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Llave

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Llave

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in
Film Theatre and Communication Arts
Low Residency in Creative Writing

By

Brenda Michelle Reagan

B.F.A. Louisiana State University, 2003

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FADE IN:

EXT. DAM SQUARE, AMSTERDAM - EVENING

We follow NIFFE, an attractive woman in her late 20s. She wears dark eye makeup and a hairstyle that obscures one of her eyes.

She carries a professional camera across her body, scanning the architecture and focusing on an obelisk statue in the center of the square.

She walks amidst groups of soccer fans, looking perplexed and then annoyed at the growing crowd.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Amsterdam, 1993"

In the large crowd of gathered fans, groups of young adults wave national flags in the air.

Along the perimeter of the square are tall gray stone buildings from an earlier century. In the center circular portion, a projection screen displays replays from a soccer game.

Teens attempt to pass and dribble soccer balls through the crowd which is ecstatic with WHOOPS, YELLS, and CHEERS.

Niffe makes her way to the edge of the square and ducks between two buildings to light up a joint.

ANGLE ON: THREE TEENAGE BOYS

After another teenager heads a soccer ball, one teenager catches the ball and motions the other two to come closer. He points to the niche where Niffe has disappeared and they begin to walk in her direction.

CLOSE UP: NIFFE

Niffe puts out the joint and lights a cigarette. The faint light barely emerges from the shadows.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE FROM THE TEENAGER'S P.O.V.

Niffe steps into the crowd, brushing shoulders with a few pedestrians. The boys walk closer to Niffe's niche.

One of the group, the AMSTERDAM TEENAGER, scans the ground, littered with confetti, and picks up a flyer.

The group continues walking until the teenager with the flyer bumps into Niffe. She shifts her camera to her far shoulder.

AMSTERDAM TEENAGER
(in Dutch)
Excuse me. It isn't fair to bump
into one so perfect.

Niffe shrugs and begins to look in the opposite direction. The Amsterdam Teenager catches her eye.

AMSTERDAM TEENAGE
(in English)
I'm sorry, you don't speak Dutch?

Niffe pulls away from him. He releases her as one of the gang painstakingly slides her camera off her shoulder.

The Amsterdam Teenager holds up the flyer, dusting off the grime.

AMSTERDAM TEENAGER
(in German)
You're German? No matter what, you
should come. There will be a very
international crowd.

Niffe takes the flyer and begins to thread her way through the crowd in the opposite direction.

NIFFE
(sarcastically)
I'll be there.

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT, AMSTERDAM - DAY

Niffe walks confidently, arm-in-arm with COLLIN, thirties, dressed in high-end chic and smoking a large joint.

SUPERIMPOSE: "The Next Day."

They slowly meander down the middle of the street as storm clouds begin to form in the sky.

Oncoming traffic moves out of their way as it is plain that they are oblivious to the cars and other pedestrians.

Stopping briefly, Collin dramatically blows smoke in Niffe's face. She playfully slaps him.

The two stop in front of a glass-walled series of buildings on the block.

They pass through a boisterous but slightly run-down, pedestrian filled street populated with cafes and marijuana Bars.

The storefronts transform to houses of prostitution.

ANGLE ON: PROSTITUTE FRAMED IN WINDOW

A long bleach-haired tall, curvaceous PROSTITUTE, turns and presses her butt provocatively against the glass.

Niffe plucks the spliff from COLLIN'S fingers and blows a large puff of smoke, obscuring his view into the brothel.

NIFFE

I bet under absolutely no provocation, she will press her pussy against the glass.

COLLIN

Yea, probably, I'm **that** irresistible.

NIFFE

Not only that, she will do it with so much gusto that the glass shatters.

COLLIN (CONT'D)

You're on. What are the stakes?

NIFFE

If it breaks, I'll take that ticket your mentioned earlier off your hands.

Collin scowls back at Niffe.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

Plus, I don't think the editor at *People* would want to know why you really never delivered that last story.

COLLIN

Fine, if the glass holds, as it is accustomed to do in this modern age...

(dropping his voice)

I'll rent a room in this wonderful establishment our friend inhabits, and we'll spend the night in whatever way I please.

Niffe grasps Collin's hand in a strong shake.

NIFFE

Deal.

COLLIN

Deal.

The sky lets out a serious rumble and the glass CRACKS in a vertical line, slowly creating a spiderweb across the surface.

A few members of the crowd panic and run in different directions.

When the commotion is over, the sidewalk is lined with glass and the Prostitute is lying on the Wealthy Tourist who is supported on his elbows.

As Niffe steps forward to offer a hand, he collapses. The Prostitute and Wealthy Tourist rise slowly, pulling shards of glass from their arms.

PROSTITUTE

(in Swedish)

Thank you so much.

SECOND MAN

It was nothing, Are you Swedish?

CLOSE UP: PROSTITUTE

Faint trickles of blood run out of the Prostitute's temple.

PROSTITUTE

(perplexed)

Ok.

Niffe helps the Prostitute to buckle her heels and shake the last bit of glass off her mini-skirt as she rises and then turns to the Wealthy Tourist.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

When does it leave?

The Prostitute walks closer to the Wealthy Tourist and extends her hand which he quickly kisses, allowing his lips to travel up the rest of her arm.

As Niffe steps closer, the Wealthy Tourist is forced to register her existence.

COLLIN
(suddenly incensed)
I don't know, witch.

He pulls the wallet out of his back pocket, removes the ticket, and hands it to Niffe and turns back to the Prostitute.

NIFFE
I'm not psychic, I did a piece on the foundation problems in the red light district the last time I was here and the dangers for those who live and work here. There was a lot more research than you would imagine. I noticed all the spider cracks had expanded beyond the point of structural integrity. Plus, I've seen this happen once before.

COLLIN
What's the chance?

NIFFE
Look it up in the *Journal of Social Health*, 1992.

Collin turns back to the Prostitute and talks in broken Swedish as she looks on perplexed and giggling.

The crowd begins to thin out and Niffe walks quickly away, new energy in her step. We see the length of the red light district from the air.

Niffe walks slowly down the middle of the street.

CLOSE UP: NIFFE

Niffe's eyes are closed and large droplets of rain begin to fall and cling to her eyelashes.

EXT. ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL, MAASHAVEN HARBOR, ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS - NIGHT

A foggy docklands warehouse in silver geometric forms can be seen rising above the water in the background of a narrow but packed cobblestone street. A couple cloth banners catch the wind.

On the street teenagers and young adults mingle in a thick mob that is almost impenetrable to pedestrians.

The revelers are dressed in costumes and club wear: leg warmers, slinky dresses, pacifiers.

A variety of glowing jewelry in a myriad of colors highlights the dilated pupils of passing faces.

Sweat beads on some individuals and steam rises into the cools night air off of bare torsos exiting a few remaining open clubs.

Most the crowds are centered around D.J.s spinning vinyl records on the front patios of the warehouses and restaurants.

In front of one bar, world-infused trance MUSIC blares from a D.J. while the other members of the band perform behind the glass walls at the front entrance.

Individuals and a few couples energetically dance in front of the D.J. while the rest of the crowd is quietly hypnotized to the music.

Niffe, in latex and designer jeans, stands beside the D. J., shouting directly in his ear.

She steps away and scans the crowd, patiently peering through the dancers on tip-toe.

A male REVELER puts a brightly colored iced drink in a clear cup in Niffe's hand and pulls her by the waist to the D.J. booth. The reveler holds up a jello shot and they both down one without hesitation.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

These images are interspersed with close-ups of the flashing multicolored dance floor lights in magentas, greens, and blues in an increasingly epileptic pace as the series of scenes progresses through the night:

A) Niffe making out with the reveler on the dance floor.

B) Niffe talking her way behind the D.J. booth.

C) Niffe sitting on the rooftop of one of the warehouses in a chain where each person massages the back of the person in front of them.

INT. DISCO COUSTEAU, ROTTERDAM - MORNING

Niffe lies asleep on a leather couch in the back of the bar. Two bartenders sweep and clean out boxes around her. Niffe's eyes flutter open as light tickles her face.

Niffe pulls out the plane ticket and smooths out the bends in the card stock.

NIFFE
(softly)
Fuck that no name travel
guide, they can find a new travel
writer.

Niffe sits up and runs her fingers through her hair. She gestures towards the front door, and one of the bartenders unlocks the door in a blast of sunlight.

EXT. STREET, ROTTERDAM - SAME

Standing on the front porch, Niffe dials a number in her cell phone.

INT. MODERN PENTHOUSE, AMSTERDAM - SAME

The shrill RING wakes up Collin, who's face is buried in his pillow beside the Prostitute. He claws his way through her thick mop of hair and answers the phone.

The Prostitute SIGHS loudly in her sleep.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

COLLIN
Collin. This better be important.

NIFFE
I know it's early, but it is
essential.

COLLIN
I remember now, you just want to
make sure you're clear to fly. Made
a fool of yourself last night?

NIFFE
Well, I know your night was better
than mine. Can you talk to the
airline and make sure your business
switches over the name on the
ticket - it's blank.

COLLIN
Yea, I'm calling right now. You
should be free of your Dutch
shackles by 9:30. You know, it's ok
to stay somewhere longer than three
weeks.

NIFFE
I appreciate your concern, but my
health is taking a pounding here.

COLLIN
That bad? You know there is an
amazing spa at my hotel.

NIFFE
I don't really do spas. I've gotta
go pack.

COLLIN
Good night.

EXT. SCHIPHOL AIRPORT, AMSTERDAM - EARLY MORNING

Carrying only a large, stuffed backpack and messenger bag,
Niffe walks up to the sliding glass doors. She then
hesitates and veers to the side.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Two days later."

Negotiating several barrel-size stainless steel columns, she
fishes through her bag for a pipe, and sinks against the
wall to a concrete bench, looks around briefly, and lights
the pipe.

Niffe's phone rings and 'Dad' glows on the screen. She
clumsily hits the reject button and returns the large cell
phone to her travel bag. Her gaze returns to the pipe.

NIFFE
(quietly, to herself)
To former times.

She sits thinking and twirls the ticket in her lap. She
stuffs the pipe into a cloth bag and into the trash.

She enters the sliding glass doors.

INT. SCHIPHOL AIRPORT WAITING ROOM - SAME

Niffe listens to a portable tape recorder through a pair of
large headphones and flips through a binder of slides.

She tries to make out details by holding them up to the
fluorescent lights on the ceiling.

She looks up at the television set in the upper corner of
the room as another passenger gets up and raises the
volume.

A breaking news report shows scenes of an airport bombing where injured passengers are being pulled from rubble and glass. The scene is labeled on screen: 'Barajas Airport, Madrid, 7:25 AM'

Niffe's cell phone rings, the screen displaying 'Dad' again. She grimaces and picks up the call.

