

# 50 Ways to Die in L.A.

by

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Original Screenplay (excerpt)

Los Angeles 2020, several years into a sectarian civil war. Ne'er do well Jake leaves Saigon to reunite with Allan, an old friend doing N.G.O. relief work. But when Jake arrives in Los Angeles, he learns that Allan has just been killed by a sniper and that he was wanted for war crimes. Jake then quixotically sets out to clear his friend's name and...

Yeah, so I landed in Havana and had the taxi guy take me to my old dive hotel along the Prado. Arrived to find that the place had collapsed a week earlier, killing two guests and an eighteen year old maid.

I'm wondering if it's a sign that coming here isn't the best idea I've ever had.

Jake Kenner writing to Allan O'Donnel  
August or September, 2015

BLACK SCREEN

JAKE (v.o.)

Where should I begin?... I was born  
the the very moment my father died,  
forty five years ago. April 30, 1975.  
That date ring a bell?

ARCHIVAL NEWS FOOTAGE: The Fall of Saigon, Vietnam in  
pandemonium. Looters with TV'S, electric fans, etc.  
Frenzied crowds running every direction down the packed  
streets.

JAKE (v.o.)

I wasn't actually *there*, but this is  
the moment I decided to make my  
entrance. - I'm not saying that's why  
I turned out the way I did... All I  
know is that my life has been a long  
line of disasters that I've had to  
evacuate from in a big hurry.

A U.S. Army HELICOPTER passes right overhead and banks  
over a row of buildings, heading out of Saigon.

JAKE (v.o.)

Or I could start on a warm spring  
afternoon just five years ago. The  
day when all the chickens came home  
to roost.

ARCHIVAL - EXT. ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE DAY

TITLE: 2:15 P.M. MAY 1, 2016

The Presidential LIMOSINE speeding out onto the tarmac.

JAKE (v.o.)

fifteen years of war on.... well it's  
hard to say exactly what - during  
which time two out of every three  
Americans had lost his job and the  
Dow had gone from 11,000 to 11. Ford  
shares were was selling for a buck  
fifty which was a buck fifty more  
than anyone was willing to pay for  
them.

Wide shot of the runway is crawling with soldiers - *combat  
ready*. The PRESIDENT anxiously trotting up onto the plane.

JAKE (v.o.)

By then, the only things Americans  
were interested in laying their hands  
on was food and guns. - And not  
necessarily in that order.

Air Force One taking off.

JAKE (v.o.)

And so it was with great concern for the nation's future that our president embarked on a unannounced trip to Kuwait to meet quietly with some old friends - desperately hoping for...

The spectral orange flare of a MISSILE rising up toward Air Force One.

JAKE (v.o.)

Well, whatever it was he never quite made it out of Maryland.

The missile hits Air Force One and the sky explodes to white.

JAKE (v.o.)

Nobody really knows who actually pulled the trigger....and now nobody really cares.

End of archival footage.

EXT. HOTEL ROOFTOP BAR DAY - PRESENT

JAKE 45, a dark angular handsome drinker on the precipice of a rapid decline. Laser eyes darting from target to target, looking for the next disaster to befall him.

TITLE: Tijuana, Mexico  
May 1, 2020.

JAKE (v.o.)

Five years and seven million or lives later, the Former United States had exploded into a dozen independent third world third rate war-torn nations.

Jake sips his beer.

JAKE (v.o.)

None of which effected me at all. I was living in Saigon. Bit of blog work, teaching pidgin English, and fucking up my life in about sixteen different ways. Truth is, I was about to go down in a blaze of inglory when Allan's letter arrived. A cryptic note offering me work with some kind

of humanitarian relief outfit in  
sunny Los Angeles.

A waiter comes over with another beer for Jake.

JAKE (v.o.)

It's five days later, and I've made  
it as far as Tijuana. But it's  
definitely not the Tijuana I  
remember.

EXT. U.S./MEXICAN BORDER CROSSING DAY

The AMERICAN SIDE - traffic backed up for miles, furniture  
strapped to car roofs. Alongside the road: thousands of  
makeshift tents. A Kosovo-esque exodus of humanity stopped  
in its tracks.

A Mexican soldier with a firehose shoots a stream of water  
through barbed wire at a crowd of Americans surging on the  
other side.

JAKE (v.o.)

At night, it only gets worse.

Mexican soldiers patrolling the border area. A bullhorn  
echoing ominous warnings.

HELICOPTERS floating overhead, spotlights dancing  
hauntingly across the terrain.

JAKE (v.o.)

A million American refugees stuck at  
this crossing alone. All trying to  
talk, bribe or fuck their way over.  
And yet here *I* was, trying to get  
*into* the place they wanted so  
desperately to get *out of*.

EXT. AIRSTRIP TIJUANA DAY

Soldiers load crates into an old DC-3 transport PLANE with  
a red cross crudely drawn on its tail.

Jake approaches tentatively. Spots...

The gringo PILOT with a pistol tucked in his belt -  
overseeing everything. Totally nerve-fried, gulping  
coffee. Pulls a white pill from his shirt, chews it down  
and smiles cheerfully at Jake.

Jake hands him an over-stuffed envelope.

INT. AIRPLANE - AIRBOUND DAY

Jake looks out a side window as they fly low over the sprawling REFUGEE CAMP just on the American side of the border.

JAKE (v.o.)  
Ecstasy. From the Latin: *ex stasis*.  
To leave stasis behind.

Jake glances around the plane's cargo compartment. Five heavily armed GUYS lounge around, smoking and looking like they came from very broken homes. Wooden CRATES marked 'Milk' are stacked up and sealed tight - Russian lettering on their sides.

JAKE  
What's in the boxes?

GUNMAN  
Golf balls.

