he had a big idea: "These, and many other commonly observed phenomena tend to show that it requires a minimum of about 21 days for an old mental image to dissolve and a new one to jell." He published a book on his thoughts about changes in behavior and sold more than 30 million copies. And that's where the bullshit notion of: It takes 21 days to form a new habit - came from. It's a myth. Anyone can create a new mental map in 21 days but for it to stay permanent, for the new you to reveal itself, it takes a hell of a lot longer. How long you ask? 66 days to be exact. And that number can vary widely depending on the behavior, the person, and the circumstances. In another study, it took anywhere from 18 days to 254 days for people to form a new habit. So you want to know what that means for you, for me, for all of us? If you want to set your expectations appropriately, the truth is that it will probably take you anywhere from two months to eight months to build a new behavior into your life. It's a long road and I've been on it now for 183 days and I still feel the phantom limb.

A helicopter sound fades off into the distance.

SCENE 2

ENCOUNTER

Maggie walks over to Cesar carrying two beers. Cesar looks up. Maggie wears a black dress, red high heels, lace gloves and a headscarf.

MAGGIE

Miller Lite?.

CESAR

It's the National Beer of Texas.

MAGGIE

That's a bottle filled with shit. Try this.

She hands him a Blue Moon.

CESAR

There's a lemon in my beer.

MAGGIE

This is unfiltered wheat ale spiced in the Belgium tradition. It is smooth, sweet and it has a nice crisp, refreshing finish. The lemon adds to that crispness, making it light on the palette. (Beat) Sometimes they serve it with a slice of orange.

Cesar looks at Maggie.

MAGGIE

Take a swig.

Cesar picks up the beer.

MAGGIE

Wait. Don't forget to squeeze the lemon. Give it a good pinch.

Cesar does.

CESAR

It's not bad.

MAGGIE

It's fucking fantastic. Next to a Guinness, man I love me some Blue Moon. Some people get into drugs, some liquor, and other pretentious motherfuckers into wine. But me, I love the beer.

CESAR

I feel the same way about hats. I love hats. Thank you for the beer.

MAGGIE

You're sitting in my chair.

CESAR

There's another chair right there that you can use.

MAGGIE

You see this is my bar. *The World's Biggest Draft*. It has like 500 different types of beers from all over the world. I was the first girl to taste all of them in a 6-month cycle. They put a plaque on the chair you're sitting on and I'm the only one who sits on that chair. If I come in here and see someone sitting on it, they know that they need to get their ass up out of it. It's the only thing I've accomplished that I'm proud of and I'm not going to let someone else's ass stink it up.

Cesar gets up and sits in another chair.

MAGGIE

I've seen you in here now for the last few days. Visiting or moving?

CESAR

Trying to do a little bit of both.

MAGGIE

And how's that working out for you?

CESAR

Slowly.

MAGGIE

I like a man who takes his time because when he decides to move then you know he's serious.

CESAR

You know a lot about beers?

MAGGIE

I'm an alcoholic.

CESAR

That's not good.

MAGGIE

I went NYU.

CESAR

It's a good school.

MAGGIE

Expensive.

What did you study?
CESAR

People.
MAGGIE

What did you learn?
CESAR

They're easy to forget. What about you?
MAGGIE

What?
CESAR

Did you go to school?
MAGGIE

For a semester. Studied biology. English Lit. But, I didn't finish. Headed over seas.
CESAR

Where did you go?
MAGGIE

What?
CESAR

Where?
MAGGIE

In the Eastern Hemisphere.
CESAR

Yeah, but where exactly?
MAGGIE

I don't-
CESAR

Paris, Rome-
MAGGIE

No, I-
CESAR

Siberia?
MAGGIE

I don't like talking about it.
CESAR

Okay. Do you want to talk about the war?

What was that?

Do you want-

What?

To talk.

About what?

Life, art-

I thought you said-

Politics.

Hold on-

Rough weekend?

No.

Okay, if you need to talk-

I'm fine.

I'm a good listener.

I don't like questions. You ask too many fucking questions!

Fuck you! I just wanted to have some conversation over a nice beer.
Unfuckingbelievable.

MAGGIE

CESAR

MAGGIE

*Maggie gets her chair and goes back to her table.
Cesar looks at his beer.*

CESAR

I'm sorry.

MAGGIE

I don't need your company.

CESAR

Sometimes I also forget.

MAGGIE

Forget what?

CESAR

About people.

*Maggie slowly slides her chair across the bar to
Cesar's table. He raises his mug.*

CESAR

Non Sibi Sed Patriae.

MAGGIE

Latin?

CESAR

It's a toast.

MAGGIE

What does it mean?

CESAR

Not for self, but for country.

MAGGIE

Let's stick to cheers.

CESAR

Cheers.

*A moment of not knowing where this is going to
go...*

CESAR

You still go to NYU?

MAGGIE

Graduated last year.

Congratulations. CESAR

Yes, applaud me for finishing my tertiary education. MAGGIE

Your family must be very proud of you. CESAR

Were you in the military? MAGGIE

Yeah. How do you know? CESAR

I had a brother who served. MAGGIE

I was a Marine. CESAR

So was he. You still active? MAGGIE

I did my time. I didn't catch your name? CESAR

I didn't throw it. MAGGIE

I just want to know your name. CESAR

Maggie. MAGGIE

Cesar. Good to meet you. CESAR

Same here. So where are you from Cesar? MAGGIE

Pharr. CESAR

How far? MAGGIE

No. Pharr, Texas. CESAR

Huh?

MAGGIE

CESAR
Its four hours south of San Antonio. You know that little boot of Texas. Right there, next to the border.

MAGGIE
Never been that "far."

CESAR
Funny. You?

MAGGIE
I'm originally from Durham. My mom moved us to Queens when I was ten.

CESAR
I have an uncle who lives in Durham.

MAGGIE
Yeah?

CESAR
He owns a Mexican restaurant.

MAGGIE
I love Mexican food.

MAGGIE reaches across the table. CESAR reaches for his chest.

MAGGIE
Easy, you had something on your face. You seem a little on edge.

CESAR
That's why I'm having a beer...to take the edge off.

MAGGIE
Maybe you should talk to somebody.

CESAR
Like a shrink?

MAGGIE
Or a therapist.

CESAR
Fuck that. They just want to get into your head for their own morbid fascination-

MAGGIE
That's not-

CESAR

And blame it on some uncle who made fun of the size of your peepee as he played with it.

MAGGIE

Is this the same uncle from Durham?

CESAR

Get the fuck out of here.

MAGGIE

Hey, I'm just trying to help you out.

CESAR

I don't need any fucking help!

MAGGIE

Okay!

She gets up, walks over to the jukebox and plays – Yeah Yeah Yeahs! "Maps" comes on. They both sit, listening to the song. As it builds, Maggie starts to join in until she's dancing freely all around the bar. She spins and spins until she falls to the floor.

MAGGIE

I love that song.

CESAR

I'm sorry.

MAGGIE

That's okay. I can be pushy.

CESAR

I don't mean to be-

MAGGIE

Hey, no worries, yellow cars.

CESAR

Excuse me?

MAGGIE

It's something my father used to say.

CESAR

Yellow cars?

MAGGIE

Yeah, ever since I can remember, he always owned a yellow car. The prize of his collection was a 1967 Chevy Impala, canary yellow. It had those pan vision windows. I was about ten when he had his last yellow car. It was a beat up Ford Tempo. My father was an addict. He would go on binges, one day, two days, a week. Every time he went on a binge, he'd get in his yellow car and drive off. When he'd return, he'd have a different yellow car. When he was sober he was the greatest dad in the world. If not...I personally liked the yellow car parked in the driveway. The last time I saw him, my father was in the living room vacuuming the same spot over and over again. My mom was yelling, "look at the druggy, look at the druggy." He was blank, dead. He just kept vacuuming. In the morning, we go into the living room. The vacuum is still running but dad is gone. I go outside and the yellow Ford Tempo is gone. Must be on a binge. Everyday, from the window of my bus, I would look to see if there was a yellow car in the driveway. But he never came back. I say yellow cars to say that, "I'm sorry, I will never leave you, but if I do, I am coming back in a blue car." Who needs another beer?