INT. BREAKFAST ROOM, ASJHOLT ESTATE, MIDWEST U.S.A. - SAME

A late middle aged man, NIFFE'S FATHER, in a monogrammed robe sits at the breakfast table with three newspapers still wrapped up and the television broadcasting the morning news.

He leafs through a stack of mail, sees a postcard signed Niffe with a brief note and walks over to the telephone and dials a number.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

NIFFE

Yes?

NIFFE'S FATHER

Are you ok? There has been a bombing on the anniversary of the Irish 1921 Bloody Sunday in Madrid. The terrorists may be paying homage to the incident. I just got your postcard that you were headed that direction.

NIFFE

You have impeccable timing as usual: a news report just came on in the airport here in Amsterdam, it's the first that I've heard of the situation.

NIFFE'S FATHER

Have you thought about that job offer I told you about at my friend's Wall Street location? I talked to Steve again. It could actually work part time or full time. You wouldn't have to give up your photography.

NIFFE

I think I took one economics class in college. I am never going to work in finance. We're both being

NIFFE
bombarde d with footage of tons of
corpses, let's face reality.

NIFFE'S FATHER
Are you happy? You don't sound
like yourself.

NIFFE
I don't feel like myself, but I
have some plans.

NIFFE'S FATHER
Such as?

NIFFE
I'll let you know as soon as I work
them out. Trust me, I'm happier
here than I would be back home.

NIFFE'S FATHER
I know. I love you.

NIFFE
I love you too.

Niffe slowly puts her phone down and looks out the window at
an airplane landing, lost in thought.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STEEP DITCH OF AUTOBAHN FREEWAY, GERMANY - DAY

A remnants of a smoking, totaled sports car lies on its side
in a steep ravine. The hood is flattened into something
resembling an accordion.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Autobahn Freeway, Germany, Mile Marker 282,
1990"

A payphone stands in the foreground on the shoulder of the
road and Niffe, bruised and bleeding extensively from a
wound on her forehead, is propped up on the inside of the
booth.

A train station above boards the last trickle of passengers.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE'S HAND.

Niffe, shaking, tries to negotiate a deutschmark coin from
her pocket to the slot. The phone RINGS before she can
accomplish the task.

ANGLE ON: ENTIRE PHONE BOOTH.

Niffe's face comes into view as she she struggles to answer the phone, and we see that her right eye is filled with blood.

NIFFE
(shakily)
Hello??

TORI (V.O.)
I got the call you made earlier,
sorry I didn't answer. I was
teaching...

NIFFE
(slurring her speech)
You're sorry?

TORI
Oh my god, what's wrong?

NIFFE
My car looks like a futurist
sculpture.

TORI
I'm looking up the emergency
number, I've got a great computer
at work, I'll send someone right
away. Do you see a landmark?

NIFFE
(haltingly)
There's a train station above me.

TORI (V.O.)
Above you? I can scream. Hold the
receiver out of the booth and
towards the train station.

Niffe holds out the phone receiver and points it toward the train station.

TORI (V.O., CONT'D)
(screaming)
Help. Help down here. Please. H - E
- L - P

Niffe's arm slowly droops from weakness.

TORI (V.O., CONT'D)
You sound awful. What happened?

NIFFE
My car: it's upside down. It
doesn't look like I hit anyone
else.

Niffe slumps against the glass wall.

NIFFE
I shouldn't just leave the car,
I've got to go check on it. It's a
rental.

TORI (V.O.)
What are you on? Stay right there.

NIFFE
Nothing. Never mind ...

TRAIN PASSENGER (O. S.)
Are you ok? We're coming. Sit
tight.

NIFFE
I gotta go, I think someone
actually saw me.

TORI (V.O.)
Is help coming?

NIFFE
Yea.

TORI (V.O.)
Call me from the hospital. I love
you.

ANGLE ON: PHONE RECEIVER

NIFFE passes out, falls to the ground, and the ear piece
swings freely.

ANGLE ON: ENTIRE SCENE

A DOCTOR struggles down the steep, rocky embankment.

He reaches for Niffe's neck to check her pulse, notices a
stream of blood running down it, and puts on his driving
gloves.

INT. METRO PLATFORM, MADRID - DAY

Niffe sits on a streamlined metal bench, lost in thought.

SUPERIMPOSE: "The next day."

The subway is fairly busy. A crowd of business suits obscure tiled walls.

A notebook sits on Niffe's lap, open to a blank page.

Niffe observes a Couple standing near her. The train arrives and all the passengers board it but Niffe and the couple.

MALE PASSENGER

(in Spanish)

Meeting: All time condensed in one moment.

FEMALE PASSENGER

(in Spanish)

Should we go out for dancing and tapas? It's the perfect hour.

MALE PASSENGER

(in Spanish)

To the house. There is something much more interesting there.

CLOSE UP: NIFFE'S NOTEBOOK

She scrawls "lost" on the blank lined page and illuminates the graphite letters till they shine gunmetal silver in the dingy fluorescent light.

ANGLE ON: ENTIRE METRO STOP

A train arrives and Niffe boards it through a maze of exiting passengers.

INT. CAFÉ GIJÓN, MADRID - DAY

ZUZEN, a man dressed in dark fashionable street clothes in his early thirties sits at a high stool amid purple curtains, granite table-tops, and the heavily polished oak of a historical coffee shop.

Groups of people are engaged in animated discussions. A few of the window booths are occupied with writers with open notebooks.

At one table, a couple stares at a large clunky gray laptop and sip iced drinks.

Zuzen looks at a stack of typed paper in a leather folder and then glances at the literary group, known as a tertulia, meeting in the booth beside him.

As their heated discussion escalates, they become audible above the roar of the busy restaurant.

ANGLE ON: TERTULIA

TERTULIA MEMBER ONE

(in Spanish)

We keep descending to their level and trembling at their threats of bombs and petty assassinations of local politicians and prison guards and they keep escalating. It's a formula for disaster. The Barajas airport bombing has finally left behind the group's former tactic of targeting politicians and crossed into the mania of attacking innocent civilians.

TERTULIA MEMBER TWO

(in Spanish)

They were self-governing for an eternity, and they will never lay down their weapons. The Basques will always demand independence. They possessed it for over 1,000 years, and they remember it well.

TERTULIA MEMBER ONE

(in Spanish)

Many did not guess that the gentle but persistent pressure of demonstrations would liberate the Basque state.

TERTULIA MEMBER TWO

(in Spanish)

The economy sent the flag of the USSR to its flames. Spain's federal government will never release an economic gem. The police force of the Basque land has formed its own counter-terrorist group, Grupo Antiterrorista de Liberacion - GAL, but it uses the exact same tactics as its enemy, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna. Madrid's Parliament looks the other way and Felipe González is too dumb to notice.

TERTULIA MEMBER THREE
(in Spanish)
That would seem to support my
theory that Spain is in fact
heading towards anarchy in the next
10 years, regardless of the prime
minister.

TERTULIA MEMBER ONE
(in Spanish)
I've read your panic paper:
completely off topic. You represent
E.T.A. as a world power.

Niffe, dressed in a business suit, passes between the
tertulia and Zuzen's table. She stops and looks around and
selects a small table nearby.

GIJÓN WAITER
(in Spanish)
Good Afternoon. Can I answer any
questions or get you anything to
drink?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I'll have the Blanco y Negro iced
coffee for now.

ANGLE ON: TERTULIA

TERTULIA MEMBER TWO
(in Spanish)
Irregardless, we can't
resign ourselves to the fates, we
should support the Basque
Nationalist Party.

TERTULIA MEMBER ONE
(in Spanish)
Go ahead and pull out your campaign
stickers and buttons, get it over
with.

The waiter returns with a drink in a parfait glass.

GIJÓN WAITER
Blanco y Negro.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Thank you.

Niffe pulls out a notebook and mini-tape recorder from her purse. She hesitates to push the record button as the conversation of the literary group hushes to barely audible.

Zuzen notices Niffe and motions for her to join him at his table.

ZUZEN

There is a certain scarce resource
here: tables, and I hate to see one
of these beautiful discussions
forced outside because of it.

Niffe collects her belongings and walks towards Zuzen. She takes the wrought iron stool beside Zuzen, facing the group she has been watching.

Niffe extends her hand and after a second of hesitation, Zuzen shakes it.

NIFFE

Niffe.

ZUZEN

And are you American? British?

NIFFE

I'm American, in denial.

ZUZEN

An ex-patriot.

NIFFE

You could say that, but undecided.

Movement from the tertulia catches Niffe's eye and she stares at them for several moments, forgetting Zuzen.

ZUZEN

(in Spanish)

Do you speak Spanish?

He delicately lifts up her notebook cover and spots the tape recorder.

NIFFE

Some.

ZUZEN

For example?

Niffe turns quickly to look at him.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I speak Spanish fairly well because
I studied abroad in college and my
parents sent me to a language
school, but I need to know more
about another dialect: Euskera.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Euskera is not a Spanish
dialect. It's a unique language.
If you listen for too long, that
group may transition into the
Catalan dialect. A bunch of
peace-loving wanna-be radicals...

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Perhaps you could translate?

ZUZEN
I suppose I have a few moments.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, MADRID - MORNING

NIFFE sits at an above ground metro platform in a business
suit carrying a small black portfolio. Her hair is swept up
in a loose bun.

She scans an article in a newspaper titled *Libre
Pensamiento*. She pulls out her cell phone and dials a
number.

INT. BUSY NEWSPAPER HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

An impeccably dressed RECEPTIONIST transfers a call through
a switchboard.

She immediately picks up a new call, while nodding and
buzzing in a REPORTER as he flashes his neck badge in her
direction.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

RECEPTIONIST
(in Spanish)
Good morning. How can I assist you?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Good morning. I am wondering if you
have any positions currently
available.

RECEPTIONIST
(in Spanish)
What experience do you have? There
are some entry-level positions, but
we always hire on spec before
offering a permanent position.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I did a multilingual column in
Amsterdam and acted as the editor
for a college paper for two
years...

RECEPTIONIST
(in Spanish)
In Spanish?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
No, but I am fluent because I have
traveled and spent a year working
in countries such as Belize and
Argentina.

RECEPTIONIST
(in Spanish)
Then why don't you come tomorrow
and leave your resumé around 17:30.
Bring a summary of an article you
are interested in submitting as
well. We are visible just off the
Recoletos metro stop.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
See you at 17:30. Thanks so much.

RECEPTIONIST
(in Spanish)
Good Bye.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Good Bye.

INT. METRO STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: "Four days later."

We see the subway system: almost empty. Huge tiled tunnels reveal fixtures that RATTLE and flicker with passing trains.

INT. METRO CAR - SAME

Zuzen and Niffe sit beside each other in a car with few passengers. A few are drunk and others are teenagers looking to continue their mischief wherever the subway will still transport them.

ZUZEN

You made your point. Give me the scissors.