INT. AIRPLANE - LATER

JAKE (v.o.)  
My old friend Allan had become something of a world-roving humanitarian legend. Dropping into one man-made disaster after another and performing minor miracles. Yemen, Afghani-stan, Florida and other wartorn vacation spots. - I hadn't actually laid eyes on him in over five years, not since Burma, the last time things were halfway right in my life.

Jake closes his eyes - his mind going back to...

FLASHBACK - EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE DAY

TITLE: April 1, 2015  
Putao, Burma

A trash-strewn village square. Twenty young Burmese teenage BOYS crouch terrified on the ground, their thumbs tied behind their backs. They're guarded by a squad of dead-eyed SOLDIERS, guns ready, waiting for the order to shoot. Standing to one side is:

ALLAN, 40 - a charmed, good looking Irishman without a worry in the world. The permanent half smile of a man who's trying to stay amused with life and succeeding grandly.

He's calmly negotiating with a murderous looking Burmese COLONEL, who's in charge. Allan motions for the colonel to come and see what he's got in a delivery TRUCK that is parked nearby.

JAKE waits very anxiously beside the truck.

TO THE COLONEL gazing inside at thousands of cans of BUDWEISER.

COLONEL

You know I can just drink the beer  
and shoot these boys.

ALLAN

You *can* but you wouldn't feel right  
about it in the morning.

The Colonel.... smiles.

PRESENT - INT. PLANE DAY

The LOS ANGELES skyline appears on the horizon.  
A haze hangs over the city. Cars backed up on the freeway.  
Jake thrilled to be arriving and about to see Allan.

JAKE (v.o.)

From on high, L.A. looks about the  
same as it ever did... but then you  
get a little lower...and see that the  
smog is smoke...

Fires burning all over town.  
The cars on the freeway are all burnt out shells.

JAKE

...and that the traffic's been backed  
up for years.

The PLANE makes a steep bank past the charred ruins of  
GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY before landing on a stretch of  
Sunset Blvd. Its dive motels and strip bars bombed into  
shells of their former glory.

The magnitude of the disaster that awaits Jake finally  
hitting him.

PILOT

I'd have taken you to LAX, but I'm  
not on such friendly terms with the  
people holding it these days.

EXT. SIDE STREET

Jake steps down into a crowd of hopped up looking SOLDIERS unloading the plane.

PILOT  
Alright, let's make it happen!  
I'm outta here in ten!

A dozen skittish people stand in a clump off to one side - all loaded down with overstuffed suitcases. They look hungrily toward the airplane, and *strangely* at Jake.

PILOT  
Return passengers. They all think  
you're a bit kookoo.

For coming here.

Jake looks around, sees no sign of Allan.

JAKE  
My friend's not here to meet me.

PILOT  
Maybe he got stuck in traffic.

Or maybe not.

TO JAKE wrestling his way through a swarm of motorcycle taxis. Young guys tugging at him, urging him to hop on their bikes.

EXT. L.A. STREETS

Jake riding on the back of an old Honda. The driver FLAK is 17, scrawny, and wears a Moroccan Fez. It's a strangely quiet rush hour, the traffic consisting mainly of old bicycles.

They cruise down a street of collapsed and shell battered buildings. In a second floor kitchen, a family eats dinner in bomb created al fresco.

The street is an obstacle course of debris and burning garbage. Weeds and bushes push up through the cracks unchecked - as though the city's been abandoned for years but the people are still here. Tired, unwashed people of all ages trudge home hauling water and whatever food they've managed to get their hands on.

Above it all looms what's left of the Hollywood sign:  
HOL Y.

EXT. L.A. STREETS      SUNSET

Flak stops the motorcycle in front of the

AMBASSADOR HOTEL, the grounds encircled with barbed wire and militiamen.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

Luxury gone to seed. Banged up non-matching furniture, a cracked filthy mirror. The lobby is aswirl with journalists and other assorted war junkies who check out the new arrival. Dazzled, Jake reaches the

FRONT DESK

The CONCIERGE looks like a hardened arms dealer - probably for good reason. He coolly *evaluates* Jake.

JAKE

Hi... uh yeah, I was uh wondering if there was a message for me.

CONCIERGE

That depends. Who are you?

JAKE

Oh uh, Jake Kenner.

The Concierge shakes his head impassively.

JAKE

I was expecting a message Allan O'Donnel.

A mili-beat hesitation.

CONCIERGE

I'm sure there's nothing from a Mr. O'Donnel.

JAKE

He said he'd either meet me at the airstrip or here at the hotel.

This gets a philosophical shrug.

JAKE

You got any rooms?

CONCIERGE

It *is* a hotel. Would you like the quiet side or the shelling side?

JAKE  
The *shelling side*?

CONCIERGE  
They're two hundred cheaper. -  
Actually all I've got at the moment  
is shelling side, but something'll  
probably open up in a few days. It  
always does.

JAKE  
Shelling side it is.

CONCIERGE  
That'll be three hundred rembini.

JAKE  
You guys take pesos?

CONCIERGE  
Anything but American dollars and  
American Express.

INT. HOTEL ROOM      NIGHT

Jake passed out on a bare mattress that lies on the floor.

JAKE (v.o.)  
Leaving Vietnam hasn't stopped the  
dream I keep having. - it's the day I  
was born....but I'm already forty  
five years old.

DREAM - EXT. SAIGON 1975 DAY

Jake dreams the same ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE of the Fall of  
Saigon we saw before. But now - Jake is inserted into the  
footage itself.

JAKE is swept along with a frantic mob of Vietnamese  
stampeding down the street. An old WOMAN stumbles and  
falls from sight. A grandfatherly MAN presses his hand  
into a young woman's blouse and cups her breast.  
Jake reaches

AN OPEN PLAZA - hundreds of army boots, helmets and rifles  
lay abandoned across the ground. Three Vietnamese soldiers  
shed their uniforms, strip down to their underwear and run  
off barefoot. A

ROCKET slams into a nearby building.