CESAR just stares at her.

MAGGIE

You alright?... I talk too much sometimes.

CESAR

You look great in your dress.

MAGGIE

Oh, thanks. It's homage to Pat Benatar.

CESAR

You look... glamorous.

MAGGIE

I was going for rebellious. 'We are young, heartache-to-heartache we stand. No promises, no demands...Love is a battlefield'

Beat

CESAR

You still an alcoholic?

MAGGIE

It's just one drink. Tomorrow. Finito.

CESAR

Why?

MAGGIE

I start a new job tomorrow.

CESAR

Good for you.

I'm really excited but...

MAGGIE

But what?

CESAR

I'm not sure if I am doing the right thing.

MAGGIE

That's not good.

CESAR

I don't want to fuck up.

MAGGIE

Then don't fuck up.

CESAR

It's easy for you to say.

MAGGIE

You either do or don't that's it.

CESAR

That doesn't help.

MAGGIE

Just make a choice.

CESAR

I want to make the right choice.

MAGGIE

You will.

CESAR

You think so.

MAGGIE

I do. What's the new job?

CESAR

I'm working with vets. I'm one of those people that want to get into your head for my own morbid fascination

MAGGIE

Ah, man. Look. I don't have anything against therapy. I just don't think it's for me.

CESAR

Fair enough. But, were you deployed to Iraq?

MAGGIE

CESAR

Not interested in the direction of this conversation.

MAGGIE

There's nothing wrong with talking about your experience.

CESAR

Listen, if I ever have a need to share, I'll make sure to make an appointment.

Beat

MAGGIE

Non Sibi Sed Patriae.

CESAR

Non Sibi Sed Patriae.

A moment. She smiles.

CESAR

That is the prettiest smile I've seen in three years.

MAGGIE

Pretty? Are you making fun of me?

CESAR

No.

MAGGIE

What are you saying?

CESAR

That you have a nice smile.

MAGGIE

Nice? First pretty, now nice. Fuck you. I'm hot motherfucker. I got a great ass. Sweet tits. What I don't have is a pretty smile! Pretty! That's for cheerleaders and Tupperware moms from Long Island. Asshole!

CESAR

Easy, I didn't mean anything by it.

MAGGIE

Who do you think you are?

CESAR

I was-

MAGGIE

Coming into MY BAR!

It's a compliment. CESAR

Fucking with MY night! MAGGIE

I didn't mean- CESAR

You want to go back to my place? MAGGIE

Huh? CESAR

What do you say? MAGGIE

What for? CESAR

For a drink or food? Or a fuck. MAGGIE

Are you serious? CESAR

Yes. MAGGIE

I just wanted to talk. I'm not some... I wasn't trying to pick you up. CESAR

I didn't say you were... I'm trying to pick you up stupid asshole. MAGGIE

I can't. CESAR

Why not? MAGGIE

It wouldn't be right. CESAR

You gay? MAGGIE

No. CESAR

Then what's the problem?

MAGGIE

I just can't.

CESAR

Huh. That's a first.

MAGGIE

MAGGIE walks out. Cesar stands there for a moment. Then goes after her.

SCENE 3

SLEEP

Hours after the bar. In the dark.

CESAR

Fuck. Oh shit! Maggie!

MAGGIE

Say it again.

CESAR

Maggie!

MAGGIE

Again!

CESAR

Hold on, I'm-

MAGGIE

What?

CESAR

I can't- I gonna...

MAGGIE

Go ahead. I'm there.

CESAR

I'm sorry. I can't. I'm sorry.

MAGGIE

What's a matter? Are you crying? Cesar? Cesar?

Beat

CESAR

I got to go.

MAGGIE

Excuse me!

CESAR

I have to feed my pigeons.

Lights up. CESAR grabs his pants.

MAGGIE

Is something wrong?

No. CESAR

It's okay if there is. MAGGIE

No. I just got to go! CESAR

Okay. I am going to see you again right? MAGGIE

*CESAR stumbles out.
MAGGIE stands at the door, stunned.*

What the fuck just happened? MAGGIE

JACK stands behind her.

Maggs. JACK

No. Not right now. MAGGIE

Did I wake you? JACK

Jack. MAGGIE

Easy. Yellow cars. JACK

I don't need to talk to you right now. MAGGIE

Then why am I here? JACK

Maggie looks at him. She goes to her purse and takes out a bottle of pills and takes one.

Do you want my clinical diagnosis or do you prefer plain old guilt? MAGGIE

Either works. JACK

Fuck. What time is it? MAGGIE

0500. JACK

Just say five o'clock in the morning... God. MAGGIE

So? JACK

So what? Why are you looking at me that way? MAGGIE

Happy E.T. day. JACK

My god is it today? MAGGIE

You forgot? JACK

I did. MAGGIE

I forgive you. So here you go. *(He hands her an autographed copy of E.T.)* JACK

Jack. MAGGIE

I never forget. JACK

I know. Thanks. Hey. MAGGIE

Hey. JACK

Steven Spielberg. How did you get this? MAGGIE

Ebay. JACK

That's a surprise. MAGGIE

Want to pop it in? JACK

I have to get ready. MAGGIE

Are you serious? JACK

I start a new job in the morning. MAGGIE

How many chances do you get to watch a movie with me? To watch E.T. of all movies? JACK

We can watch it here on the laptop. MAGGIE

You have any cracker Jacks? JACK

Here. *(She pulls out a box from her knapsack)* MAGGIE

Twizzlers? JACK

No. Just the cracker Jacks. MAGGIE

Where's the prize? JACK

It's not in the box? MAGGIE

I don't see it. JACK

It's got to be somewhere. MAGGIE

*MAGGIE lifts her sleeve.
A tattoo, the prize, is pasted on her arm.*

I didn't forget. MAGGIE (cont.)

Thank you. So, what did you do tonight? JACK

Nothing. Went to the bar. Alone. MAGGIE

Really? What happened to all your friends? Jenny the one with the big tits? JACK

Eww! JACK! She got married. MAGGIE

Carrie? JACK

Engaged. MAGGIE

Jackie? Nadiyah? Gracie? JACK

MAGGIE nods to all three.

No way Sylvia got hitched? JACK

She died last year. MAGGIE

That's too bad. JACK

It's okay. I never really liked her. MAGGIE

That's not very nice. JACK

Jack, I think I met someone. MAGGIE

Really? Who? JACK

Just a guy. MAGGIE

Do you like him? JACK

I think so. MAGGIE

Are you going to see him again? JACK

He ran away. MAGGIE

That's too bad. JACK

I don't know why I even try. People talk about not wanting to be alone, yet they do everything in their power to stay alone. They become so selfish, so self involved that they don't see the sacrifices people are making on their behalf. I say fuck them, let them die alone. MAGGIE

Maggie. JACK

What? MAGGIE

You got to cut people some slack. JACK

They just end up disappointing me. MAGGIE

Beat

You have to let me go. JACK

I want to know what happened to you. What it was like for you over there. MAGGIE

It was boring. JACK

What were your last thoughts? What did you do day today, in battle- MAGGIE

Nothing. JACK

Don't be an asshole. MAGGIE

Don't be a bitch. JACK

MAGGIE

Fuck you. You left me. You didn't care about anything but your self. You just packed up and left.

JACK

I wanted to fight.

MAGGIE

Bullshit, since when were you so patriotic?

JACK

I bled red, white and blue.

MAGGIE

This is serious. I want to help.

JACK

It's not possible.

MAGGIE

Why?

JACK

Because I'm not here.

MAGGIE

I know that.

JACK

And I'm not coming back.

MAGGIE turns back to the laptop screen and stares.

MAGGIE

I like this part. I like it when he hides in the closet amongst the dolls.