ANGLE ON: OLD-FASHIONED METAL SHEARS

Niffe twirls the scissors on her index finger and then hands them to Zuzen.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE AND ZUZEN

NIFFE

I want to see if the legend of the alluring mythological lamia and her buried treasure is true. Why don't we just pry off that panel?

Niffe gestures to a plastic panel on the car wall.

ZUZEN

Why that one?

NIFFE

It's near a dude who looks like he has plenty of tools to assist with unearthing the treasure.

A MOHAWKED PASSENGER decked in a thick array of neck chains and several lip piercings looks toward Niffe and then back at a small hardback book he flips through rapidly on top of his skateboard.

ZUZEN

Basically, there are thousands of those panels, but there's an

ZUZEN
identifying feature. I'll know when
I see it.

NIFFE
Scalpel.

Zuzen continues to scan the walls, ignoring Niffe.

ZUZEN
It's just the wrong time in the
wrong car.

Zuzen gestures toward a security camera near the front of
the subway car ceiling.

Niffe walks around the rapidly emptying car, swinging from
one pole to the next.

NIFFE
(romantically)
So, we're seriously doing this?

The mohawked passenger looks Niffe in the eye for a moment.

NIFFE (CONT'D)
I only ask because I'm kind of
getting away from the...mischievous
side of my life lately.

Zuzen snatches the scissors from Niffe and tucks them in his
back pocket. The car lurches and Niffe barely catches
herself on a ceiling loop.

ZUZEN
Are you paying attention?
(in Spanish)
Very Dangerous!

Zuzen points to a posted warning sign and translates into
English:

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
It is dangerous to place any part
of the body outside of the coach.

Niffe sneaks up on Zuzen and playfully kisses him on the
cheek. She slowly slides her hand down his neck and
back. Then, at lightning speed, she snatches the scissors.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
(mockingly, in Spanish)
Very, very dangerous.

He kisses her roughly on the lips. The train comes to a complete stop and they notice they are the only passengers left.

Niffe plops into a seat, looking at her watch.

NIFFE

Only 23:40.

CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

(in Spanish on the intercom)

Pardon the inconvenience. We are experiencing difficulties that will be fixed in a few minutes. Thank you for your patience.

Zuzen sits back down beside Niffe.

ZUZEN

I want to know more about you.

NIFFE

(in a gangster voice)

Give me what you've got and I'll put my goods on the table.

ZUZEN

I know you were born in the U.S. You've been traveling ever since you could get a passport and your wicked step dad could do nothing, and you enjoyed that very much.

NIFFE

Did you peek at my notebooks?

ZUZEN

Hardly, just pieced together your own words.

NIFFE

You missed some vital facts: I moved to England when I was eleven, so the U.S. can't entirely claim ownership. I have corresponded with my father since about 14 almost solely by letters, who despite his lack of social justice seems to remember my existence on major holidays. I retain a couple close ties from boarding school and I will someday survive on journalism alone.

ZUZEN

I don't doubt it.

The scissors reflect only flashes of light as they tilt to the windows and the train picks up speed again.

NIFFE

You moved to Madrid from, or continue to reside part-time somewhere in the Basque land. You speak Euskera, Spanish, and some Spanish dialects - probably because they lend you an aura of mystery. You travel frequently, actually nearly bi-weekly between Bilbao or San Sebastian and Madrid. Your home phone is unlisted and I could have sworn I saw you with a mustache yesterday. I suppose it is possible to grow a mustache in three days - but I doubt it.

ZUZEN

The line's coming to an end.

NIFFE

Really?

ZUZEN

For the night.

NIFFE

I have my first day of work tomorrow, this whole thing is surreal and counter-productive...but I would like to know if you have a doppelgänger.

Zuzen leans close and blows lightly into Niffe's ear.

ZUZEN

That is what the ghosts...los fantasmas...feel like.

The metro doors open.

NIFFE

I don't mean a sinister spiritual figure portending bad luck...more of a twin.

Zuzen leans in and kisses Niffe. His hand brushes Niffe's hand timidly. They leave and as they walk up the stairs we hear:

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
We made it out alive. I will take
you to a cabstand or bus, if you
prefer that to my bike.

INT. TAXI CAB, MADRID - EVENING

Niffe, dressed in a suit, walks from the metro entrance and through the lively and active crowd of the district of Lavapiés.

A mixture of North African and Spanish people mingle at outdoor cafes while reggae MUSIC blasts from an open shop door.

SUPERIMPOSE: "One day later."

In the next small square, she stops to watch two athletic performers in street clothes dance the tango with a few onlookers. Several pedestrians share a couch that has been hauled out into the square.

EXT. STREETS OF SAN SEBASTIAN, NORTHERN SPAIN - SAME

Zuzen runs full speed down the cobblestone streets of the historical areas of a beach city. He dodges late evening diners and a few groups of tourists.

Three plain clothes POLICE chase him.

POLICE 1
(in Spanish)
Move out of the way.

The police begin to lose Zuzen amid the LAUGHING throngs of students.

Police 1 turns to the other cops.

POLICE 1 (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
Split up.

He motions for POLICE 2 to follow him and they head to the left.

POLICE 3, athletically built, heads to the right and quickly gains on Zuzen. He notices him over his shoulder and scatters the baskets and books of the remnants of an outdoor craft market.

Zuzen looks to the right and ducks down a street where a small crowd is heading. He drops his pace down to a brisk walk when he hears tango MUSIC emanating from a discotheque.

He extends his hand to the first Younger Woman he sees gathered around a group watching a couple doing tango in the street.

ZUZEN
(In Spanish)
Care to tango?

The Younger Woman agrees and they fall naturally into a tango. Her friends immediately form a small circle and within a half-minute a few more pedestrians have joined.

The third police officer looks hard at the couple and Zuzen guides his partner and she shifts her hips and shoulders, obscuring the his pursuer's line of sight.

He follows the crowd around the next bend. Zuzen finishes the dance and kisses the woman on both cheeks.

YOUNGER WOMAN
(in Spanish)
Are you from Madrid?

Zuzen nods his head, yes.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Some of the time.

YOUNGER WOMAN
(in Spanish)
Will you tell me about it over a
cocktail?

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Another time? I have a pressing
matter.

Zuzen slides a business card in her cleavage.

EXT. NIFFE'S HOSTEL POOL COURTYARD, MADRID - LATE NIGHT

Niffe sits in a half lotus position in a high-backed sofa chair. Loose yoga pants cover all of her legs except her toes.

Her light-colored bathing suit top is still glistening under the moonlight entering through the wide open windows. A sliver of aqua pool water can be seen through the blowing laundry of the patio.

She holds a handset to her ear, its spiral cord running through her open door.

NIFFE

Hello, my long lost friend.

TORI (V.O.)

Greetings Spanish extraterrestrial.

A chill passes over Niffe as a breeze blows the tropical foliage around her.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

So what have you been doing with yourself?

TORI (V.O.)

Definitely trying to stay out of the running of competition with you: Employee of month of Libre Pensamiento.

NIFFE

Hardly. I'm contracted.

TORI (V.O.)

So spill: you must have all the authenticity of your fiction plots in your real life!

NIFFE

No steamy details yet, though I had a premonition in a street tango I saw last night. People were gathered in what seemed an impromptu dance-off. Young and beautiful and sweaty.

TORI (V.O.)

More about you - you're avoiding the topic.

CLOSE UP: NIFFE.

NIFFE

I met him in the subway...while
playing the part of the usual lost
soul searching for directions with
wild eyes...

A bat KNOCKS a nearby window, is dazed for a second, and
then FLUTTERS off.

Blowing curtains frame a half-open window. We see stacks of
books and folders half-way to the ceiling.

Niffe scans the window and quickly looks away.

TORI (V.O.)

Don't make me pry it out of you...
I know he is one of your sources.

NIFFE

Perhaps, but a mysterious and
close-lipped one. I have stacks of
research to do tonight.

TORI (V.O.)

I know my responsible power-suited
one...get your beauty sleep, but
remember, as long as he he isn't a
terrorist, go for it. Don't forget,
I'm coming down for that visit
soon. I've never been to Spain.

NIFFE

Yes ma'am. Sweetest dreams.

TORI (V.O.)

Surrealist dreams.

Niffe hangs up, picks up her towel, and heads to her room.

EXT. CERVECERIA (BAR-CAFE), MADRID - EVENING

Niffe and Zuzen sit at a table and umbrella on the sidewalk
of a busy street.

Niffe's eyes wander over to a street vendor and Zuzen's eyes
wander from her cleavage to her delicate shoulders.

ZUZEN

They have been working you hard.

NIFFE
Entirely. Exhausted in the best
way.

ZUZEN
I can tell. You are wasting away to
nothing. Let me order you something
hardy.

NIFFE
By all means. The tapas menus are
the one thing I've yet to decipher.

Zuzen's line of sight follows a passing male across the
street. He leaps up and follows ANDONI.

EXT. BUSY STREET, MADRID - SAME

From Niffe's perspective, we see Zuzen catch Andoni at the
corner. He is broad shouldered and wearing casual loose
clothing.

His large, dark eyes make him appear much younger than he
is. Zuzen motions Andoni to follow him and they embrace.

CLOSE UP: ZUZEN AND ANDONI

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
How are you?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
So so. What's new?

ZUZEN
(in Euskera)
I have a girlfriend, Niffe. She's
here at the cafe.

Andoni stares blank-faced at Zuzen for an instant and sits
on the railing, bringing himself to Zuzen's eye level.

ANDONI
(in Euskera)
Wow, that's very fast.

ZUZEN
(in Euskera, with a smirk)
She told me the same. Did you get a
hold of the artifact?

EXT. CERVERCERIA (BAR-CAFE), MADRID - SAME

Niffe sits gazing at the crowd and sipping on a drink as the two men arrive.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
May I present Andoni?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Delighted.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
How do you do?

Andoni and Niffe exchange kisses on the cheeks.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Andoni is my best buddy from college.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
What did you study?

Andoni pulls up a chair from the nearby table which is being bussed.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
We studied polar opposites. I am interested in rare languages and art history and once I realized that Zuzen spoke flawless Euskera then we were best friends.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I see. It's rare to speak perfect Euskera?

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
You could say that. The language hasn't been looked upon as a cultural treasure until recently. Francisco Franco, the totalitarian dictator of Spain from 1939 until 1975 made the language politically and officially unlawful.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
But, luckily literature continued
in Euskera and the Basque people
continued to paint and sculpt, so I
have something to concentrate on in
University.

ANGLE ON: ANDONI AND ZUZEN

ANDONI (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
If we hang out long enough, you
might even see us butt heads.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Literally?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
Head bashing is a game in Northern
Spain. It is a rite of Spring along
with lifting logs and other classic
feats of strength.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
We really have to order. You
already dined?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
More or less.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Meet us back in about an hour if
you like. Have a phone yet?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
I will and, no.
(to Niffe)
Best of luck.

Andoni swings his back-pack over his wide shoulders and
walks rapidly away in a large stride.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
See you later.