PRESENT - INT. HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

Jake bolts upright in bed. A dim flash of light illuminates his face, followed by another explosion. The hotel shudders slightly. Jake dazedly rolls off the bed and stumbles over to

THE WINDOW - An artillery duel is underway a half mile away. Darkness, light, dark, thunder. Jake hypnotized by this strangely beautiful man-made lightning storm.

EXT. HOTEL COURTYARD - MORNING

Jake seated, working on yesterday's coffee. Circles under his eyes.

JAKE (v.o.)

The 155 millimeter hangover. They say people in L.A. are losing their minds, not because of all the killing but because they can't get a good night's sleep.

Jake shoves away a plate of grim looking eggs.

RADIO (o.s.)

Scattered fighting throughout the night throughout Los Feliz and into...

EXT. HOTEL - STREET DAY

Outside the barbed wire fence is a swirl of vendors, hustlers and prostitutes - all trying separate the foreign journalists from their money. Jake spots FLAK, his moto-taxi guy from yesterday.

EXT. STREETS - SAME

Jake on Flak's old Honda, zipping along. Today, Flak's sporting a combat helmet, worn at a jaunty angle. They pass the bombed out remains of PARAMOUNT PICTURES.

They round a corner and are met with a line of CARS shooting toward them - all going BACKWARDS. One driver talking away on his cell phone.

UP THE BLOCK - an exchange of gunfire between two rooftops. Flak whips the bike around toward a slightly less lethal route, his face the picture of nonchalance.

EXT. STREET

Flak rolls the motorcycle to a stop in front of a beautiful old apartment building - still grand despite its blasted out windows and shell ravaged surface.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

The once plush lobby is totally trashed. An old WOMAN is chopping up what remains of a GRAND PIANO for fire wood. She nods a cheerful hello to Jake who heads up...

THE CRUMBLING STAIRWAY

and down a hallway, past an apartment whose door is open, its insides stripped. Jake reaches #302. Knocks hesitantly. Nothing. Tries again more urgently.

MAN'S VOICE

(from behind Jake)

*Kak vam pamochk?*

An ancient MAN leaning on a cane appears like an apparition in the hallway. He speaks to Jake in Russian.

MAN

*Ktotye koshka? Skazhitye?*

JAKE

Uh, Mr. O'Donnel. Allan O'Donnel.

The Old Man Looks at Jake like he's nuts.

JAKE

You speak English?

MAN (disgusted)

*Nyet. No English.*

JAKE

Mr. O'Donnel. *Where?*

MAN

*Ditye pa pyerit stalye  
pritpachitaiye...*

The man continuing on a mile a minute - making all kinds of hand signals, ending with a pantomime of driving a golf ball.

JAKE

Golf? He's *golfing?*

RUSSIAN

*Da! Golf.* You go. Hole two-teen. You find.

Jake goes, shaking his head 'whatever'.

EXT. STREET

Flak looks pretty grim about where they're headed. They pass a tennis and golf pro SHOP that's been picked clean long ago. They drive onto the battered remains of the

EXT. WILSHIRE COUNTRY CLUB

Flak negotiates the bike through the wreckage the once posh club and onto the GOLF COURSE - the fairways overgrown. Burnt out cars and bomb crater sand traps and

GRAVE MARKERS. The back nine converted into a massive graveyard. Wooden crosses scattered out chaotically in every direction. The sight of them is like a punch to Jake's guts.

A clump of PEOPLE are gathered around an open GRAVE ahead. Jake dazedly climbs off of Flak's bike.

FLAK (anxious)  
I gotta be heading back soon.

JAKE  
I'll find my way back.

FLAK  
This isn't a great part of town to wander around in.

Jake heads unsteadily toward the grave side, passing a

BLACK SOLDIER half hidden by a large tree. He wears a blue beret with a UNITED NATIONS insignia. As Jake passes, the soldier stares at him, trying to place his face. Jake reaches...

At the grave side a mix of people of all ages are gathered, some dressed in operating room whites.

PRIEST (dreamlike)  
...Allan O'Donnel.

Gunfire and artillery come from the distance, but no one even registers it. Everyone staring at the grave in disbelief.

*Except one MAN.* A good looking swarthy white guy, 6'3. Wears a scruffy blue jean jacket and looks like he hasn't slept in a few days. He's gazing intently at Jake, trying

to figure out *who* he is and *what* he's doing here. Jake looks away uneasily. Sees the profile of a

WOMAN standing a bit apart from everyone else. Dark, Mediterranean. Long uncontrollable midnight hair. High cheekbones beneath expressionless dark eyes that are a million miles away. She is *hauntingly beautiful*.

The mere sight of her hits Jake square in the chest. Just seeing her eyes that are in a place he'll never know. And Jake absolutely certain that Allan *did know* that place.

Suddenly the woman turns away and slowly drifts off into a clump of woods, vanishing.

The Priest makes the sign of the cross. Mourners file up to the grave. Jake steps shakily forward. Picks up a handful of dirt and tosses it into the air. As it floats slowly downward, a military HELICOPTER passes in the distance.

EXT. CEMETERY SAME

Jake shellshocked, walks aimlessly through the grave markers. A surviving golf flag flaps listlessly in the wind. A white JEEP pulls up beside him. The black U.N. soldier seen earlier is at the wheel.

SOLDIER

How about a lift?

He speaks with an accent that's sounds French, but not exactly. Jake nods dreamily and climbs into the jeep. They start off.

JAKE

Thanks.

SOLDIER

Captain Kabila.

JAKE

Jake Kenner.

KABILA

You a friend of O'Donnell's?

(Jake nods)

Known him long?

Jake nods again.

They slowly pass the hauntingly beautiful WOMAN as she walks toward the street. Kabila glances at Jake to see if

he notices her. But now, Jake is too dazed to pay her any mind.

KABILA

What do you do here in Los Angeles,  
Monsieur Kenner?

JAKE

I don't do anything. I just got to  
town yesterday.

KABILA

Really? From *where*?