JACK

To blend in with plastic and fur and Styrofoam.

MAGGIE

I can't believe you took me to see this. How old were you? Like 9?

JACK

I wanted to make you smile.

MAGGIE

You did.

JACK

You have such a pretty smile.

I'm glad you're here with me Jack.

MAGGIE

Yellow cars?

JACK

Happy E.T. Day.

MAGGIE

MAGGIE continues to watch E.T. as Jack disappears...

SCENE 4

THE EXCHANGE

*Cesar carries a backpack, sets it down.
He feeds the pigeons.*

CESAR

Breakfast time my little pajaritos! Here you go. Eat up. Hey Tonio, stop eating Linda's food. You got your own. I like your feathers. It's a pretty mixture of dark gray and white. You don't see that kind of gray unless it's on a pigeon I guess. Natural selection. You know, to help you adapt into your environment so you can survive. Even your pigeon shit has that dark gray and white. Let me see, yeah, you do kind a blend in with the street and the concrete. But go in the grass, against that green. I see you and I will shoot you. So play on the concrete so I don't kill you. I'm sorry about being late this morning. I met her. She was at the bar. I just went there to get a beer, scope it out, and do the duty. She's really pretty. She's mean. I like her. Felix, don't judge me. I thought I could give it to her. But I can't. It's better if she doesn't know.

Jack enters.

JACK

How come you living in a tent?

Cesar stares at Jack.

CESAR

It's cheap.

Cesar goes inside the tent. Jack stands there, waiting. He goes through Cesar's bag. Pulls out a phone.

JACK

You call your mom?

An Ipad. A couple of books and begins to set them down, methodically. After a moment, Cesar pops his head out.

CESAR

Don't touch my shit.

JACK

How do you live like this?

CESAR

I couldn't afford a hotel.

JACK

You look like a bum living in a tent like that.

CESAR
People can live in tents, like the Bedouin.

JACK
They're nomads.

CESAR
There's freedom.

JACK
In what?

CESAR
To literally be able to carry your home on your back... like a snail.

JACK
So now you are a mollusk.

CESAR
No, I'm not a- right now it's only temporary.

JACK
What do you do for heat?

CESAR
I got big blankets.

JACK
How do you take a shower?

CESAR
The church, they let me use their facilities.

JACK
Like homeless people.

CESAR
I'm not homeless. I got a bed, a roof over my head, and friends to have dinner with.

JACK
The pigeons?

CESAR
Yes.

JACK
You look crazy talking to them.

CESAR
I'm not crazy. Shut the fuck up!

It's a nice tent. JACK

It's aqua. It looks like I'm sleeping underneath the ocean. CESAR

You're going to drown. JACK

I'll float. CESAR

Not if you can't breathe. JACK

I'm used to sleeping in a tent. CESAR

This ain't the desert. JACK

Why are you giving me a hard time? CESAR

You're like a fucking squatter. JACK

If it bothers you so much, let me move in with you. CESAR

That's not the answer. JACK

Why? CESAR

I reside in a small pine box. JACK

That's not my fault. CESAR

You sure about that? JACK

The two stare at each other. Beat.

I got up this morning and I walked out and I noticed a rainbow over the skyline. You think it leads to a pot of gold? CESAR

JACK
Like leprechauns and shit?

CESAR
Maybe, I mean it starts somewhere and ends somewhere else. So maybe there are leprechauns waiting at the other end.

JACK
It started in Astoria and finished in Jersey City. There is no gold-

CESAR
I'm not talking about gold. I'm talking about leprechauns.

JACK
There are no such things as leprechauns.

CESAR
I want to imagine the possibility.

JACK
Why?

CESAR
I want to live in a world filled with color, rich color and paints and birds and-

JACK
Leprechauns.

CESAR
Exactly.

JACK
That world does not exist. There is only one reality. And when that's done, that's it. That's all you got.

CESAR
No. I'm done with people telling what my world is. I'm going to live in a world where anything is possible.

JACK
You're the one denying the facts.

CESAR
What if the rainbow started in Jersey City and ended in Astoria?

JACK
Does it matter?

CESAR
It's all about where you start. You're only looking at it one way.

JACK
I grew up in Queens. There are no leprechauns in Queens.

CESAR
Maybe not in your world.

JACK
Did you fuck my sister?

CESAR
No dude!

JACK
So what happened?

CESAR
Don't get mad at me.

JACK
Don't give me a reason to be mad.

CESAR
I had a beer with her. We talked and then I left. I couldn't give it to her. But I will.

JACK
I'm starting to doubt your sincerity.

Beat

CESAR
You remember when we got back? Big ass parade.

JACK
Yeah. You got fucked up, pissed on yourself, passed out on some street corner and woke up next to some hobo named Leon.

CESAR
Good times, good times. Man, you think we'll ever go back to who we were?

JACK
I've lost faith in that idea.

CESAR
I know we were trained to kill. That's how you win the war. You kill. But I was raised to not hurt people. That it's morally wrong. And then you sign up, never thinking you're going to end in a war. And they train you and you lose that side of you, the side that cared, the side that was human. But then, when your time is up, they just put you back on the street. You can't be who you were before the corp. And you can't be "the soldier" anymore. So who am I'm supposed to be now?

Let's google you. JACK

He grabs the IPAD.

Let's see who you are. JACK

Give it back. CESAR

C-e-s-a-r-r-o
Rodriguez with an s or a z? JACK

Z dude. CESAR

Lest see-it says here:
Name: Cesar Rodriguez
Location: (Sacramento), California
D.O.B.: 02/07/90
Occupation: Student at (California State University of Sacramento)
Favorite Color: Red
Best Qualities: Personality, Honesty, Positive and "honor"
Worst Qualities: None
Be this guy. He sounds like he has a good head on his shoulders. JACK

It's weird that there are people out there with your name, and they have done completely different things with their life. He is a student. Where? CESAR

California State University of Sacramento. JACK

Is it a good school? CESAR

About as good as NYU. JACK

What's he studying? CESAR

Psychology. JACK

CESAR

Another freaking wizard. It's good that Cesar is going to college. I just said my name- my own name came out of my mouth. It feels funny. Like I am a traitor to myself. Say your own name.

JACK

Jack Morgan.

Beat

CESAR

I think I would have liked to have been born in Sacramento.

JACK

I want you to give it to her.

CESAR

I told you. I will.

JACK

Maybe you should set up an appointment and really talk to her.

CESAR

About what?

JACK

You could use some help.

CESAR

I don't want her in here. (*Points to his head*)

JACK

It might be good for you.

CESAR

I'm doing just fine.

JACK

No your not.

CESAR

I don't bother anybody.

JACK

It's time.

CESAR

Why are you trying to fuck with my head?

JACK

Because it's fucked.

CESAR
I don't know what you're talking about.

JACK
Make an appointment. It's an order.

CESAR
Fuck you Jack. We ain't in the corp no more. You ain't my superior officer and this ain't no war. I do for me and you need to fucking do for you.

JACK
Selfish prick.

CESAR
You fucked up!

JACK
Make the appointment!

CESAR
I'm not going to any FUCKING THERAPY!

Beat. Jack's gone.

CESAR
I'm sorry Jack.

SCENE 5

GOD'S PLAN

*Jack and Cesar are in a waiting room.
Cesar shuffles around in his seat.
He gets up and begins to do push-ups. JACK
reads a magazine.*

Push-ups? Really?

JACK

I'm nervous.

CESAR

People are staring.

JACK

Fuck them. Let them stare.

CESAR

If you act like a grunt people will treat you like a grunt. Situate yourself.

JACK

Cesar stops. He sits.

Did you meet God?

CESAR

No.

JACK

Why?

CESAR

Scheduling conflicts.

JACK

You know, I think I see him sometimes.

CESAR

So God is a he?

JACK

Well not exactly. Sometimes it's a man, a woman, a child or a leaf.

CESAR

Yeah, I know, God is everywhere.