NIFFE (CONT'D)
(to Zuzen, softly)
Why'd you get rid of him so fast?

A waiter brings out a glass and pours Zuzen white wine.

ZUZEN
He's forever a student and I do
think, most of the time, he's a
vital force. But this is our
dinner.

NIFFE
Agreed.

ZUZEN
To opening new doors!

The two toast.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
I have something I feel
compelled to present.

NIFFE
(slyly)
I'm the last person to stifle a
compulsion.

Zuzen pulls a loose felt drawstring bag from his pocket and
withdraws a brass key with a circular eye surrounded by a
delicate filigreed symbol.

The primitive business end of the key is cut away at right
angles and dotted with braille like patterns.

NIFFE (CONT'D)
This is incredible.

ZUZEN
It is very ancient, but the lack of
interest in the region it hails
from makes it primarily interesting
to me.

NIFFE
Are you kidding? I'm not an
archaeologist but this just feels
weighty, important.

ZUZEN
You see this section...

Zuzen points to the bow of the key where the chain is threaded.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)

This part, the bow, was once part of the key that turned the gate to my great-great grandfather's estate - almost like a small castle.

NIFFE

But this area looks different.

Niffe runs her finger along the blade, serrated at right angles.

ZUZEN

The blade was almost rusted through before I was mature enough to realize I should preserve it, but I couldn't afford to have archaeologists do their magic, so I had an artist friend create a modern interpretation of the blade.

Niffe leans across the table and kisses Zuzen.

EXT. ZUZEN'S APARTMENT ROOF, MADRID - LATER THAT NIGHT

The three lounge across the grade of a terracotta tile roof. People can be heard chanting and singing rounds in the street.

A couple meteors shoot across one corner of the star-filled sky.

NIFFE

So how did you meet so young and stay friends so long?

ZUZEN

Helps that I've lived in the same place for a decent amount of time.

Niffe throws a handful of autumn leaves at Zuzen.

ANDONI

It was a challenge. Keeping up with his travel schedule is not easy...

Zuzen gets up and runs circles around the two. He narrows the circle to a small spin around Niffe.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
And then he will slap you on the
face for your lack of political
activism.

Andoni throws up his hands in mock frustration and walks to
the edge of the roof.

NIFFE
(mock dramatically)
Don't do it!

Zuzen pretends to trip and falls in Niffe's lap.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
See what I mean? You guys should
really see this.

Andoni turns back to the view.

Zuzen jumps up for a split second and then sits back in
Niffe's lap.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE AND ZUZEN

Niffe kisses Zuzen lightly and turns back to Andoni.

ANGLE ON: THE EXPANSE OF THE ROOF

NIFFE
(with sudden seriousness)
What, in your opinion, is political
activism?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
It is when a person has the courage
necessary to take what belongs to
himself and his people.

ZUZEN
What he's trying to say is that a
person should be politically severe
on the government in power when it
is politically severe on that
person's a priori rights.

NIFFE
That about summarizes my view. I'm
just unsure of how to go about the
"severe." Any ideas?

The two men look at each other and smile.

ZUZEN
I simply say,
(in Spanish)
If the government exists, fight it.

ANDONI
And I say, if I care to pass my
exams, if the government exists,
question it.

Andoni makes a brief exaggerated bow.

ZUZEN
G'night.

NIFFE
Hasta Luego.

Andoni briefly sautes and then he slips off the roof to the sidewalk below and grabs his bike chained near the sidewalk.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ZUZEN'S APARTMENT ROOF, MADRID - EARLY MORNING

Niffe and Zuzen have moved close together and to a higher point of the roof. They watch for a hint of dawn through the silence.

Niffe shifts and slides loose tiles off the apex to the other side. She lifts off Zuzen's arm and climbs down to use the restroom.

When she returns, Niffe cannot find Zuzen or her shoes. She steps onto the flat roof near the door and checks everywhere.

As she nears dark shadows near a large potted plant, Zuzen jumps into view.

ZUZEN
Boo.

Niffe jumps but does not scream. She rips the shoes from Zuzen's hands and pushes him against the wall.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
(jokingly, in Spanish)
I'm sorry.

Niffe kisses Zuzen violently and then their caresses soften.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
Come on, the best view for sunrise
is on the other side.

Niffe grabs her sandals and follows Zuzen up a short ladder
against the wall.

The sky slowly fills with color and they sit, legs
intertwined, clutching hands on the upper roof.

A network of scars is visible on Zuzen's chest and his
shoulder, where his button-down shirt has fallen open.

NIFFE
Thank you.

Niffe nestles her head into Zuzen's lap with her eyes half
open, watching the sunrise. Niffe's eyes sleepily close.

DISSOLVE TO:

MESOPOTAMIAN TEMPLE - NIGHT

A shadowy hallway and its elaborate geometric carved borders
is illuminated faintly by pitch dipped torches.

A NOBLEWOMAN kneeling beneath one of the torches rises and
seizes one of the torches.

She begins investigating small inscriptions diminutive to
the larger carvings surrounding them, as she recites a
chant.

NOBLEWOMAN
I have not increased my wealth
except with such things as are my
own possessions. I have not seized
wrongfully the property of
others. I have not taken milk from
the mouth of babes.

When the woman finishes the prayer, she slides a stone
inwards near the inscription, then reaches deftly into the
hole and quickly pulls out her hand.

A door slides inward. She enters the center of the bee-hive
shaped room and depresses a small button. The door closes
and she blows out the lamp.

The room is pitch black and swiftly, with the transformative
qualities only possible in a dream, the tunnel opens up to a
bright mountainous valley.

A LAMIA CREATURE, mythologically beautiful and fair, reclines brushing her extremely long white hair with a bronze comb. She crosses her legs and her webbed toes are exposed from the shadows.

She adjusts the grip of her pale fingers and their long pointy nails on the comb. The filigree on the handle catches sun rays as they filter through the ruined turrets of a chateau on one of the nearby peaks.

In the early morning light, the rays finally illuminate the nude creature, long and lithe beyond human form.

Shrill LAUGHS of children echo from the the direction of the chateau and the Lamia Creature runs startled into the woods.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ZUZEN'S APARTMENT ROOF, MADRID - MORNING

Niffe lies with closed eyelids, clearly in REM, as dawn breaks over Madrid. Her phone RINGS sharply and she sits bolt upright, startling Zuzen.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

Hello...Of course...probably in half an hour. I will call as soon as the interview is wrapped. I understand, I will take that into consideration. No, no inconvenience.

ZUZEN

Who was that?

NIFFE

Libre Pensamiento.

ZUZEN

(in Spanish)

Politics is exactly what I don't need right now, how about you?

Zuzen pulls Niffe back to the cushions on the roof so that his head lies on her chest.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)

Your heart is beating so fast, what were you dreaming about?

A series of ambulance and police sirens WAIL in the distant city.

EXT. STREET, CHUECA BARRIO, MADRID - EVENING

Couples and groups of teenagers sit on benches, drink cheap beers at outdoor cafes and expensive coffees at awning-covered picture-menu shops.

Niffe sits near a tall metallic statue that blocks her from the crowd, sketching occasionally, but mostly writing.

CLOSE UP: NOTEBOOK

She turns the page and writes beneath the date, 'I've been here two weeks and I may soon think in Spanish, not just speak it...'

The SCRATCH of her pen is covered up by two teenagers sitting at the bench behind Niffe.

TEENAGE MALE
(in Spanish)
So there are two ways to swallow
your fear...

TEENAGE FEMALE
(in Spanish)
Or you could just spit it out.

She brings a dark fan with one edge layered with a blade, unfurls it dramatically, and spits to the side.

TEENAGE MALE
(in Spanish)
Listen, seriously, that is sexy,
though...

He moves to kiss her, and she playfully twists out of his reach. When the Teenage Female stands up, her breasts are almost in Niffe's face.

She pretends she doesn't notice the teenager and leans back, continuing to write.

TEENAGE MALE (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
So you can exorcise it slowly and
carefully like you are some
underpaid surgeon, slowly and
clumsily like an old lady
unwrapping a mint in church, or
your can rip it fast like a
band-aid.

TEENAGE FEMALE
(in Spanish)
Or, you could simply be fearless as
I.

A motorcycle, vintage and ROARING loudly, pulls up the curb almost directly in front of the teenagers.

The motorcyclist puts down the kickstand, pulls off his helmet and shakes out his hair: It is Zuzen. He then locks the helmet to the cycle.

CLOSE UP: NIFFE

Niffe turns around and smiles.

Zuzen extends his hand and pulls Niffe to standing. He brushes her tendrils of her hair away.

They kiss and a GUST of wind brings up Niffe's hair around them, half obscuring the kiss from the bystanders.

ZUZEN
Care to join me?

Zuzen pulls a helmet out of the storage compartment. Niffe inclines her head, pulls the helmet on, closes the visor, opens it again, and steals a kiss from Zuzen.

With both helmets on, Niffe joins Zuzen and they WHIZZ into the traffic circle.

INT. NIFFE'S CORNER CUBICLE, LIBRE PENSAMIENTO OFFICE - DAY

Niffe types on an computer and the green glow makes the dark circles under her eyes more prevalent.

She looks out to the window, and spirals of baroque statues and goddesses can be seen along the roof-lines leading to Retiro, the largest park in Madrid.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Art and Music Merging in Lavapiés District/"
"Homes for Young Artists: The University City in
Flux/" "The End of Enlightenment?: Minority Group Tension
Grows in Spain."

Niffe rises and browses a grid of published papers dated 1994 with titles such as: "Conjuntos de arte y música en Lavapiés," "Residencias para jóvenes artistas: una ciudad universitaria en movimiento," and "¿El final de la Ilustración?": Las tensiones entre grupos minoritarios se acentúan en España."

Niffe stares for a moment at the final title.

ANGLE ON: THE AUTHOR CREDIT ON THE FINAL ARTICLE: 'NIFFE ASJHOLT'

A breeze RUSTLES the corners of the newspaper and Niffe looks back at the park longingly.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET, BILBAO, BASQUE PROVINCE - EVENING

Niffe and Zuzen walk briskly through a cultural district of Northern Spain. A few tourists punctuate the landscape with flashes from their cameras.

SUPERIMPOSE: "The next day, Bilbao, Spain."

Niffe turns her head as she passes a hastily throw-up graffiti scrawl. It reads: $4 + 3 = 1$

NIFFE

What is the significance?

Niffe gestures towards the writing.

ZUZEN

An ancient and clearly defiant statement that the combination of the four Spanish Euskal Herria provinces and the three French Basque regions equal unity or what we call Euzkadiko Jaurkitza.

NIFFE

Very intellectual for grafitti.

ZUZEN

(in Spanish)

Look, in this part of the country, the people understand, in their heart, Spanish better than English, and Euskera and its many dialects better than both.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

So it obviously is connected to some terrorist cause, or religious perhaps? They seem so intertwined.