JAKE

Saigon. - I was gonna go to work for  
Allan.

KABILA

What sort of work?

JAKE

I haven't a clue.

Kabila looks curiously at Jake who's got a thousand yard  
stare going out the window.

JAKE

How did it happen?

KABILA

The Russe' Market. Sniper. Shot right  
in the head. Probably never felt a  
thing.

(softly)

Too bad.

EXT. HOTEL DAY

Kabila pulls the jeep up outside the Ambassador Hotel.

JAKE

Thanks for the lift.

KABILA

Let me buy you a drink. You could  
probably use one.

JAKE

That'd be great. I'm lousy for cash.

EXT. HOTEL COURTYARD - BAR

Jake on a sentimental jag, and a few drinks worse for  
wear.

JAKE

...could piss you off now and then,  
but it was never *boring*. Best friend  
I'll ever have.

KABILA

Yet you say you haven't seen him in  
five years. - And you come all the  
way from Saigon for a job, but you  
don't know *what* the job is?

JAKE

If you knew me better you'd  
understand...  
I was all outta lives in Saigon.

KABILA

So what exactly do you do?

JAKE

My only real skill is for fucking my  
life up.

KABILA

What are you *by trade*?

JAKE

Journalist.

KABILA (smiling)

Ah, you're right. You *don't* have any  
real skills.

Kabila signals the waiter for another drink.

JAKE

But enough about *me*. What's *your*  
story Kabila? Where you from?

KABILA

Rwanda.

JAKE

*No shit?* Tutsi or Hutu?

KABILA (chilly)

No one ever told me... If you're  
asking yourself what did I do in '94,  
I spent most of it in a tree.

JAKE

I'm sorry. - And what do you do here.

KABILA

Here - I stand around and watch you people slaughter each other.

JAKE

Hey, don't include *me* in that 'you people' business. I've been in Southeast Asia the last ten years, during which time *these people here* have been killing each other just fine without me.

KABILA

*Ah oui*, but you are from one of the American tribes, no?

Two African U.N. SOLDIERS enter the bar - greet Kabila.

SOLDIER 1

*Salud Laurent. Habiri gani?*

Jake trying to follow the French-African patois.

KABILA

*Pas mal. Vien de weka uchafu a la terre O'Donnel.*

SOLDIER 1

*Hongera! Cette homme es un mjinga de premiere classe.*

Kabila nods in agreement. The Soldiers take the beers and head off towards a table. Kabila turns back to Jake.

JAKE

What'd he say?

KABILA

It's a *Kirwandan* saying. It doesn't really translate.

JAKE

Try me.

KABILA

- The truth is not everyone around here is so crazy about your friend.

JAKE

Now that you mention it, you don't exactly seem broken up over his passing either.

KABILA

Best thing that's happened to me all week.

Jake blindsided by Kabila's cheerful delivery.

KABILA

Your friend was a vampire.

JAKE

*Excuse me?*

KABILA

He drank blood. - The worst profiteer *en la zone entier*.

JAKE (scoffs)

What are you saying, he was *black market*?

Kabila starts to explain that.... then decides that enlightening Jake isn't worth the trouble.

KABILA

Something like that.

JAKE

Yeah well from what I hear, anybody who manages to eat in this town is living in the black.

KABILA

Some of us are blacker than others.

JAKE (incredulous)

Look around you, *mon capitain*. My guess is you've got bigger fish to fry than Allan O'Donnel.

KABILA (smiles)

I do *now*.

Kabila raises his beer in a toast.

Jake SWINGS for Kabila's head.

Kabila leans deftly away and pulls Jake over the table - sending him crashing to the floor.

Action around the bar comes to a stop. The patrons curious, but nonchalant. Hell, what's a little bar fight in times like these?

A PHONE rings. The one-armed BARTENDER picks it up, listens...and looks down right at Jake.

BARTENDER

Mr. Kenner.

JAKE (to Kabila)

Excuse me.

Jake calmly gets up, walks to the bar and takes the phone. A garbled MAN'S VOICE with a Euro accent comes from the other end.

JAKE

I can barely hear you.

MAN (o.s.)

...Stein. I was a friend of Allan O'Donnell's. I have something here for you. Perhaps we can meet?

JAKE

I'd love to meet any friend of Allan's.  
Come by the hotel.

STEIN (o.s.)

I've got a bar tab there I'm trying to avoid. Let's say L'Hanoi? The concierge knows where it is. Say an hour?

JAKE

How will I recognize you?

The line goes dead. Jake hangs up and heads back over to Kabila, who has been watching Jake closely.

KABILA

I want you to listen very...

JAKE (curt)

Yeah, whatever. Thanks for the drink.

KABILA

Where are you rushing off to?

JAKE

I've got a meeting.

This has a slightly absurd ring to it.

KABILA

Well, L.A. isn't such a good place  
for meetings. The only thing it's  
good for is *leaving*.

JAKE

And I was just starting to like it  
here.

EXT. L'HANOI DAY

A Vietnamese restaurant in a crumbling deco building.  
Grenade proof metal grills on the windows. The gutted  
remains of the Capitol Records Building looms just beyond.  
JAKE walks into

THE RESTAURANT FOYER

and is stopped by a teenage GIRL. Behind her is a table  
covered with pistols and assault rifles - each with a  
numbered red tag. An Asian MAN emerges from inside, gives  
the girl his TICKET. She hand over his GUN, and pockets  
her tip. She then steps up to Jake and *thoroughly* pats him  
down and nods him on into

A SHADED COURTYARD

It's another world. Tables of men in hushed conversations  
in Viet and eight other languages. All eyes quickly  
taking in Jake. He sits. Reaches and picks up a...  
discarded NEWSPAPER in the next chair.  
Headline: *A Fallen Angel of Mercy*

A tall MAN suddenly looms over Jake. It's the SAME MAN he  
saw at the funeral earlier - the one who looked at Jake so  
suspiciously. He smiles easily now, looking like an  
overgrown Euro backpacker who spends a lot of time  
drinking beer and telling women how beautiful they are.