JACK

That's not what I mean dick. CESAR

What? JACK

I don't know if it is God for sure. CESAR

You're not making sense. JACK

CESAR
On the way over here. We were standing on the corner of 46th and 6th and I noticed this little kid. I couldn't tell if it is a little boy or little girl cause it had a little hoodie over its head and it's all bundled up. I am staring at it and it is staring right back at me. It felt like an eternity. Then it said, "Hey!" Like if to say, stop staring at me.

JACK
You shouldn't stare.

CESAR
I couldn't help it. The kid was fuzzy, out of focus, but everything around him was not, it was clear, like when you put a pair of glasses on, everything outside the frame is fuzzy and inside the frame is clear. But this was backwards and that's why I think it is God looking at me.

JACK
So you still think you don't have a problem?

CESAR
Do you think God has a plan?

JACK
I don't know.

CESAR
I find it hard to believe that he took time out of his day to create a plan just for me.

JACK
He didn't. It's all a matter of choice.

CESAR
I didn't choose this.

JACK
Yes you did. You just won't accept it.

CESAR
I don't know. Maybe it's all bullshit. After the things I did, things I saw, there's no way there's a God.

JACK

God just looks after the big picture. He doesn't get too involved in the details.

Beat

CESAR

Jack, do you think that I am crazy?

JACK

I don't think that I'm qualified to make that assessment.

CESAR

I am too aware of my sanity. Crazy people don't ponder their craziness. They got too much crazy shit to think about.

JACK

Like what?

CESAR

Like moons and if the walls are dancing, if the door stays open will the cucuy come get me, shit like that.

JACK

I think you need to understand that when you lose your friends, guys you served with - it's a real loss. It's a loss of someone you trusted and you loved in a very intense way. And you feel guilty about it. Because you walk up to that lifeless body that was your friend and you find it with its neck slit open and a hole in its chest. You look down on it, and you say, "I did that. It's my fault." And you realize you can't go back again. You can't say that it didn't happen, or that maybe somebody else did it. You do it. It was your choice.

CESAR

What I'm going through is normal.

JACK

So you think that you're behaving like a normal person?

CESAR

Yeah. It's called grieving.

JACK

Maybe not crazy, but you're definitely emotionally disturbed.

CESAR

So you think that I am disturbed?

JACK

Emotionally... yes.

Maggie enters.

Mr. Rodriguez. MAGGIE

They're calling you. JACK

I heard her. CESAR

Get off your ass and answer her. JACK

I think this a bad idea. CESAR

Get up Marine and do your job! JACK

Stop calling me Marine! I am not in the fucking CORP ANYMORE!!! CESAR

Last call for Mr. Rodriguez... Mr. Rodriguez! MAGGIE

If you don't answer her I am going to slice your fucking throat. JACK

Here! Cesar Rodriguez, that's me. Hey. CESAR

Hey. MAGGIE

SCENE 6

RETRIEVAL

*Cesar stands across from Maggie.
They stand in the uncomfortable silence.*

CESAR

About last night – this morning –

MAGGIE

How did you find me? Are you stalking me?

CESAR

No.

MAGGIE

What are you doing here?

CESAR

I'm taking you up on your suggestion. About talking to someone.

MAGGIE

This isn't a good idea.

CESAR

Because we fucked?

MAGGIE

You didn't finish.

CESAR

I told you... I had to go.

MAGGIE

You have to see someone else.

CESAR

But I want to see you.

MAGGIE

I don't need this on my first day.

CESAR

If you can't handle it-

MAGGIE

It's not a matter of "handling it". It's inappropriate.

CESAR

I won't tell anyone if you won't.

That's not the issue.

MAGGIE

CESAR
Come on. You know it takes a lot for a soldier to admit he needs help. You're just going to kick me to curb?

MAGGIE
Fine. I'm Margaret Morgan.

CESAR
I thought your name was Maggie.

MAGGIE
It's my nickname.

CESAR
I like saying that name.

MAGGIE
I don't like using it in a professional setting.

CESAR
Is that a rule?

MAGGIE
Number one.

CESAR
What about Doctor Maggie?

MAGGIE
I'm not a... Fine. What would you like to talk about today?

CESAR
Hair products.

MAGGIE
Hair products?

CESAR
And trains.

MAGGIE
Seriously?

CESAR
I like to ride them. I like to look up and read the advertisements.

MAGGIE
And what do you like about them?

CESAR

They're sexy.

MAGGIE

In what way?

CESAR

I saw an advertisement for a hair product. It was Mrs. Wilma Flintstone. She had before and after pictures. One with her normal boring styled hair and the other more...sexy, let loose kind of style, and I got to tell you Doctor Maggie, she looked hot. I wanted to bang her doggie style. Does that make me a pervert or some weirdo?

MAGGIE

You watched those cartoons growing up?

Cesar nods.

MAGGIE

It took those images of innocence, a mother figure of sorts, from your childhood and transferred her into a sex symbol for you. By updating her look, she was no longer a cartoon with two-dimensional characteristics, she was humanized and you began to deal with her as such. You are not a pervert. You are not weird.

CESAR

What if I jerk off to them?

MAGGIE

Then I have to look into your past relationships with women and what roles they played in your social development.

CESAR

What role did you play?

MAGGIE

Don't fuck with me.

CESAR

I shouldn't have left like that.

MAGGIE

Right.

CESAR

I got nervous.

MAGGIE

I don't think that this is the appropriate time to discuss this.

CESAR

You're right. Dinner?

MAGGIE
Rule number two: I don't date clients. Cesar-

CESAR
I like the way you say my name.

MAGGIE
Do you really want me to help you?

CESAR
I have a, a buddy, who says that I am emotionally disturbed.

MAGGIE
Do you think you are emotionally disturbed?

CESAR
No more than anyone else in this world.

MAGGIE
Who is this friend of yours?

CESAR
Someone I served with.

MAGGIE
Why don't you tell me a little bit about him?

CESAR
I thought that we were going to talk about me.

MAGGIE
Then tell me a little bit about yourself.

CESAR
Okay. Where do you want to start?

MAGGIE
How long did you serve?

CESAR
I did four years. Two deployments to Irag and Afghanistan.

MAGGIE
How come you joined the Marines?

CESAR
Full Metal Jacket.

MAGGIE
Kubrick.

Great movie.

CESAR

So this movie inspired you?

MAGGIE

The beginning with the Sergeant and Gomer Pyle, "FOUR INCHES! PYLE, FOUR INCHES!" Fucking fantastic, the Marines were bad asses.

CESAR

So you wanted to be a bad ass?

MAGGIE

I wanted to be respected.

CESAR

What makes you think that you weren't respected?

MAGGIE

You see. That's what I am talking about. You take things people say and judge it and manipulate it to fit some formula, some theory on behavioral conditions. I just wanted to be a Marine because I could.

CESAR

Fair enough. So you're from Pharr right?

MAGGIE

Yup.

CESAR

Got any family back in Pharr?

MAGGIE

A mother and three brothers.

CESAR

What about your dad?

MAGGIE

He's dead. I'm the oldest.

CESAR

The man of the family.

MAGGIE

I was nine. Had no choice.

CESAR

Have you been back?

MAGGIE

No. CESAR

Why? MAGGIE

How was it last night? CESAR

Listen, Cesar- MAGGIE

I haven't been with a girl in two years. CESAR

You were... I enjoyed the conversation. MAGGIE

At the bar? CESAR

At the bar. MAGGIE

I really like you. CESAR

MAGGIE
I am just trying to get some information about you— Look, you, I, we can't get into that. Not here. I'll lose my job. If you really like me, let me do my job. Sit down, answer a few questions. And if you want to stop, we'll stop.

What about us? CESAR

MAGGIE
Us? You're the one who came here. You're the one who said he needs help? What did you think? We were just going to pick up where we left off, fuck on the desk like some shitty ass porn. This is us now. Take or leave it.

Cesar sits in the chair.