ZUZEN

(in Spanish)

Politics are a religion here. In the the end it's connected simply

ZUZEN
to language: a group of people that
understand each other should be
united and self-governing.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
And the differences in each region
and sub-dialect...

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Negligible.

Niffe nods quickly and then fixes her eyes on a large modern mansion. They pause briefly and enter shortly behind another couple.

INT. BASEMENT GALLERY - EVENING

Zuzen looks around for the hostess and then turns to Niffe as they stand in front of a large painting on paper obscured by thousands of hanging threads and shavings of rubber.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Do you know the problem with the
Basque nation today?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Only the basics.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
Modest, aren't we? I've seen the
the slowly accumulating library on
the inside of your hotel room.

NIFFE
I heard as few as 30 percent of the
Basque people speak Euskera as a
native language.

ZUZEN
That's right, but it is recovering
thanks to a number of organizations
and popular support.

NIFFE
So how do you know it so well?

ZUZEN
My country origins.

NIFFE
Really, you strike me as a city
boy.

ZUZEN
I try to stay flexible.

The two look towards the next art installation, when the
GALLERY OWNER approaches.

Zuzen and the Gallery Owner exchange kisses and greetings in
Euskera.

Zuzen turns to Niffe, as if he has just recalled her
presence.

ZUZEN
This is Niffe, mi novia.

NIFFE
(in Euskera)
The pleasure is all mine.

The two women exchange a single kiss on the cheek and the
Gallery Owner moves close to Zuzen in the pretense of
admiring another angle of the sculpture.

GALLERY OWNER
(in a low voice to Zuzen,
in Euskera)
Not even a Basque, but her posture
is flawless.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)
She is my protégé.

Niffe looks at Zuzen quizzically.

GALLERY OWNER
(in Spanish)
How did you meet?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I'll leave that up to Zuzen.

ZUZEN
(in Spanish)

ZUZEN

Pure chance. We were both doing a little observation of the literati of Madrid.

GALLERY OWNER (CONT'D)

(in Spanish)

I'm sorry. Writers can be so dry.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

This wine is dry, but simply divine.

GALLERY OWNER

(in Spanish)

You could say that. I'm from the Navarre region so I appreciate the fruits of Spanish vineyards.

Another guest taps the Gallery Owner on the shoulder and whispers in her ear.

GALLERY OWNER (CONT'D)

Excuse me. I will find you before you escape.

Niffe lets out a long breath and crosses her arms, shifting the slit of her party dress to reveal more of her long pale legs.

ZUZEN

Its important that you stay neutral. She'll certainly give you some leads if you play your cards right.

(in a whisper)

And she absolutely abhors reporters unless she invited them to begin with.

Zuzen smiles softly and directs Niffe to nearby artwork: a large blown-glass sculpture. The two walk in opposite directions around the piece until they meet again and lock hands.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

The souls of the Basque people are more or less like the air in this glass dust box.

Niffe's hand traces the profile of the glass about an inch from the surface.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

Is it possible that something as fragile as glass could hold the soul of someone so powerful and determined?

ZUZEN

(in Spanish)

I think a human being is much more vast than any single creation. It's a muddy symbol at best.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

I think its crystalline, and sharp, and almost so clear, literally, that it forces the viewer to to clarify her thoughts.

ZUZEN

(in Spanish)

But it's hollow. And all these wonders around you hold the potential of flesh and bone.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Beautifully put.

Niffe moves closer to Zuzen and puts her arms around him. The gallery owner approaches them and turns to Niffe.

GALLERY OWNER

(in Spanish)

I hate to interrupt, but I absolutely must introduce you to someone.

Niffe smiles and they walk away from Zuzen.

SALBATORE, in his mid-thirties, wearing round glasses and wearing a vintage suit jacket, approaches Zuzen from behind, catching him off guard.

Zuzen looks surprised for an instant and then quickly smiles.

SALBATORE

(in Euskera)

She is stunning. You are a lucky man.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ZUZEN'S FORMER LOFT, BARCELONA - EARLY MORNING

From his viewpoint, we see a man hesitate at the old fashioned gargoyle knocker on the front door of an apartment building.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Barcelona, 1990"

A strong, chill wind picks up and the man tightens his coat and pulls out a key. As the camera pulls back we see that the man is Salvatore.

INT. BEDROOM, ZUZEN'S LOFT - SAME

A Bengali woman, MAHENDRA, sits in lotus position on several layers of floor mattresses bordered in large pillows and bean bags.

Layers of beaded wooden curtains divide the space in front of her. The windows to her right and left are open.

As a strong wind picks up, she stands and throws back her hands towards the triple glass doors and slowly falls backwards allowing her palms to catch her fall in a yoga bridge position.

Translucent imagery-covered curtains billow out horizontally, projecting scenes of animals and exotic Indian landscapes on the ceiling before Mahendra allows them to settle across her body.

ANGLE ON: MAHENDRA'S FACE BENEATH THE CURTAIN

After several moments, a half-breeze blows one curtain aside.

Mahendra, undulating her hands in a traditional Indian dance, rises in an illusion of weightlessness from the ground to her knees.

ANGLE ON: THE ENTIRE ROOM

We see the profile of another figure beside her, turned to the side. She throws the curtain off him and reveals the sleeping body of Zuzen.

Salvatore, in a multi-colored hammock strung from joists in the far corner, turns to smile at Mahendra.

SALBATORE
(in the Catalan dialect)
Don't sleep on the floor my beauty,
come here.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASEMENT GALLERY - NIGHT

ZUZEN

(in Euskera)

Salbatore. I almost didn't recognize you, it has been so long and you usually don't appear unless I'm currently in the presence of a beautiful woman.

Zuzen and Salbatore exchange greetings.

SALBATORE (CONT'D)

(in Euskera)

But seriously, I don't recognize you half the time anyway, my master of disguises.

Salbatore pauses to pluck a wine glass from a cocktail waitress as she passes.

SALBATORE

(in the Catalan dialect)

I really miss old times.

ZUZEN

(in the Catalan dialect)

I miss a lot about Barcelona.

Niffe returns and steps between them.

NIFFE

I love the forms of conceptual art springing up in that area, it's an epicenter: video, installation, performance. My favorite arena is the melding of performance and two dimensional art - murals and grafitti.

SALBATORE

In the past, I followed it.

ZUZEN

You did more than follow it.

SALBATORE

But I couldn't even tell you the most idolized artists today. I've moved in a different direction.

ZUZEN
Niffe, the person to talk to is
Andoni.

NIFFE
He's here?

Zuzen scans the crowd, growing by the minute.

ZUZEN
Or will be.

SALBATORE
Really, I'll go find him. I know a
trick.

Salbatore holds up three fingers to the WINE BAR HOSTESS and
she pours three large red wines.

Salbatore balances the glasses easily and brings them toward
the glass sculpture.

Andoni enters from a small gallery to the left and
immediately spots Salbatore.

Zuzen whispers a translation in Niffe's ear as Salbatore
passes around the glasses of wine.

SALBATORE
Andoni hears wine in his soul.

NIFFE
That does seem to be the case. I
used to do a little bit of art
myself, a long time ago, back in
college.

SALBATORE
(sarcastically)
That must have been such a very
long time ago, I'm surprised you
remember.

Niffe ignores Salbatore and takes a short sip of wine and
looks at Andoni.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Salbatore tells me that you used to
make the street your canvas.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
That was some years back.

He glares at Salvatore.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
I think its safe to say I'm in the
clear now.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I'm putting together an article,
more in the realm of a
glorification of the street artist
than a condemnation and I'm trying
to get together an expert in this
area, so I can bring together both
the central and northern Spanish
aesthetics.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
Well, I certainly haven't seen that
in a major newspaper around
here. No one will consent to using
their names and most reporters
don't want to touch the issue with
a pole. It's not worth the risk
for most active artists.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I will take that into
consideration. Would you consent
to...

Zuzen caresses Niffe's shoulder from behind.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
I am certainly no expert anymore,
but I will let you interview me and
refer you on if you insist.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I do.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
When?

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I leave by train tomorrow. How
about 14:30?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
14:30 would work. At the nearest
metro stop to the St-Jean-de-Luz
Hotel. I think you would find that
area of Bilbao essential to your
story.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Perfect. Should leave plenty of
time to continue interviews
afterward.

Salbatore turns from the group he has been chatting with to
Niffe, Andoni, and Zuzen and exclaims:

SALBATORE
Let us go to the garden.

The five mingle through the crowd, buzzed and laughing.

EXT. STREET, SUBURB OF BILBAO - NIGHT

A GOAT, with a small rhinestone collar, stands in the middle
of an eerily quiet and narrow street. The juvenile's horn
buds glisten in the moonlight.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Bilbao, 1975."

A long low car breaks the silence at break-neck speed and
SQUEALS as it makes the turn off a highway too sharply.

As the driver spots the goat, the brakes SCREECH.

Through tinted glass, only the driver's gold tooth, five
o'clock shadow, and the barrel of a semi-automatic in the
passenger seat is visible.

The goat BLEATS loudly.

The driver's side window lowers slowly, revealing a man with
features distinctly like Zuzen's except salt and pepper hair
and crow's feet around the eyes which add 30 years.

ZUZEN'S FATHER
(in Euskera)
Shoo. Spawn of Satan.

The Goat BLEATS again and turns more directly into the oncoming headlight.

Nearby, an elderly lady, AMA, exits from a neighbor's home carrying an empty pan. She almost passes the car and then notices the scene.

She grabs the goat by the collar and tugs until it walks beside her.

AMA
(in Spanish)
So sorry sir!

The window rolls down a slight bit more as the lady steps onto her front porch steps.

Zuzen's Father carefully aims the barrel out the window, aims with one eye, and shoots down Ama in cold blood on her steps. She falls backward and blood immediately begins pooling around her skull and oozes down the top stairs.

The car pulls away and sharply and silently accelerates.

EXT. STREET, SUBURB OF BILBAO - DAWN

Superimpose: "Wise-woman: Do not disturb."

An street-artist has scrawled "Ez Eragotzi" near Ama's front door.

A drizzle has mixed the blood of the woman with the rain and a very thin line trickles from her doorstep to the bottom of a long hill.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

This entire scene is M.O.S. Basque popular MUSIC plays instead.

A) Niffe, carrying a messenger bag, and wearing new, larger sunglasses, steps into the sun of a hotel courtyard. As Zuzen comes up for air at the end of a pool lap, they kiss goodbye.

B) Niffe stops to admire the contemporary and sculptural quality of a Guggenheim-inspired metro entrance.

C) She scans the crowd waiting for the other train and pauses her gaze on two men who stand almost completely in the shadows. They wear dark suits and earpieces and watch Niffe intently.

D) One of the agents snaps a picture at belt height of Niffe. His camera lens is a large telephoto.