STEIN

Jake. Kurt Stein.

STEIN

Good to meet you.

They shake hands. Stein sits. A Waiter appears, exchanges  
pleasantries with Stein in Vietnamese.

STEIN

*Hai cafe sua da.*

JAKE

You speak Viet?

STEIN

Just some restaurant bits.

JAKE

What are you, German?

STEIN

(playfully stern)

You should never guess that someone is *German*, Mr. Kenner. The Germans killed six million jews, gypsies and homosexuals, and that was just in their spare time. *The Swiss*, on the other hand, didn't kill anybody. All we did was buy up all the gold fillings.

JAKE

Hell, what was I *thinking*?

The coffee arrives. They sip them somberly, suddenly remembering why they're here.

STEIN

I'm sorry about Allan. I know how close the two of you were. He spoke of you all the time... Allan and I used to meet here in the afternoons about this time. I still think I'm going to look up and see him walking in the door.

A Vietnamese MAN walks in... and joins his friends.

STEIN

I wonder how long that will last.

They're silent for a moment. Then Stein reaches into his jacket and pulls out a large PARCEL which he slides over to Jake. It's stuffed with MONEY of various currencies. Jake is baffled.

STEIN

Allan wanted to make sure you'd be alright. Just before... he went, he asked me to look after you when you arrived. Make sure you had a bit of a parachute until I could get you on a flight out of here.

JAKE

What do you mean *right before*?

STEIN (awk.)

- He didn't go right away. After he was... shot, we got him into my car. But...

JAKE

So you were *with him*?

STEIN

Myself and Harris.

JAKE

Who's *Harris*?

STEIN

Our partner.

A subtle shift happening in Jake as he unconsciously slips into an investigatory mode.

JAKE

I'd like to talk to this Harris.

STEIN

So would *I*. I've been trying to reach him all morning. He's in Mexico City seeing about a shipment of prosthetics that's being held up in customs down there.

(makes the 'bribe' sign)

Stein looks down at the newspaper. A PHOTO of the marketplace where Allan was shot. Stein turns the paper over.

STEIN

It's a huge blow. Allan almost single-handedly supplies an entire field hospital over in Fairfax. He's managed to get food and water into places the U.N. is afraid to go. He's arranged for the safe passage out of here for three thousand refugees. A lot of people are still alive because of him.

JAKE

- Take me to where it happened.

STEIN

There's nothing to see.

Jake fixes his eyes on Stein.



Nobody even knows what all the initials stand for. This isn't a real war. It's a *gang war*. As for the U.N... they're just the gang with the coolest uniforms.

Stein looks at the U.N. soldiers disdainfully.

STEIN

Allan was becoming too big.... The U.N.'s worst nightmare is that the world's is going to figure out what a joke they are and send them all home. No more *per diem*, no more danger pay. No more real estate scams.

STEIN

Don't ask me why, but a lot of people are desperate to get out of paradise here.

They pass a storefront dentist's office. In the window is a sign that says: 'WE BUY GOLD'.

STEIN

Selling mansions for pennies on the dollar. Did you know that the legal titles to half the houses in Beverly Hills are now held by *African foot soldiers*? And hey, I say good for them. But next time you run into Kabila, tell him not to cast stones. You never know what you're going to hit.

JAKE

Are you saying you think the U.N. might be mixed up Allan's death somehow.

Stein looks sharply at Jake. The first hint that Stein is ever anxious about *anything*.

STEIN (pointed)

No. And even if I *did* think that, I wouldn't think it *very loudly*.

EXT. STREETS

They drive past an old WOMAN sitting in a lawn chair selling GASOLINE out of a plastic jug. Stein turns the corner and a huge

OUTDOOR MARKET sprawls in front of them. The sort of apocalyptic vision of chaos you'd expect to see somewhere like Calcutta or San Salvador.

JAKE

Jesus.

STEIN

Welcome to the fourth world.

EXT. MARKET DAY

Jake and Stein walk through the tumult of vendors packed in around the ruins of office buildings. Plastic tarps over stalls selling car batteries, powdered milk, candles, assault rifles, strawberries, and everything in between.

STEIN

Half the city's starving and the other half's looking for a good deal on Zanax.

JAKE

Some things never change.

Meat on slabs of dirty ice, a woman fanning flies away with a banana leaf. An elderly feeble man and wife try to sell a beautifully framed impressionist PAINTING. Possibly museum material, but no takers.

As Stein tells the STORY we jump back and forth between PRESENT TIME and slightly washed out FLASHBACKS.

STEIN

The three of us. Me, Harris, and Allan.

STEIN FLASHBACK - EXT. MARKET DAY

Allan and Stein walking with HARRIS, a gangly whiteboy who looks like he stepped right out of a Nebraska cornfield.

STEIN (v.o.)

Allan had heard a rumor that there was some liberated tetracycline floating around.

Allan making discreet inquiries with various shady looking traders.

STEIN (o.s.)

But it was seeming more and more like just a rumor.

PRESENT

Jake and Stein pass A BOY (12). He's got dishevelled hair and wears a ragged CHICAGO BULLS jacket. At his feet is a wooden crate full of ammunition that he's selling.

STEIN

Then we got here.

They reach an older HIPPIE WOMAN (wearing Yassir Arafat Keffiya) standing at her stall, selling eggs and perfume.

FLASHBACK - MARKET

Jake, Harris, and Allan - standing at the same PERFUME stall. Allan picking up a bottle.

HIPPIE VENDOR

When the water's run dry, a woman needs it more than ever.

ALLAN

Maybe I should get a bottle or two for my girl.

Then a quiet *RUSH of air*.

Allan's HEAD invisibly punched to one side. He seems to float on his feet for a second, then crumples to the ground in slow motion.