Do you have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep? MAGGIE

Yes Dr. Maggie. CESAR

Do you have or feel irritability or bursts of anger? MAGGIE

Only when I'm hungry.

CESAR

Any nightmares?

MAGGIE

Yes.

CESAR

Reoccurring?

MAGGIE

Yes.

CESAR

Why don't you tell me about it?

MAGGIE

I am in Hell and I am looking for the love of my life. Every time I get close to her a huge bunny shits on me and slows me down.

CESAR

Are you going to take this seriously, because you are wasting my hour and yours? You know what, forget this. I got a busy day ahead of me and-

MAGGIE

I see this kid standing in front of his house, screaming into his cellphone. A bullet rips threw his forehead. And he has this blank stare on his face. He drops the phone. His mouth falls open. There's no flesh on the bottom of his face— just his skeleton. And then I wake up.

CESAR

Who is the kid?

MAGGIE

I don't know.

CESAR

Who do you think it is?

MAGGIE

God.

CESAR

Why do you think that?

MAGGIE

Because he's out of focus.

CESAR

Why out of focus?

MAGGIE

Because it's a dream.

CESAR

How long have you been having these dreams?

MAGGIE

Since I got back.

CESAR

When was that?

MAGGIE

The Red Sox had won the World Series.

CESAR

What was it like in Iraq?

MAGGIE

Hot. Slow. Sand. Lots of fucking sand.

CESAR

What did you do?

MAGGIE

I was assigned to 2nd Battalion, Fifth Marines, Echo Company. We were there to secure Iraqi oil fields before Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard could destroy them. After that, we were ordered to move on to Baghdad.

CESAR

Did you see any action when you got there?

MAGGIE

Almost immediately.

CESAR

Anything specific?

MAGGIE

At 0800, I remember seeing a muzzle flash from an Iraqi tank on a hill about 600 meters away. Which was followed by an explosion on one of the Marine tanks, the M1A1 Abrams, that was beside me. Over my head I heard from the radio a tank officer yell, "We're hit." Everything stopped for a second. Then I heard laughter. The Iraqi shell hadn't done any damage. So the M1A1 maneuvered into position to return fire. The Iraqi tanks were old pieces of shit. The Iraqi tank turned and was now at a complete stop. The M1A1s unleashed a devastating barrage of armor-piercing rounds—shells containing depleted uranium rods that easily penetrated the Iraqi tanks' weaker armor.

The kinetic force of the shells sucked out everything including the bad guys that were inside. That was my first day.

MAGGIE

Did you kill anyone while in combat?

CESAR

No. Not that I know of. Or can recall.

MAGGIE

Did you lose anyone close to you?

CESAR

No. There were other soldiers but no one I would consider close.

MAGGIE

Cesar, it is normal to be affected by combat situations.

CESAR

What?

MAGGIE

It can be very traumatic. The destructive force of war creates an atmosphere of chaos and compels you to face the terror of unexpected injury, loss, and even death. It's okay to have some sort of emotional distress. You were in a combat environment, away from loved ones, sleep deprived, periods of intense violence followed by bouts of boredom and inactivity. And then, it's over and you find yourself here - with no real way of knowing how to reintegrate yourself into society, to have a positive life. Lots of soldiers, like you, are having these same experiences.

CESAR

Where did you get that from? Psychology 101.

MAGGIE

It's just an observation.

CESAR

Your professional opinion?

MAGGIE

Yes.

CESAR

You need to go back to school.

MAGGIE

At least, I don't cry during sex.

Beat

MAGGIE

That was uncalled for.

CESAR
I would love to fuck you right now.

MAGGIE
Excuse me?

CESAR
I want to unbutton that shirt, unzip that skirt, and slam the shit out of you.

MAGGIE
Cesar-

CESAR
I know that you want it.

MAGGIE
This session is over.

CESAR
I can see that you're lonely. That you need a hole filled. Let me fill it.

MAGGIE
Please leave.

CESAR
Come on Margaret. Let's deal with us now.

MAGGIE
I'm your therapist.

CESAR
You're just a drunk bitch from the bar.

MAGGIE
And you're a scared little boy who can't finish the job.

CESAR
Fucking shrinks, you're all the same.

MAGGIE
Get out.

CESAR
You're so fucked up in your own head that you feel the need to go digging into someone else's to make you feel better.

MAGGIE
That's right.

CESAR

How can you treat me when you haven't learned to deal with your own fucking problems!

MAGGIE

I'll recommend someone else.

CESAR

What's a matter Margaret? Hit a nerve.

MAGGIE

Time for you to go.

CESAR

It's your first day.

MAGGIE

I'm calling security.

CESAR

And you fucked it up.

CESAR leaves.

SCENE 6

REBUILDING

*Maggie comes in and sits at the couch.
Jack enters.*

JACK
I wish I could eat a hoagie again.

MAGGIE
Like the Spicy Godfather?

JACK
With a Guinness.

MAGGIE
Best sandwich in Queens.

JACK
I assume it went shitty today.

MAGGIE
Wasn't my finest hour.

JACK
Tell me about it?

MAGGIE
I had a horrible morning and I took most of the day off.

JACK
Way to go champ.

MAGGIE
Don't shit on me.

JACK
I'm not the one doing the dumping.

MAGGIE
Jack, I want to be left alone.

JACK
Maggie, we both know that's not up to me. So. Talk it out.

MAGGIE
I'm the most incompetent therapist in the whole world.

JACK
Jesus, it's a big world.

MAGGIE

Up and down, I broke every rule I learned at school.

JACK

And that's because it's the 4th best school in the country.

MAGGIE

Jack.

JACK

Apologies. Go on.

MAGGIE

Remember the guy I told you about?

JACK

The one that ran off?

MAGGIE

He was my first appointment.

JACK

No fucking way.

MAGGIE

It's not funny Jack.

JACK

No. That's ironical.

MAGGIE

I should have stopped session.

JACK

That's not your M.O.

MAGGIE

Why did I continue?

JACK

Because you have a need to save the world.

MAGGIE

I thought I could be professional.

JACK

And?

MAGGIE

I pissed him off.

JACK
You have a knack for doing that.

MAGGIE
Right now, I don't need sarcasm. I don't need "I told you so" I don't need you to talk down to me.

JACK
What do you need?

MAGGIE
If you want me to talk about it with you, you need to shut up and listen and not judge.

JACK
Okay.

MAGGIE
Poor guy. I think that I may have done more harm than good. And I just want to help him, but he really pissed me off.

JACK
What did he do?

MAGGIE
He started talking about trains, and banging me doggie style, then he fucking yelled at me. It was so hot.

JACK
You got problems.

MAGGIE
Why did he have to be a Marine?

JACK
Are you going to see him again?

MAGGIE
No.

JACK
So you're just going to drop him?

MAGGIE
What do you want me to do? I can't see him professionally. It's unethical.

JACK
He needs you.

MAGGIE
He needs to see someone else. Someone more... I don't know just more qualified. You were right. It's too much.

Is it raining frogs outside? JACK

Why? MAGGIE

Cause you just said I was right. JACK

I hate you. MAGGIE

I'm right. Right. Right. LEFT CRADLE LEFT. RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT! JACK

Stop it. MAGGIE

Look Mags, if you really want to know what it was like for me over there, you need to get off your ass, sober up and go find him. JACK

I'm not going to be his therapist. MAGGIE

Then be his friend. JACK

I don't even know where he lives. MAGGIE

He filed paperwork, get the address. JACK

I can't. MAGGIE

If you don't do this, you'll blame yourself for reacting to things that weren't your fault. JACK

Is that your expert advice? MAGGIE

No, yours. JACK

SCENE 7

HUEY

Cesar feeds the pigeons.