LOBBY, ST-JEAN-DE-LUZ HOSTEL, BILBAO - DAY

Niffe walks in, shaking her umbrella and scanning the small crowd in the lobby. She looks around for a second and then places the umbrella in the stand near the door.

She spots Andoni in the cafe, sitting just inside a door open to the courtyard.

NIFFE

(In Spanish)

Hello Andoni. I'm ecstatic we could make this happen last minute.

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

Niffe, what a pleasure. No trouble finding it?

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Not really, a taxi brought me straight away?

ANDONI

Bring your hunger as well?

NIFFE

Guess a little breakfast wouldn't hurt.

Andoni turns to the BARISTA just behind the counter.

ANDONI

Mind if I order?

NIFFE

Anything light this early in the day and coffee is great.

ANDONI

(in Euskera)

I'll go ahead and have the special. For the lady, a cup of espresso and omelet.

BARISTA
(in Euskera)
It will be right out.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
So, I didn't bring any cameras. I
just have my eyes, and
mini-recorder if you're not
opposed.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
The rest of the hotel will thank
you.

Niffe starts to say something and is silenced.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
I'd like to confine my discussions
to the mainly neutral art scene.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Fair enough. I'm strictly an art
journalist and here to get a story.

Andoni pouts his lower lip playfully.

NIFFE (CONT'D)
And obviously to bask in the
presence of a great artist.

ANDONI
Goes without saying.

Andoni takes a coffee and sets it in front of Niffe.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
(in Euskera)
Could we have a couple waters also?

The Barista hands a water to Andoni and he takes a large
sip.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
So shoot, before my food gets here,
because I'll be totally distracted.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Ok, so to start off with, where
else have you been published or
interviewed?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
Outside Bilbao, hardly anywhere
worthwhile.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Keep in mind that all readers don't
share your opinion that Bilbao is
the most important artistic
epicenter.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
Well, *Archipelago* and ArtForum but
that was long after my
concentration as a street artist.

Niffe starts the tape recorder.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
That brings me to my first
question: what was your
impetus? Did you do it because you
wanted to make a particular
statement or let the world know
about an injustice?

CLOSE UP: NIFFE AND ANDONI

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
It was a combination, but primarily
political. There were a number of
dire political restrictions. The
only way to change even a tiny part
of society seemed to be inscribing
a mark on my neighborhood and on
the institutions of judges and
jailers that denied me my cultural
freedom.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
What is your opinion of the Kale
Borroka, the street fighting of the

NIFFE
Basque nationalist youth guerrilla
groups?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
Infantile imitators! Nothing more.
But the relationship of the
political vandals and petty local
level criminals to an established
activist party like E.T.A. can
hardly be the substance of an
artistic and cultural interview if
we are to continue.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
What is your earliest memory of
someone picking up a spray can, or
a brush?

The Barista sets down their plate and slides them partway
down the counter. Salvatore sets Niffe's plate in front of
her.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
He went by Lamia. He was street
smart, almost always respected, and
usually had enough cash to survive,
and in short, had everything I did
not.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
His nickname: Doesn't that indicate
something important in Basque
culture?

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
A lamia is a mythological creature
that is much like your unicorn in
its degree of vanity and
uniqueness. It occupies the same
exalted place among most of the
population's hearts, but has a
slightly darker existence.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
How's that?

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

This female creature, like her real life counterpart, cannot be described accurately physically, but can be deciphered from other more well-known myths. She is nymph-like in her tendency to fastidiously tend to her hair, usually with a silver comb that matches her own coif. She maintains a careful relationship with her looking glass. She is secretive as the Loch Ness Monster.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

And, as fairy tales go, it seems that supernatural creatures can be dangerous with a mirror.

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

You have no idea.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

This is wonderful.

Niffe gestures to her plate.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

(in Spanish)

Please continue...So you were staring wide-eyed at your own lamia...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL SHIP YARD, BILBAO - NIGHT

Tug-boats and commercial ship hull skeletons dominate the skyline like a mechanized museum of natural history.

They tower over YOUNG ANDONI, about 16 years, wearing a back pack and hat.

He drops the heavy back-pack off his shoulders with a CLANK and onto a large plastic drum.

ANGLE ON THE WALL BEHIND HIM.

An older teenager, LAMIA, stares at a large light gray wall that is spotlighted by the intersection of the beams of several street lights.

The wall intersects another wall at 90 degree angles on either side and is nearly invisible to the perimeter.

We see the wall from three external areas: the reservoir that feeds into the shipyard and the Bilbao river and a pedestrian bridge.

As Lamia steps into brighter light, we see that he wears stone-washed tight denim jeans darkened by several layers of paint and a ripped tank top.

LAMIA
(in Euskera)
What the hell? You're going to get
my cans rusted.

Young Salvatore flips his suspenders off in frustration, lifts the back pack, and wipes imaginary water from the top of the drum.

YOUNG ANDONI
(in Euskera)
It's not wet. It hasn't rained in
about five days.

LAMIA
(in Euskera)
It's a shipyard. It's filthy.

YOUNG ANDONI
(mumbling, in Euskera)
Hell of a lot you know about
shipyards.

LAMIA
(in Euskera)
What?...I've painted two, more than
you can claim.

YOUNG ANDONI
(in Euskera)
I work here. Its my access that got
us here right now. And I don't make
a habit of claiming anything, but
this will be signed by us
both. You promised.

LAMIA
(in Euskera)
Of course.

Lamia walks into the light and then back towards Young Andoni.

LAMIA (CONT'D)
(in Euskera)
Hand me the dark orange, and start
shaking the reds.

YOUNG ANDONI
(in Euskera)
All of them?

LAMIA
(forcefully, in Euskera)
Anything dark, vibrant. Get it
lined up.

As a ship lets out a low WHISTLE, the whisper of PISSING
spray cans can be heard emptying their contents against the
wall.

As the stars track their nightly patterns, a classic pin-up
drawing appears and then emerges as a creature with gills
and extra-long fingers holding a silver comb.

These features belong to a 15-foot, long-haired
silvery-white haired woman. Lamia creates his namesake's
illustration by stacking barrels for height and Andoni's
assistance.

Lamia notices the slight leak of daylight of the coming
sunrise above the wall.

LAMIA
(in Euskera)
Start packing.

YOUNG ANDONI
(reverently, in Euskera)
Farewell, my vision!

INT. ST-JEAN-DE-LUZ COFFEE BAR, BILBAO - DAY

Niffe and Salvatore remain in the same spot, their plates
finished. Niffe leans in close, supporting her chin on her
palm.

ANDONI
(in Spanish)
So after that, I helped more and
more. And occasionally I got fed up
with the master artists and their
egos and just went out and threw up
tags for the evening or even
crashed out a spot in full color.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 When did you first get recognized?

ANDONI
 (in Spanish)
 I had always been wary of
 galleries: no one in my family was
 involved with them and so the only
 way I was getting in was if they
 approached me.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 Which gallery approached you?

ANDONI
 (in Spanish)
 It's no longer in existence, but it
 was called the Itsaslamia. I felt
 like they should be inquiring after
 Lamia, but I was the only artist I
 knew who accepted the invitation
 for a high profile group show that
 next month.

Andoni pushes his plate to the side and the Barista collects
 the dishes.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
 (in Spanish)
 I was given a blank interior wall,
 my first, and suddenly all my
 dreams of travel and my lust for
 supplies seemed to be coming true.

They look toward the courtyard where it is apparent that the
 rain has let up.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 Care to continue outside?

ANDONI
 (in Spanish)
 As long as I can smoke.

Niffe stops the tape recorder. The two walk outside.

EXT. HOTEL - SAME

They sit on the bricked edge of a flowerbed, ivy tracing a
 trellis overhead. Andoni lights a cigarette and offers one
 to Niffe. She hesitates and then accepts.

Niffe turns on the tape recorder.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

So you were having your first gallery show.

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

Yes, and the people were stiff, and the wine was ok, and the materials were grand, so I put my own mythology on the board. It was something with fire sylphs and water nymphs in thoroughly modern attire. The whole ordeal was a bit of a boy's fantasy, but it received great reaction at the opening where two people approached me to do permanent murals - this one was on a giant dry-wall - and I accepted.

Andoni ruffles through his sling bag, and pulls out a couple photographs.

ANDONI (CONT'D)

These are doubles, keep them.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

So your lifestyle didn't change dramatically?

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

I wasn't wealthy, but I had the means to produce almost every creative endeavor that popped into my head for about six months. My friends didn't change: I still went skateboarding with Lamia, I became better acquainted with the gallery world as my technique improved.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Were you ever enrolled in classes?

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

The University of the Basque Country was more than happy to admit me and I took nothing but

ANDONI
 painting classes for two semesters,
 skipping the foundations.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 Did you ever finish?

Andoni stubs out his cigarette and Niffe sets her half-finished cigarette on the edge.

ANDONI
 (in Spanish)
 No, can't say that it would have
 changed my life in the slightest
 bit if I had. The school did allow
 me the use of a fine studio,
 though.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 Where is your studio now? Where
 else have you shown?

ANDONI
 (in Spanish)
 I have an upper-story loft, half-finished, above a clothing store that requires riding a rickety freight elevator: just the right sequence of metal gates and buttons. I'm thinking about doing my next series either solely in the elevator or at least solely based on it. Let me see, I showed in a few similar galleries in Bilbao, and then moved onto London and about five years ago a string in Paris.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 Sounds like you are mostly
 internationally based now?

ANDONI
 (in Spanish)
 My style has evolved but remained independent of any artistic movement. I am proud of my Basque heritage, but I am also stubbornly independent as you might expect.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

And finally: What is the risk involved in this art? I am not asking to state whether you've been arrested, but rather, now that you can evaluate your earlier years, was it worth the risk?

Niffe notices the cigarette, burning to the filter, and slowly puts it out.

ANDONI

(in Spanish)

It certainly was, that was the foundation of my sole profession today. I don't write grants, what I do is work. Street art helped me develop an efficient and solid work ethic and it introduced me to truly creative minds.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Thank you so much for allowing me to begin my research through the eyes of such a talented artist.

ANDONI

(in English)

My pleasure. Shall we head to the murals?

NIFFE

Most definitely. Lead the way.

EXT. OPEN AREA UNDER BRIDGE, BILBAO RIVER - DAY

Niffe and Andoni stand staring up at a large, refined mural that is obscured to all pedestrians and tourists above by high shrubs.

Andoni finally looks away, takes a swig from a his flask, and watches a couple passing by on a small canoe.

Niffe stands staring, lost in the tranquil scene. Andoni comes closer and plants a kiss on her cheek and then her forehead.

Niffe steps back surprised. She looks perplexed at Andoni and then frowns.

Andoni shrugs.

ANDONI

Don't think of it as a troll's
toll. Think of it as a perk.

NIFFE

The colors do burn a little
brighter.

ANDONI

Can you please keep my connection
to this location off the record?

NIFFE

Of course.

ANDONI

It was completely my pleasure. And
if you need any more sources I do
know of a few I could divulge.