Pandemonium. More gunshots. A YOUNG WOMAN is hit. Everyone crawling desperately for cover, no one sure where the shots are coming from. Bottles and food toppling in the stampede. Stein looks up to a

TALL INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE looming in the distance. A flash of light appears in one of its windows. A BULLET zings through the perfume bottles, spraying Stein.

STEIN (o.s.)

Strange where your mind goes in those moments. I kept thinking: *God, I reek of Chanel.*

STEIN and HARRIS crawl over to Allan who is sprawled out on the ground. They lift Allan up. Everything goes slow motion as... *Harris' and Stein's eyes meet.*

PRESENT

Jake gazing fixedly at the spot where Allan was hit.

JAKE

Who did it?

STEIN

CAT sniper.

Stein gestures for them to head back.  
As they go, Jake catches the eye of...

THE AMMO BOY in the CHICAGO BULLS jacket, crouched over his ammo crate. The boy *locks eyes with Jake* for a long moment.

STEIN (o.s.)

It was five minutes before we could even get him to the car.

FLASH - INT. MERCEDES

HARRIS in the back seat, cradling Allan's head.  
Stein at the wheel, driving like a madman, dodging pedestrians.

PRESENT - INT. MERCEDES

JAKE looks into the Mercedes' back seat.  
Sees BLOOD dried black on the upholstery. He shivers.

STEIN

By the time we could reach a doctor,  
he was gone.

INT. MERCEDES - STREET      LATER

Jake stares dazedly out the car window. A man and woman pass by on a Honda scooter. He wears a suit and she wears a WEDDING DRESS. Entranced, Jake gazes at her white veil as it billows behind her.

JAKE

You have any idea what kind of work  
Allan had in mind for me here?

STEIN

I have *no idea*. - To be honest, I was  
a little amazed that Allan would  
actually *invite* someone to this  
place.

They pass a run down apartment building. Three wooden grave markers in the small yard of weeds right next to the building. The dead buried everywhere.

JAKE

There was a woman at the funeral.  
Long curly black hair. Kinda Greek or  
Lebanese looking.

STEIN (smiles)  
She's the one who Allan was buying  
the perfume for.

JAKE  
What's her name?

STEIN  
Allan told me once, but it went in  
one side and out the other. She's an  
Apocalypse Girl. It's a "club for  
gentlemen". You *know* how Allan was  
with the *damen*.

Stein's comment seems to dredge up a bad memory for Jake.

JAKE  
Nomadic.

EXT. STREET - MERCEDES

Stein pulls up in front of the Ambassador Hotel.

STEIN  
I'm sorry. Allan could hardly wait to  
see you.  
(smiles wistfully)  
He said he was about to get his youth  
back.

Jake has to look away. He climbs out of the car.

STEIN  
What do you think you'll do now?

Jake shrugs, utterly lost.

STEIN  
Listen, this is no place for anybody  
who doesn't *have* to be here. - I'll  
send over one of my guys in the  
morning, get you on the first plane  
out - let you spend that money on the  
beach in Mexico.

JAKE  
You're the second person today who's  
told me that.

STEIN  
The people have *spoken*.

JAKE  
Why do you have to be here, Stein?

STEIN

Because I've got a screw loose, just like Allan. We stuck around too long and got hooked on the place.

(shakes Jake's hand)

It was good to meet you, Jake. Hopefully the next time I see you, you'll have a margarita in one hand and a girl in the other.

JAKE

Thanks for everything.

STEIN

I wish I could have done more.

Stein smiles sadly, drives away.

A big delivery truck sweeps past, the sound of engine taking Jake back:

ALLAN (v.o.)

The *King* of fucking beers.

FLASHBACK - INT. DELIVERY TRUCK - BURMA DAY

A continuation of the earlier Beer for Hostages flashback in Burma. The back of Allan's truck is now full of the released young men who had been on the verge of execution by the soldiers. The truck starts off down a bumpy path.

JAKE

You are *definitely* running out of lives.

ALLAN

C'mon. We weren't even *remotely* in danger back there.

JAKE

You out of your fucking mind?! That colonel's a total psychopath and you tell him he's gonna feel *guilty in the morning?*

Allan shrugs - pulls two CANS of beer from under the seat.

ALLAN

Like the man said: it's time to *stop thinking* and *start drinking*.

PRESENT - EXT. HOTEL COURTYARD BAR NIGHT

Jake sits staring blankly at god only knows what.

JAKE (v.o.)

The drinking part has always been  
easy for me. But to stop *thinking*...

He takes a long sip of his beer.

JAKE v.o.)

A number of things occur to me  
sitting there at *Le Bar Ambassador*.  
One is that in my travels, I've been  
to a lot of really fucked up places,  
but *L.A.* is the undisputed  
heavyweight champion.

We see a couple of JOURNALISTS with a heavily made up  
older ACTRESS type. She's negotiating on behalf a couple  
of 19 year old beauties sitting bored at the next table.

JAKE (v.o.)

The next thing is that the small pile  
of cash Stein gave me isn't gonna  
last nearly as long as I thought.  
Truth is I can barely even afford  
this drink. I should really be  
upstairs packing, trying to figure  
out what I'm gonna be when I grow up.  
But here's the problem.

Jake closes his eyes and....

FLASHBACK - MANAGUA, NICARAGUA DAY

A much younger Jake walking through "Downtown Managua" -  
an a mostly abandoned area of fields and an occasional  
decrepit buildings. The ruins from a long ago earthquake.

Jake stops in front of half collapsed MOVIE THEATER - the  
marquee barely intact.

JAKE (v.o.)

Back when I was still more or less  
young I met a woman named Amelia.

Jake looks up and sees

A WOMAN standing in a window over the marquee. Beautiful -  
or more a memory of beauty. Now 50 and worn down by time  
and a million things that should have gone differently.

She beckons Jake inside. Jake hesitates and then makes his way into the crumbling entry.