CESAR

Do pigeons fuck? I mean, how do you do it? Do you guys fall in love? Hold each other, kiss each other, and wait for the other to fly home after a long days work at the park. I would like to be a pigeon. I'm not a big fan of flying though, scared of heights. Fucking altitude gives me the vomits. Although, I don't see you guys in the air to much. Oh, look at that, you two are cleaning each other's wings. Must be love. I had true love once. It was like a dream. She was the end all. When fresh love starts, it's pure. It's like this round crystal sphere of pure energy. And both of you feed this sphere and it becomes strong because of the innocence. But the moment you lie to each other, hurt each other, deny each other, a crack surfaces on that sphere. You put enough cracks on the surface, it breaks. I should have known. You hear it all the time. "You go away bro, the girl is going to cheat. She gets lonely." But I thought...I thought that the surface would hold. Well, nothing lasts. I thought I was alright though. I thought that, after the shit I saw over in Iraq, nothing could faze me. So I'm on leave. I thought I was done, but had a stop order and had to go back for another tour. She asked me to come by. Pick up my shit and drop off her microwave. Fuck her, she could have it back, it took forever to pop a bag of popcorn anyway. I drove up. And this dude is sitting on her porch. He nods to me as I carrying the shit in. I ask her who the dude is. She doesn't say anything. Now my sphere has just cracked open. I go outside. I look at him. I know this fucking dude. We went to elementary together. He smiles at me. I beat the fucking shit out of him. It felt good. She's screaming from the top of her lungs to get the fuck out, that I'm an animal, that she...she loves him. The fucking pitch of her voice, the sobbing and hissing, it...I go inside and grab the microwave and sling it against the wall. I hope their love rots in hell! Right then, I learned that heaven doesn't exist, Santa Clause is fake, and true love belongs in fairy tales. So you two are wasting your fucking time. Stop touching. I said STOP TOUCHING!

He steps on the pigeons.

MAGGIE

Cesar.

CESAR

FUCK!

MAGGIE

Hey. It's just me.

CESAR

What the fuck are you doing here?

MAGGIE

Jesus, what is this place?

How did you find me? CESAR

Paperwork. MAGGIE

What the fuck do you want? CESAR

I came to talk. MAGGIE

About what? CESAR

I'm sorry I let it get out of hand. MAGGIE

I thought it went pretty well. CESAR

Funny. MAGGIE

Is that all? CESAR

No. I want to help you. MAGGIE

I don't need therapy. CESAR

Friends then. MAGGIE

Leave it alone Maggie. CESAR

I can't. MAGGIE

You don't want to be around me. CESAR

I do. MAGGIE

I'm not a project. I can't be fixed. CESAR

I'm not trying to fix you.

MAGGIE

Do you get pleasure out of fucking with my head? You know, I really liked you.

CESAR

So you don't like me anymore?

MAGGIE

Yes. No. FUCK! I don't know. Everything is so fuzzy. I just want to be left alone.

CESAR

Beat

Can I have some birdseed?

MAGGIE

It's their dinnertime.

CESAR

Who are they?

MAGGIE

Friends.

CESAR

Who is the charcoal grey one with the red stripe?

MAGGIE

That's Felix. He's the soldier of the group. First one in, last one to leave. Making sure everyone eats, sleeps, and...he's the dependable one.

CESAR

Can we get out of here and go someplace and talk?

MAGGIE

Why?

CESAR

It's dirty.

MAGGIE

We can go into my humble abode.

CESAR

Okay.

MAGGIE

Cesar walks over and into the tent.

Come on in. CESAR

Maggie walks over.

You live in here, in a tent? MAGGIE

Central Park had no vacancy. CESAR

And you don't see anything wrong with this? MAGGIE

Do you? CESAR

No. *(They enter the tent)* How you holding up? MAGGIE

What do you mean? CESAR

Do you feel you are adjusting to life here in the states? MAGGIE

Look, if we're going to talk, you got to drop the fucking doctor speak. CESAR

Excuse me? MAGGIE

Talk like a real person. Ask me questions because you care not because you are trying to diagnose me. CESAR

Yeah, I'm better at this when I'm drunk. MAGGIE

Me too. CESAR

What have you been up to? MAGGIE

Nothing. CESAR

Have you been to the Statue of Liberty? MAGGIE

No. CESAR

Giant's game? MAGGIE

I'm a Cowboy's fan. CESAR

God, you are not making this easy. MAGGIE

She lies down.

Make yourself comfortable, shit. CESAR

I haven't been sleeping. Aqua. Looks like you're underneath the ocean. MAGGIE

I like the sounds of the car horns outside. It reminds me of Iraq. At night, all you hear is sounds - whistles, whizzing in the night. The jumbled sounds of trucks and planes and tanks moving from one place to another. Then it gets quiet. Around three in morning, like here, in New York. When it is pitch black, no one makes a sound. CESAR

I like when it's quiet. MAGGIE

The quiet makes me nervous. CESAR

Cesar sits next to her.

I can't go to sleep without some sort of sound. When I was a kid, my mom used to put me in the car, in the back seat. She'd turn the car on and leave it running. We weren't going anywhere. Just the idea of going somewhere, the humming of the car, the air conditioning, it always put me to sleep. When I close my eyes, I search for that slow steady sound. CESAR

I used to go to sleep with the TV on. MAGGIE

Yeah? CESAR

I would switch it to CNN. Listen to updates on the war. My brother went over there. MAGGIE

Yeah? CESAR

He was a Marine. MAGGIE

You ever talk to him? CESAR

No. MAGGIE

Why? CESAR

Because he's not coming back. And the worst part is, they won't tell me what happened. MAGGIE

Maggie. I have to admit something. I should of... I'm sorry about yesterday. It was all my fault. CESAR

Beat. She smiles.

Do you like living here? MAGGIE

It's okay. CESAR

You ever thought about moving? MAGGIE

It's not permanent. CESAR

There's got to be a better place. MAGGIE

It works for me. CESAR

You can crash with me till we find you a place. MAGGIE

What? CESAR

You can stay with me. MAGGIE

CESAR

What the hell do you know about my pain? About my fear? About growing up thinking you're responsible for solving everything. It's all on your shoulders. And you fool yourself into thinking you can handle it. But when the moment comes. You try to move but you can't because you know if you do, you will die. But you try. You tell yourself, "It's just a step, a movement drilled into your body, your muscles a thousand times." But your mind, YOUR FUCKING MIND WON'T LET YOU. And you see yourself for what you are. A FUCKING PUSSY. Can you fix that? With all your books and your ideas, can you help that? Because I am in the fucking dark here and there is no room for all your bullshit! FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!

CESAR paces like an animal in a cage.

MAGGIE

Easy CESAR. Easy. Shhhh. It's okay. Shhh. Come here. I'm not leaving you. I'm right here. Let me be here.

*She hugs him. Strokes his hair.
CESAR lets her.*

MAGGIE

I know you feel alone.

CESAR

I have to tell you something.

MAGGIE

I feel alone too. And I am scared of how you are making me feel inside.

CESAR

Will you listen to me?

MAGGIE

Yes.

CESAR

I served with Jack.

*A helicopter sound is heard.
CESAR turns away.
MAGGIE hears the rain.
She turns away
Lights fade out.
The sound of rain remains.*

SCENE 8

DISPLACEMENT

*Three years earlier.
JACK lies on the floor.
He sings.*

JACK

*I'm fixing a hole where the rain gets in
and stops my mind from wandering
where it will go
I'm filling the cracks that ran through the door
and kept my mind from wandering
where it will go*

MAGGIE brings in some boxes.

MAGGIE

Look at what the cat dragged in.

JACK

Hey.

MAGGIE

You're wet.

JACK

I don't care. I'm happy.

MAGGIE

That makes one of us.

JACK

What's in the bag?

MAGGIE

I bought some bagels.

JACK

Got strawberry cream cheese?

MAGGIE

No.

JACK

What about coffee?

MAGGIE

I forgot you were around.

Beat

What's up with all the boxes?
JACK

Packing.
MAGGIE

I'll get out of your way.
JACK

MAGGIE
You should go through her things and if you find something you want, put it in the keep pile, what you don't put it in the sale pile.

JACK
You're going to sell her things?