Niffe takes out an old manual camera out of a messenger bag,
props it on Andoni's shoulder and runs off half a roll of
film.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

The only thing I'm recording are
these close-ups.

Zuzen pops down from the steep bank and his eyebrows furrow
when he sees the two standing so close.

ZUZEN

Tracking down the intimate details
I see...

NIFFE

More or less.

ZUZEN

(in Euskera)
Watch out, Andoni.

Niffe steps away from Andoni as soon as the shutter clicks
open.

ZUZEN

She's relentless with a camera.

Zuzen turns to Niffe.

ZUZEN

Something's come up. I've got to
head back to Madrid for business
right away.

NIFFE
You changed the train?

ZUZEN
Yes, and yours to...unless you want
me to switch it back at the
station.

ANDONI
Go ahead, I'll send you my own copy
of the other murals and tags. Nice
little Polaroids...you can print
them as intimate details of the
artist's life.

NIFFE
Thanks. You've been absolutely
wonderful!

Niffe kisses Andoni on both cheeks.

ZUZEN
I'm going to hail a cab.

Zuzen bounds back up the bank.

ZUZEN (O. S.)
I'll see you in Madrid soon, I hope
- or the biennial?

Zuzen disappears behind the bridge.

ANDONI
(yelling)
The biennial, of course.

ANDONI (CONT'D)
(in Euskera)
Farewell.

ZUZEN (O.S.)
(in Euskera)
Goodbye, my friend.

ANDONI
(to Niffe)
I hope you'll call me, because no
one else can show you the other
piece. I want to reenforce this:
you are a latent artist, but at
this point,
(with a warning in his voice)
you shouldn't try to figure it out
on your own.

NIFFE
Is it in Madrid?

ANDONI
Yes.

NIFFE
(in Euskera)
Goodbye and thanks.

Niffe lags behind and gives Andoni a short hug and releases him when they hear a HONK above.

Niffe bounds up the bank and scrambles the last couple of feet until we see Zuzen's hand reach out for Niffe's bag.

INT. TRAIN SLEEPING CAR - NIGHT

We see Niffe and Zuzen, intertwined in the top bunk of a compact sleeping car. Zuzen's eyelids flutter as if in REM and his hands caress Niffe's neck.

He finds the key pendant and rubs it like a charm. The steady CLIP of the tracks punctuates the silence.

Clouds block the moonlight through the single open window shade. As larger clouds fill the narrow window, the two disappear in darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TOTAL BLACKNESS

The silhouette of a woman CLICKS on a single light bulb in the center of a square black room with a pull string.

She stands for an instant scanning the room with her back still facing the camera which then follows her as she proceeds down a hallway that becomes darker with each step.

In total blackness, she turns on another pull light.

She walks faster and faster as she halts only in total blackness.

She turns on more lights until an infinite hallway constructed of the clean lines of modern architecture is illuminated and the walls then slowly close inward.

Niffe turns around, looking for an exit, and begins SCREAMING.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAIN SLEEPING CAR - MORNING

Niffe sits bolt upright, SCREAMING, and immediately stops, recognizing familiar surroundings.

Zuzen rolls over and holds Niffe closer. She peeks through the corner of the window shade, but the sun is barely visible over the horizon.

NIFFE (V.O.)

I've got to talk to Tori.

INT. HOSTEL POOL - DAY

Niffe sits in a bathing suit and sarong beside a small kidney shaped pool. It is sunny but breezy: large swaying palms provide shade. The rest of the recliners are empty.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Later that day."

Niffe stands in the doorway talking on the phone.

TORI (V.O.)

That's insane. I'm really worried. This is reminding me of the Autobahn. You were having terrible dreams then.

NIFFE

I was on drugs then.

(reassuring herself)

The job's going well. The trip to Bilbao was incredible. I can't decide if I'm writing about art or politics - it's so entangled.

TORI (V.O.)

An in-person dream analysis is going to be necessary for your sanity.

With the phone cord fully extended, Niffe is just able to dips her toe in the surface of the water.

NIFFE

Your doctorate is not in psychology, need I remind you, but I need all the advice I can get. I have his business card,

NIFFE
Zuzen Otxagabia, just a phone
number and box number, but we've
found several excuses to...

TORI (V.O.)
Suck each other's brains out?

NIFFE
Possibly, but most importantly, we
do unexpected stuff for the hell of
it.

Niffe walks around the periphery of the pool.

TORI (V.O.)
I see. He sounds, sort of...right.

NIFFE
Right?

TORI (V.O.)
Like there might be something there
that connects to your alternate
universe, something hopefully
elastic in your case.

Niffe looks around briefly, takes off her top and steps into
the pool.

TORI (V.O., CONT'D)
Tell me more.

NIFFE
He's sort of able to slip out of
such a distinct identity and play
the cards around him. He can blend
in seamlessly in Madrid as well.

TORI (V.O.)
Basque culture is responsible for
so much exploration and discovery,
but the rest of the world
is barely aware of the people's
existence.

Niffe sets the phone on the side and lifts herself out of
the water.

A WAITER enters the atrium and Niffe throws on her sarong
and motions that she does not want a drink before the waiter
can vocalize the question.

TORI
(V.O., CONT'D)
Have you met any of his friends?

NIFFE
Andoni and some of the artists I interviewed in Bilbao. None of them stand out except Andoni. He's academic and at the same time so passionate about his views - it's a rare combination.

TORI (V.O.)
Make a point to rendezvous with him again. I've got to get back to work, I've had students knocking at the door all day.

NIFFE
Alright, adios Sigmunda Freud.

Niffe sets down the handset, lies back against a nearby bamboo recliner, and smiles.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE, LIBRE PENSAMIENTO, MADRID - MORNING

Niffe stands in front of the large desk and larger window of a newspaper executive.

Several awards line the wall. Framed black and white photographs dominate the majority of the space on the desktop.

A small decanter of brandy sits on a bar on the side wall. A bowl of fresh stemmed and leafed oranges sit beside it.

The editor, dressed in a trendy, high-dollar suit and narrow Italian tie, is in his mid-forties and wears a neatly trimmed mustache.

EDITOR
(In Spanish)
I'm sure you are aware of some of the connections between the E. T. A. and the Irish Republican Army?

NIFFE
(In Spanish)
That came up when I did some of my interviews in Bilbao for the last story.

EDITOR

(In Spanish)

That brings about an important point: your position. I'm aware that you are very much enraptured by the culture here, are busy learning the language at an astonishing rate, and perhaps even have other ties?

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

I do.

Niffe lets the key pendant, now looped around her wrist, fall into her palm as she anxiously caresses the textured surface.

EDITOR

(In Spanish)

We don't make a habit of hiring many full time writers that are not citizens, or at least in possession of long term work visas.

NIFFE

(In Spanish)

That's perfectly reasonable.

EDITOR

(In Spanish)

You are a valuable member of our work-force, and...working far too many hours to be considered a contract employee. *Libre Pensamiento* is prepared to back your application for a Spanish work visa. Because you are removed from ancestral ties to this culture, you are the perfect reporter for an assignment we have been hoping to get off the ground for the last few months. I heard you found the last story fulfilling and not too difficult.

The editor flips through a stack of newspapers and shuffles one to the top.

NIFFE

(excitedly, in Spanish)

The story was the smoothest I have encountered. The artists at a

NIFFE
gallery opening I attended chased
down some of my leads for me.

EDITOR
(in English)
I'm glad we could pamper you on
your way in, but we have a very
serious matter - more political in
nature to tackle - right now.

The Editor hands Niffe a copy of the newspaper open to her
two-page color spread. She looks at it briefly and puts it
in her sling-bag.

EDITOR (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
When you are done framing that, I
need you to track down the two
names on this list...

Niffe takes a small word-processed table of names and
contacts from the Editor.

EDITOR (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
It's relatively self-explanatory
and Maria can fill you on any
numbers she may have updated in her
files.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Maria has ties to E.T.A.?

EDITOR
(in Spanish)
Actually, contacts is a better
choice of words and her **contacts**
are with the I.R.A.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Understood. And what is the
premise of the article?

EDITOR
(in Spanish)
You need to find the ties, among
the E.T.A. and the I.R.A. and trace
them. I have no problem with
showing their symbiotic
relationship, but please show both

EDITOR
 the deadly, considering recent
 public bombings, and positive
 points such as devotion to
 community and support by of the
 population, if any.

The editor gets up, pours a small glass of brandy and
 gestures to Niffe. She declines.

EDITOR (CONT'D)
 (in Spanish)
 The situation is a little volatile
 in Ireland, so stay firmly focused
 on your goal.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 Any specific locations I should put
 on my itinerary?

The editor sits down and unbuttons his suit jacket.

EDITOR
 (in Spanish)
 You might consider the *Egunkaria*,
 as this Basque newspaper was taken
 down completely, and in many cases
 with torture, but many of the
 stories of the individual editors
 have not been published. Libre
 Pensamiento has not published
 anything on several of the seven
 apprehended editors.

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 And the I.R.A?

EDITOR
 (in Spanish)
 That will be the challenge.
 Instruct Maria to add a few
 potential sources to your
 list. You've never been to
 Ireland, correct?

Niffe nods in agreement.

The editor takes a sip of brandy.

EDITOR

(in Spanish)

Good. Plan on that trip first, for two reasons: things are calm according to my sources and I suspect the I.R.A. has more influence on the E.T.A. than vice-versa. The budget is small, but this is a test as you might have guessed, because right now our newspaper could really use some fresh perspective.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Sounds like my most challenging assignment yet...

Niffe turns and reaches for the door knob to the glass door.

EDITOR

(in Spanish)

...and your most risky. I want to see if you can hack it with the big boys.

NIFFE

(in the tone of American
drill sergeant)

Yes sir.

Niffe smiles and exits quickly.

36. INT. LOBBY, LIBRE PENSAMIENTO OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Niffe sits in a leather chair in front of the small and tidy desk of Maria.

She looks at the many plants surrounding Maria's desk. Overgrown, tropical flowers mingle with potted trees and cacti.

The flora only partially obscures the view of Madrid from the glass wall of windows behind her.

NIFFE

Did all the plant-life in the building immigrate to your office?

MARIA

What can I say, I miss the moors. Sometimes the other employees feel the need to bring me gifts.

NIFFE

I heard you were full of all sorts of wisdom.

MARIA

I should have told the boss that investigation wasn't in my job description, but everything I'm going to tell you came from observations as a teenager and young adult. I grew up in the midst of the Irish Republican Army. Just because you weren't involved didn't mean you weren't willing to lend your home, spare room, hospitality, or perhaps your gun.

NIFFE

I've always wondered what the Irish Republic Army was like. I mean, I never personally met anyone in the mafia, but I have a mental picture. I don't know how to imagine the Irish Republican Army.

Maria sits back and crosses her arms.