JAKE (v.o.)

Twenty years earlier she was a young mother. Her husband had a steady job as a sergeant in the Guardia Nacional.

INT. COLLAPSING THEATER SAME

Shots of the once grand lobby, the upstairs bar - the theater itself - the ceiling collapsed, the rear wall crumbled providing a vista of the toxic Lake Managua nearby.

JAKE (v.o.)

On the last day of the revolution, hours before presidente fled the country - Amelia's husband reported for duty.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS THEATER BAR SAME

Pan across a stack of cardboard with a blanket atop it. Her bed. Continue to pan - the bed is empty.

JAKE (v.o.)

He could easily have stayed home that day - but he left.

JAKE sitting at a banged up table looking down at

A PHOTO of Amelia's long dead husband in his uniform.

Amelia comes over with two cups of coffee - sets one down for Jake. The two of them sit there sipping their coffee, gazing at the photo.

JAKE

She showed him to me because of something she saw in my eyes. An unspoken promise that I would tell her story.

INT. MANAGUA BAR NIGHT

A seedy place full of joyless drinkers.

JAKE

....but I never did.

Jake alone sitting in a corner - well into his beers.

JAKE (v.o.)  
 Back in those days, my eyes made *lots*  
*of promises* - and I didn't keep any  
 of them...

Jake catches the eye of the YOUNG WAITRESS and lifts his empty beer bottle: "Bring me another." She sets a fresh bottle down on the table and smiles at him invitingly.

JAKE (v.o.)  
 ....I just ran like the wind.

END FLASHBACK

PRESENT - INT. HOTEL BAR

JAKE (v.o.)  
 The last thing that I realize is that  
 in fact, there's really no rush to  
 pack, no rush to do anything at  
 all....

A WAITRESS passes. Jake motions for another drink.

JAKE (v.o.)  
 because *I'm not going anywhere*. I see  
 now that somehow my whole train wreck  
 of a life has all been leading up to  
*this*. My being *right here*, in this  
 place, in this chair, *in this moment*.  
 - And suddenly I know with absolute  
 certainty that I'm gonna die in this  
 city.

INT. HOTEL ROOM      NIGHT

Jake typing away madly on his LAPTOP, in the zone.

JAKE (v.o.)  
 But before I do - I'm going to tell a  
 story. The story of Allan's death...  
 and the story of his life.

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET      DAY

Jake makes his way through the street market that Stein brought him to earlier. A man with a shotgun guards a crate of eggs. Two women fight over a scrawny chicken, its wings flapping madly. A SOCCER MOM approaches, walking hand in hand with a young boy. As Jake passes, she murmurs faintly.

WOMAN

Shall I put you in my mouth?

Jake arrives at the PERFUME STALL where Allan was shot. The HIPPIE WOMAN VENDOR has reassembled her stock in neat rows.

HIPPIE VENDOR

When the water's down, a woman needs  
it more than ever.

Jake dazedly pays for the same bottle of perfume that Allan was holding the moment he was shot.

As Jake starts to drift away, he spots

The AMMO BOY in the BULLS JACKET. The one who was watching Jake and Stein so closely before. A functionally deranged wonder of war. A home made TATTOO of crosshairs on his forehead. Twelve years old and sleeping in places we'll never know.

Recognizing Jake, the kid pales. Jake picks up a box of 7.62 mm shells.

JAKE

How much Mexican?

The kid flashes a 5 and a zero with his hand. Jake drops a 50 peso note into the crate. The kid reaches for a box of ammo, but Jake shakes his head and taps a finger to his eyes.

KID

I d'n see nuthin.

Jake peels off two more 50's. The kid's eyes sweep the area.

JAKE

What do you see *now*?

KID

Three o' em walkin.

THE KID'S FLASHBACK - MARKET

Harris, Stein and Allan moving through the market crowd. Zero-ing in on Stein:

JAKE (o.s.)

The man from yesterday?

KID (o.s.)

Yeah.

JAKE

Who else?

The shot jumping to HARRIS.

KID

Su' guy I never see.

And over to ALLAN.

KID

And O'Donnel.

JAKE

You *knew* him?

KID (ominous)

*Eh 'body* know 'im....Walk my way. Stop  
at the cologne getch.

Allan flirting with the Perfume Vendor.

GUNSHOT.

Allan's head spinning to one side in slow motion.  
Allan floating, falling. Then total chaos.  
Stein and Harris lifting Allan, carrying him off.

PRESENT - EXT. MARKET

The Ammo Kid is visibly spooked by the whole business.

JAKE

What don't you like about it?

KID

People sayin O'Donnel get clipped  
by CAT snipe.

Barely moving his head, the Kid nods into the distance  
toward the tall

INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE where Allan was shot from.

JAKE

What about it?

KID

CAT don't hold that ground. *We* do.

Jake gazes hard at the building as though it's gonna tell  
him something.

JAKE

So what are you saying? That  
somebody was...

Jake turns back to the Kid. But he's gone. Scampering away with his crate of ammo, vanishing into the labyrinth of the market.

ACROSS THE MARKET

A WHITE MAN stands half hidden behind one of the vendor stalls. He has the face of a well-fed Auschwitz guard. He's been following the whole exchange between Jake and the Ammo Kid.

INT. HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

Jake at his computer working away on Allan's story - oblivious to the distant lightning show of artillery fire in the window. He stops and glances at his dwindling pile of CASH.

STEIN (o.s.)

*Allan wanted to make sure you'd be  
alright.*

QUICK MENTAL FLASHES:

The tall building looming over the street market.  
A flash of light. Perfume Bottles shattering.

The beautiful woman at Allan's funeral.

STEIN (o.s.)

*She's the one who Allan was buying  
the perfume for... She's an  
Apocalypse Girl.*

EXT. STREET DAY

Jake riding on Flak's motorcycle. Flak is wearing this little skull cap that looks like he stole from the Pope.