MAGGIE
Someone has to help pay for her funeral.

JACK
I don't think that mom would like the fact that we're selling some of her things.

MAGGIE
JACK, shut the fuck up and pack.

JACK begins to look through some boxes.

JACK
It's our whole life.

MAGGIE
She was a pack rat.

JACK
Oh shit, here's a ribbon that I got from her for the best son. I finished last in tether ball, track...I think I finished last in almost every event. Everyone in my class got a ribbon except me. She made me this for me and said that basketball was really my game.

MAGGIE
You suck at basketball.

JACK
I know that Maggie.

JACK continues to look through the boxes.

JACK
Here is a picture of you at the sweetheart dance-

MAGGIE

Jack, I don't really feel like going down memory lane with you today. I'm not here to grab a beer and reminisce about the good ole times. Just pack the shit you want and leave.

JACK

I couldn't do it.

MAGGIE

It's been a week since the funeral.

JACK

I wanted to come.

MAGGIE

People kept asking me where you were.

JACK

What did you tell them?

MAGGIE

That you were so fucked up on drugs that you couldn't tell night from day.

JACK

I wasn't... my head was feeling fuzzy.

MAGGIE

You look pretty clear to me now.

JACK

Yellow cars?

MAGGIE

Oh fuck you Jack.

JACK

What are you going to do with the house?

MAGGIE

You're still living here right?

JACK

Yes, but, like everything else, it got left to you.

MAGGIE

I am the responsible one.

JACK

I think that you should sell it.

MAGGIE

Why? So you can get half?

No- JACK

You don't deserve half of her money JACK. MAGGIE

Maggie, it's not about the money- JACK

This is just like you- MAGGIE

Will you listen- JACK

You are an embarrassment- MAGGIE

No, hold up- JACK

And a failure MAGGIE

You know I'm not. JACK

As a brother and a son. MAGGIE

I don't want the money! JACK

ASSHOLE! MAGGIE

I'm thinking about LEAVING! JACK

Beat

What? Where? MAGGIE

I don't know. JACK

Jack, I am not wasting anymore of my breath on this- MAGGIE

JACK
I joined the Marines. I met with the recruiter this morning.

MAGGIE
We're going to war, in Iraq.

JACK
I know.

MAGGIE
You'll end up there.

JACK
I hope so.

MAGGIE
You are a fucking moron.

JACK
Real supportive Maggs.

MAGGIE
You can't go.

JACK
I'm not asking for your permission.

MAGGIE
Do you honestly think that running off and joining the Marines is going to solve your problems? You're a fuck up. Live with it.

JACK
I know that I'm a fuck up. I'm trying to change that.

MAGGIE
You had one responsibility. Watch out for mom. That's it.

JACK
And you think that was so easy?

MAGGIE
I paid the bills on this place...I gave you money to live on, to have your fun.

JACK
Fun? I wouldn't consider the last five years fun.

MAGGIE
Oh it was such a burden for you.

JACK
I made it possible for you to live your life, devoid of responsibility, devoid of guilt.

MAGGIE

I made my life. You didn't have the balls to move out. You chose to stay.

JACK

You got all of dad's money. What was left for me? Nothing. Nothing but her. So I stayed. I took care of her, changed her, fed her, fucking washed her. So what if I did some drugs. That's all I had.

MAGGIE

She was your mother.

JACK

And yours.

MAGGIE

And you let her die Jack.

JACK

It's not my fault.

MAGGIE

When are her shots?

JACK

It was an accident.

MAGGIE

What time?

JACK

I thought...I didn't know-

MAGGIE

What FUCKING TIME!

JACK

Once at 12 and another at 5.

MAGGIE

Did you do the one at 12?

JACK

I forgot.

MAGGIE

What about 5?

JACK

I over slept.

MAGGIE

Look Jack, I am trying very hard to understand the situation you were living in. I am trying very hard to forgive you and move on with our lives. Mom was very sick, I understand that. You feel like you lost your adulthood and I understand that. I am trying to put myself in your shoes but the difference is...the big FUCKING DIFFERENCE is that I don't do crack or heroine or what ever the fuck it is you shove up your arms. I wasn't passed out and I wasn't handling a fragile 68-year-old diabetic woman in a drug induced state. I would never put myself in that position so forgive me if I am having a hard time understanding your situation!

JACK

I think mom would be proud of me.

MAGGIE

Are you serious? Proud of you? Proud of you. She knew you were incapable of taking care of yourself. She was lying in bed, with tubes in her nose and in her arms, crying and I said, "What's wrong mom?" She was looking out the window. Watching you smoke on the porch, talking to yourself. She turns to me and says, "Oh Maggie, you've always been the strong one. I don't worry about you, but when I am gone from this earth, who is going to take care of my little Jack? Who's going to watch out for him?" All she could think about is you. And, you couldn't give her the common courtesy, the deserved respect, to wonder who is going to take care of her, who is going to watch out for her. You abandoned her just like dad. Got in your yellow car and you never came back.

Beat

JACK

I'm coming back.

MAGGIE

I hope you die over there motherfucker.

SCENE 9

ORDERS

JACK stands next CESAR.

CESAR

Why didn't I pull the trigger?

JACK

You thought you had no choice.

CESAR

You're saying I chose this?

JACK

You stopped the impulse.

CESAR

Why?

JACK

Because you're not a murderer.

CESAR

He was just a kid.

JACK

He was an enemy combatant.

Beat

CESAR

I don't want to break her heart.

JACK

It's already broken.

CESAR

Fuck you.

JACK

Talk to her. Tell her the truth.

CESAR

Are you a ghost?

JACK

No.

Then what are you? CESAR

A reminder. JACK

Beat

She misses you. CESAR

Does she say that? JACK

No... but I can tell. CESAR

You have to talk about Iraq. JACK

I did. CESAR

What did you tell her? JACK

I told her about the city, tactical operations, weapons, weather conditions. CESAR

Did you tell her about the Bridge op? JACK

No. CESAR

Why not? JACK

It wasn't my fault. CESAR

Give her the letter. JACK

No. CESAR

You owe me. JACK

I don't owe you shit.

CESAR

I DO FOR YOU AND YOU DO FOR ME! IT IS CODE!

JACK

Fuck code! Fuck code Jack! If you want to talk to her, then talk to her. If not, don't. I don't give a shit. I just want this to be over so I can go home.

CESAR

That's not going to happen?

JACK

Why?

CESAR

Because you promised.

JACK

I'm sorry. I can't.

CESAR

Talk to Maggie.

JACK

I don't know what to say.

CESAR

Just tell her the truth.

JACK

She's going to hate me.

CESAR

She's going to hate you if you don't.

JACK

SCENE 10

EVAC

CESAR and MAGGIE are back in the warehouse.

MAGGIE

Cesar? Hey! I was talking to you.

CESAR

(Confused) What?

MAGGIE

You served with Jack?

CESAR

Huh?

MAGGIE

You knew my brother?

CESAR

Yeah.

MAGGIE

Why didn't you tell me?

CESAR

I wanted to.

MAGGIE

How long did you serve with him?

CESAR

A couple of years.

MAGGIE

Did you know him well?

CESAR

He was my best friend.

MAGGIE

Were you there when he...? What happened to him?

Cesar begins to look for Jack.

CESAR

Hold on. Jack! Jack!

What are you doing? MAGGIE

Jack! Where are you? CESAR

Cesar, stop it. MAGGIE

I need you to give her the letter. JACK

Jack! Where'd you go? CESAR

Cesar? MAGGIE

She won't understand. JACK

Who are you talking to? MAGGIE

Jack. CESAR

Cesar, you promised... JACK

Maggie looks up and sees that Cesar is talking to himself.