JAKE

Where do you find all these hats?

FLAK

Barneys. They had a bombed outta  
business sale.

They pull up at a huge cinder block warehouse with 'Apocalypse Forever' spraypainted to a wall.

INT. WAREHOUSE

A strip club for the end of the world. Half medieval cathedral, half KGB interrogation center. Candles and shadows, the sound of gothic death groove pulsing underneath. Funereal waitresses drift by in varying degrees of undress.

Two psychotic looking MILITIAMEN sit with their rifles lying on the bar at the feet of a dead-eyed STRIPPER dancing apathetically over them.

Jake sits down a dozen stools away.

A BARTENDRESS appears, attired in elaborate Elizabethan garb. She lifts her chin with monumental indifference.

JAKE

The King of beers.

BARTENDRESS

All we got today is Kabex.

Whatever that is. Jake looks over at the Militiamen.

JAKE

*They've got beer.*

BARTENDRESS

They've got *guns*.

JAKE

In that case, make it a Bud.

She shrugs malevolently, pulls out a beer and bangs it down. Waiting for Jake to drink and fuck off.

A BAR GIRL eases into the stool beside him. She's wearing a white micro bikini top with rifle crosshairs centered on the important places.

B-GIRL

Where's *my beer*?

JAKE

You got a gun?

B-GIRL

I got something better. Come with me. I'll show you what it is.

JAKE

Actually I'm looking for a friend of mine who used to come around here. Guy named Allan O'Donnel?

The B-Girl and the Bartendress trade dark looks.

BARTENDRESS

You're not gonna find him *here*.

JAKE

It's *his girlfriend* I'm looking for.

BARTENDRESS

Well that's too bad 'cuz she ain't here neither.

Ice. She turns and goes. Jake sips his beer, digesting that. Then glances at the B-Girl, and sets a 100 peso note on the bar. The B-Girl's eyes flick to it, then scan the room.

B-GIRL

The Ralph's at La Brea and third.

JAKE

*The grocery store?*

B-GIRL

She's a checkout girl.

She starts giggling like she's got a screw loose somewhere. Seeing her EYES up close, the woman is clearly drugged to the gills.

JAKE

How about a name?

B-GIRL

I'm Toy.

JAKE

*Her name.*

B-GIRL

Any... Meda veda something.

Jake slips her the money. She takes hold of his hand and eases him closer, brushing his fingertips ever so lightly across the faint glow of perspiration that covers her breasts.

B-GIRL

You *sure* you don't wanna have a look?  
It's a vision like you ain't never seen before.

Jake is drawn precariously in, clearly a man with a weakness for these kinds of visions.

JAKE (weakly)

Some other time.

Jake just managing to force himself toward the exit.  
Toy calls out after him.

B-GIRL

You could be dead 'fore you hit the  
end of the block.

(caressing herself)

This here could be the last look your  
eyes *ever* get.

CU of JAKE'S FACE as he continues walking out.

JAKE (v.o.)

What scares the shit out of me is  
that *maybe she's right...* and maybe  
she always has been. And it's this  
fear that I'm missing my very last  
look that has sent me chasing after  
those visions again and again.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jake riding on Flak's bike, swerving around debris in the  
road. They pass the charred ruins of L.A. Country Museum  
and the WOOLY MAMMOTH placidly wading through the La Brea  
Tarpits. Looming up ahead is a big

SIGN: Ralph's supermarket

Flak pulls into the parking lot.  
Jake walks toward

THE STORE: a huge bomb blasted opening where automatic  
doors once were. The inside is filled with beds and  
primitive operating tables.

CAR HORNS suddenly start blaring dimly in the distance.  
Everyone stops in his tracks, listening. As the car horns  
grow closer, everyone takes off running in every  
direction.

A dozen CARS fly into the parking lot - full of WOUNDED.

A flashflood of motion as medics start lifting the wounded  
out of the cars and into the store.

Jake is knocked aside by two MEN carrying a third MAN who  
clutches his exposed intestines, trying to hold them in.

A PRIEST appears - but he's wounded too - hand pressed hard against his eye - all kinds of goopy shit leaking out.

Jake stumbles backwards, turning away, and there is

ANYA. Looking down and working desperately.

Jake locks in on her face. Her eyes.  
The curve of her cheekbones. Her lips.

ANYA

*Vetchka!*

She's beint over the SAME MAN who was trying to hold his intestines in just moments earlier. Anya reaches inside him with a clamp. She looks around desperately, sees JAKE staring at her, entranced.

ANYA

Get over here!

Jake stumbles over, half coming out of his spell.

ANYA

Put your finger here.

He stares at her HANDS, buried in the wreckage of intestines.

ANYA

Just grab it!

Jake reaches in and grabs. Anya clamps off the wound.

ANYA

Do you know him?

Her words not registering with Jake. He stares intently at her mouth. She has an accent of some kind. Don't we all?

JAKE

Where are you from?

She looks up at him - trying to see something she might have missed.

ANYA

Are you wounded?

jake hesitates... then shakes his head.

JAKE

I was a friend of Allan's.

Anya's eyes lock on Jake's.  
Suddenly Jake is shoved aside and sees a

MEDIC taking his place.

Jake steps back, watching Anya work on the wounded man.

INT. HOSPITAL      SUNSET

All quiet. Kerosene lamps cast a yellow flickering light.  
JAKE and the MEDIC share a cigarette near six corpses  
lying in a row across the floor.

MEDIC

These ones must have been alone. If  
nobody shows after twelve hours, we  
wrap em up and take em golfing.

Across the room - the Young Man (that Jake helped Anya  
with) lies dead on a table. Eyes wide, gazing at nothing.  
His girlfriend is draped across his chest, an animal like  
groan rising up out of her.

ANYA stands several feet away, staring blankly at the  
woman. Anya then turns impassively to

JAKE.....deciding.  
And nods faintly towards the door.

\*      \*      \*

End of excerpt.