There is no one there. MAGGIE

He's standing right here. CESAR

No. There is only you and me. MAGGIE

What? CESAR

Cesar, Jack didn't come back. MAGGIE

Give her my letter. JACK

I can't focus. CESAR

There is no Jack! MAGGIE

Say something to her Jack! CESAR

Cesar, talk to her. JACK

Cesar, there is no one there! MAGGIE

She's your fucking sister. CESAR

Cesar! Look at me! MAGGIE

Give her my letter! JACK

What letter? CESAR

WILL YOU FUCKING LISTEN TO ME! MAGGIE

Cesar jumps on top of her and starts to choke her neck.

Wait...what? Hold on! Will you shut the fuck up! Please. CESAR

Cesar. Cesar. Let go of me. You're hurting me. Cesar. MAGGIE

Can you please, Jack, I need you to say something to her. Please. CESAR

Cesar. This isn't you. MAGGIE

Yes it is Maggie. CESAR

Tell her. JACK

CESAR

I can't stop it. I can't take it back. I can't. I just want my world back.

MAGGIE

Okay, slow down. Cesar. Slow down. Breath.

Cesar pulls back. He looks at Maggie.

CESAR

I'm like this fucking animal now.

MAGGIE

It's okay. Just. Let's start. Why don't we start at the beginning? Are you still seeing Jack?

CESAR

Yes.

MAGGIE

Does he talk to you?

CESAR

Yes.

MAGGIE

Is he talking now?

JACK

Tell her. Please. Cesar. You have to tell her.

CESAR

Yes.

MAGGIE

What is he saying?

CESAR

I have to tell you what happened to him.

Maggie stops. She takes a moment.

CESAR

I don't want to.

MAGGIE

Why not?

CESAR

I love you. And if I tell you. You won't love me back.

MAGGIE

Cesar, if you really care for me, you have to tell me what happened to my brother.

CESAR

My unit had received orders to secure a bridge over the Diyala River. Jack was my squad leader. While crossing an open field with limited cover, we came under heavy machine-gun fire from a building that appeared to be mud-brick house. And he had us hunker down in dusty building. But, before we could determine the location of the machine gun nest, we came under fire from another direction—mortar rounds launched from a hidden location. And?

Jack walks up to Cesar.

I could hear yelling. Jack ordered us to move out of range, but the mortar shells kept finding us. I looked up and I notice this kid, perhaps a hundred meters away, watching us move every time we moved our positions. He would yell into the cellphone, and then disappear inside a mud-brick house. Then the mortar fire would find my squad again.

MAGGIE

What happened next?

CESAR

The shells and machine-gun fire kept coming, so Jack wanted us to “snatch” the kid up for interrogation. We scrambled across, trying to make our way into the mud-brick house. And I got stitched up and went down near a wall. They went in.

MAGGIE

Jack went in with them?

CESAR

I couldn't move.

MAGGIE

Why?

CESAR

I took one in the leg and I was pinned down.

MAGGIE

Could you see what happened to Jack?

CESAR

Based on intel and observations, I estimated 4-6 enemy personnel in the building. I see five women and children, noncombatants, run for cover into the same building that the MG fire is coming from.

MAGGIE

Could you see Jack?

CESAR

I'm able to identify the location of the machine-gun position, on the second (top) floor on the north side of the mud-brick house. And I don't know what to do. I'm trained to kill or capture the enemy without harming the noncombatants. Given our commander's intent to gain and maintain enemy contact in order to kill or capture enemy personnel, I identify three possible courses of action:

JACK

What are we Marine?!

CESAR

Natural born killers sir! Rumble young man rumble. Huah!

Cesar becomes completely still.

JACK

A. Call for indirect fires to destroy the house.

CESAR

Can't do that. You're in the house.

JACK

B. Call the vehicles to come forward to provide heavier direct fires.

CESAR

Vehicles are taking mortar fire and are unable to provide support.

JACK

C. Maneuver the trail fire team to gain a better position to provide more effective fire.

CESAR

Fire team is taking losses. I will go in after my brother. I am here to protect my brother. My platoon, my goddam beloved corp - that is what I was trained to do.

MAGGIE

Cesar, what happened to Jack?

CESAR

I lied in the street for what felt like a long time — helpless, certain that I would be hit again. Another Marine dragged me over to a side of a building — applied antibiotic cream and bandaged my leg to control the bleeding. Then mortar shell—exploded near our position, the first of several explosions. Then I saw the Iraqi kid come out of the mud-brick house. The kid was yelling into the cellphone. He must be giving away our position so I took aim down the iron site of my rifle-

JACK

You will live.

CESAR

At his forehead-

JACK
And you will kill.

CESAR
I take a breath -

JACK
And you will sleep.

CESAR
And the kid went down. Someone took him out. I get up from my position and scrambled to where the kid was dying. His face was gone. I opened the door. I looked in and I saw Jack on his knees. An Iraqi was standing behind him with a knife to his throat. Jack was bleeding, and bruised. He looks up at me. I tried to lift up my rifle and aim. But I couldn't. I froze. Jack does this quick move. He turns and the Iraqi slices Jack's throat. And the blood begins to flow out of his neck. Like long highways on a map. Jack slowly falls to the ground. The Iraqi looks up at me and then an RPG—a rocket-propelled grenade—exploded into the wall near my head and I blacked out. When I woke up, Jack was in my arms. I don't know how long we waited for the next evac. I sat there with Jack. In the dark until we heard the humming of the blades. Lights pierced in and four balls to wall Marines plunged in and scooped us up. I looked over to Jack. Get up, let's go home. Come on, we're going home!

MAGGIE
And?

CESAR
He didn't move. He didn't. Move. I carried his body to the chopper. And I found this letter and a picture of you. And I told myself that I had to get this to you. Because I... I froze. I'm so sorry Maggie.

*CESAR reaches down into his pocket and gives
MAGGIE the letter.*

JACK
Hey Sis, if you are getting this letter then it means that it didn't go to well for me over here. It's strange writing one of these. You want to say the right words, like the last words I would say to you if I was standing right next to you. But I'm not, and it's just for precautionary reasons we have to write them. Things are good. I'm a sergeant assigned to 2nd Battalion, Fifth Marines, Echo Company, in Regimental Combat Team 5. Can you believe it? I'm in charge of a squad of Marines. My Marines. The Two-Five is the most highly decorated Marine unit in the history of the Corps. Our motto is "Retreat? Hell!" It's an abbreviated version of what was purportedly said in the First World War, when we arrived to support British and French troops and were told that they had to immediately turn around and go back the way they came. "Retreat? Hell, we just got here!" I thought you would get a kick out of that. I got to tell you sis, despite what's reported, the people around here are amazing. And the kids. Such smiles in sad faces, it's worth all the shit that we are going through. And the mornings, my god, they are breathtaking. Yesterday, one of my buddies, Cesar, we hopped in the Huey just about sunrise. We lifted up and into the sky and for the first time Cesar said he wasn't nauseous. I looked out into the desert sky. It was a weird mix of pink, yellow

and orange with streams of black gray smoke dancing off the burned rubble on the ground. It was peaceful. I looked out and spotted something fuzzy in the sky. I called Cesar over, to see if he could see it. He came over and sat next to me and said that it looked as clear as a lake. I said, "Cesar, but it doesn't look fuzzy to you, like right there, in the clouds." Cesar gazed over to where I was pointing and said that he saw it, that it looked out of focus. We sat there - staring at the fuzziness the world had created - and he said, "Maybe, its God." I love you sis. And there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about you. I know that you are still pissed at me because you don't write back. All the letters come back return to sender. Like I said before, I'm really sorry about what happened and the way things got left. I can never be truly sorry enough for you I guess. I really loved mom. I hope you forgive me. Just thought you'd like to know that I have a knack for being a Marine. I finally found something that I'm good at. I miss you sis and I hope that you never have to read this but if you do... Yellow cars. P.S. Don't hate on the war too much, we are actually doing some good for these people. I love you, your brother, Sergeant Jack Morgan. USMC.

Maggie folds the letter.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

CESAR

Maggie?

Maggie walks out. Cesar looks up and realizes that Jack is also gone.

The lights fade as Cesar comes to terms with what just happened.

End of play