MARIA

Trust me, you will when you are through. I don't think the I.R.A. would have allowed a mafia - a monetary focused organized crime group.

NIFFE

Really?

MARIA

(laughing)

Well, there wasn't one in my town, it's relatively small, outside of Belfast.

There is a pause as Niffe shifts her eyes to the paper in front of her.

It is the table of names, covered with hand-written additions of phone numbers and a paragraph of hand-written information.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'm so glad there is someone else around who enjoys speaking English.

NIFFE

As am I. And we will talk about
the fun side of Belfast over
drinks.

MARIA

Tomorrow?

Niffe nods enthusiastically.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Are you're sure you have everything
you need?

NIFFE

One can never have enough
bullet-proof armor from the way the
editor described it.

MARIA

I survived without it.

Maria glances at the framed photos on her desk.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I haven't been back in over five years. Could I ask a favor?

NIFFE

Fire.

MARIA

If I loaned you a quality camera,
could you take some pictures in
Belfast, downtown or wherever, even
the surrounding country-side?

NIFFE

If you loaned me a camera, I'd
probably do just about anything. I
lost my last one from a street
mugging.

MARIA

I saw some of your work in a
journal the other day, and the
truth is, I might be writing a book
that might need a cover or at least
a few background images.

NIFFE

Really? I'm impressed at your
powers of discovery. I haven't

NIFFE
investigated a story of this type
before. You'll be my savior.

Maria's phone rings.

MARIA
Tomorrow.

NIFFE
Yes. Farewell.

MARIA
Enjoy your evening.

NIFFE
Definitely. Until tomorrow.

Maria picks up the handset as Niffe walks out of the office,
her messenger bag brimming with books and papers.

Maria waves a quick goodbye as she approaches the door.

INT. GATO NEGRO CERVECERIA (BAR) - EVENING

Maria and Niffe walk in from separate doors to a medium
sized but crowded bar which has opened all of its
floor-length windows to the night pedestrians.

Mostly 20-somethings wonder in, wearing backpacks, and
blending with a few tourists. The lighting is subdued.

ANGLE ON: BARTENDER.

He motions to Maria to sit at his end of the bar.

MARIA
(in Spanish)
A Cuba Libre please.

BARTENDER
(in Spanish)
Always. And an appetizer?

ANGLE ON: ENTIRE BAR.

Maria scans the crowd for Niffe but her view is blocked by a
group of students.

MARIA
(in Spanish)
Keep it open. A friend of mine will
be arriving.

As the bartender sets down a mixed drink in front of Maria, Niffe taps her on the shoulder as she approaches from behind.

BARTENDER
(in Spanish)
And for the lady?

The male bartender looks Niffe up and down.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Juana.

The Bartender leans forward on the counter, ignoring several customers beside Niffe JINGLING pesetas.

BARTENDER
(in Spanish)
I was going to say writer, or
Reporter? But not **Juana**.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
Let's focus on the wonderful food
Maria told me so much about.

Niffe looks purposefully at the trays of tapas, mostly small plates of seafood, lining the glass shelf above the bar.

BARTENDER
(in Spanish)
Of course.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
A sangria and a menu, please.

BARTENDER
(in Spanish)
We don't have menus.

MARIA
(in Spanish)
Shrimp toast, the one on display
there and bread.

Maria turns to Niffe.

MARIA
(in Spanish)
More?

NIFFE
 (in Spanish)
 This sounds good for now.

BARTENDER
 (in Spanish)
 That will be 14.50 pesetas.

The nearby customers jostle the women slightly and they pick up there drinks and a couple of napkins and move to the back.

MARIA
 I don't blame you for speaking Spanish. The bartender can be a terror, but mostly he just breaks in new customers. This place is rowdy, he does them a favor.

NIFFE
 I suppose that's fair. I just went for a jog and time crept up on me.

MARIA
 We forgot one thing you must try.

Maria signals the Bartender and he nods.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 He always throws that in.

NIFFE
 This place is like a force field.

The ROAR of the crowd picks up, almost obscuring her words.

NIFFE (CONT'D)
 I mean, you could talk about anything in here and the people standing three feet away couldn't possibly hear.

MARIA
 That's why I usually like to bring my crushes here. This place is so latent with energy. I love the atmosphere.

A puff of cigarette smoke wafts in Niffe's direction.

NIFFE
 The atmosphere of Morocco or a fraternity bar.

They both laugh loudly until the bartender catches Maria's eye.

MARIA
Oh, we'll have to catch...or fight
the crowd. Ready?

A small plate of shrimp toast is passed towards the women and Niffe snags it at the last minute as a group of boys reaches for the plate.

She almost knocks over a glass of wine behind her in the shuffle.

NIFFE
Pardon.

The man behind her has already turned back to his companions, gripping the stem of the glass.

MARIA
Let us dig in.

NIFFE
I think I better go get the next
one.

MARIA
(shouting)
True, I failed to catch that one
once, it wasn't pretty.

The women polish off the appetizer and order another drink as the crowd thins slightly. Maria spots one of the two open booths.

MARIA
Shall we?

NIFFE
Of course.

The two leave their plates behind and head to a tall-backed dark wood booth that leaves them sheltered from the noise.

MARIA
So this is it.

Maria brings a manual camera out of her bag with two detached lens in separate bags.

MARIA (CONT'D)

You can take photos of whatever you like, I just want to see images from the neighborhoods and the people at the addresses tucked into the lens bag. It's been so long, it will be almost like I've returned when I see the results. Plus, I have a feeling they will be exactly what the editor of a literary journal needs to finish next month's issue. Do you have a tripod?

NIFFE

Yes. All I want is credits if they are published, I miss photography painfully.

MARIA

And also, I want to give you the number of a place to order film.

Maria hands Niffe a small sheet of lined paper.

MARIA

And also, the name and address of a very good friend I finally tracked down so you have one guaranteed interview for *Libre Pensamiento*.

Niffe scans the small paper and brings a black notebook out of her bag and tucks it in carefully.

NIFFE

Thank you. I am very grateful.

MARIA

Will the camera fit?

Maria eyes Niffe's small messenger bag. Niffe stuffs the equipment in her bag with relative ease.

MARIA

I must pick up my daughter.

Niffe glances at their finished drinks and then at the Bartender who is looking in the women's direction.

NIFFE

I will walk you out.

The two exit and, realizing they must walk in opposite directions, hug goodbye.

INT. METRO SUPERMARKET, MADRID - LATER THAT EVENING

Niffe picks up a small metal basket from a stack by the front door and negotiates the busy aisles of a small supermarket with and above and below-ground entrance.

She picks up small packages of granola bars and food for the road.

Niffe begins walking towards the bottled drinks in the rear corner of the store, when several masked men appear with everything covered but their eyes.

MASKED AGENT 1(O.S.)
(shouting in Spanish)
Come here. All of you. If you
don't obey, look to heaven.

MASKED AGENT 2(O.S.)
(echoing in Spanish)
This means: Hit the Floor!

VARIOUS AGENT'S VOICES(O.S.)
All. Hit it if you want to live.

Niffe quickly rounds the back of the aisle and carefully places her hand basket on the shelf. She looks in her pockets.

FOOTSTEPS are heard approaching and the florescent lights begin to go out after a round of semi-automatic SHOT.

This occurs slowly until there are only a couple lights remaining on the aisle where Niffe was originally shopping.

Niffe quickly rounds the corner and coaxes her body into the bottom shelf and arranges a couple large boxes of cereal in front of her hugged knees.

From Niffe's point of view, we watch heavy black leather boots STOMP by.

The footsteps get closer and the last light above Niffe's head goes out with a the BANG of a gun and fizzling POP.

ANGLE ON: FRONT OF MARKET

MASKED AGENT 1
(quietly, in Euskera)
What are you doing?

MASKED AGENT 2
(defiant, in Euskera)
I had to make sure there were no
jokers around here.

Masked Agent 1 leans in close to Agent 2, staring at his forehead and almost breathing up his nostrils, as Agent 2 admires his rows of executed lights.

Masked Agent 1 pulls up his mask to reveal his bearded chin and turns to Agent 3's ear, gritting his teeth.

MASKED AGENT 1
(slightly louder, in Euskera)
Are you trying to fuck up the
entire operation? This will be
fast! Get up to the front
worthless shit!

ANGLE ON: NIFFE

Her eyes open and she appears to be holding her breath.

The FOOTSTEPS of Masked Agent 2 fade away and Masked Agent 1 walks rapidly away.

Niffe releases her breath with an audible SIGH and desperately tries to get her phone to connect to the office but the signal won't allow it in the underground location.

The voices of the Agents can be heard in the background rounding up hostages.

ANGLE ON: FRONT OF MARKET

About 35 SHOPPERS lie at the front in a rough single file line. The third masked agent stands near the door, staring out to the metro hallway.

Two other agents stand at either end of the line, large hand pistols pointed down and towards the trembling line of people.

Masked Agent 1 approaches and motions to Masked Agent 2 and Masked Agent 4 to follow him to the opposite corner.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE'S HIDING SPOT

Niffe slowly extends her head and sees a clear aisle. She steps quickly out of her hiding spot.

ANGLE ON: BACK OF STORE

Niffe runs to the restroom alcove and in the relative dark, she loads high speed film into her new camera and begins rapidly shooting off images.

The three Masked Agents rip flags from the history of Spain and Castile-León that line the periphery of the upper wall of the supermarket.

When all the flags have been stripped, they dump the flags on the center of the line of people.

The people startle but do not rise.

When the last pile is dumped, Masked Agent 1 roughly scoots the people into a large circle by dragging them across the ground. He motions to Agent 4 who lays out the flags carefully on the pedestrians.

One middle aged FEMALE HOSTAGE begins to WEEP.

Masked Agent 1 rips several strips off one of the flags and ties blindfolds around the nearest hostages.

Agent 3 slaps the crying Female Hostage hard across the face and then holds her steady while Masked Agent 2 blindfolds and gags her.

ANGLE ON: MASKED AGENT 1

Masked Agent 1 motions to Masked Agent 4 to fetch something for him and says something softly in Euskera.

CLOSE UP: MASKED AGENT 3

Masked Agent 3 digs in his backpack and we think it might be a weapon, but a small gas can emerges.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE

Niffe has slowly worked her way down the aisle and continues to slowly shoot photographs, her temples are beaded with sweat. She approaches the nearest aisle for a better vantage point.

As she hears footsteps approaching, Niffe ducks around the end display.

Masked agent 2 walks halfway into the shadows of the hallway to the restrooms. He is breathing erratically. He grabs his mask, thinking he is out of view, and GULPS air.

As he turns in Niffe's direction, the masked agent is revealed as Andoni. He is perspiring heavily and his eyes are wide open.

CLOSE UP: ANDONI'S PALMS

He opens them to reveal bloody crescents punctured by his own nails.

ANDONI
(mumbling in Euskera and Spanish)

Fuck, I can't do this. Shit. Shit.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE

Andoni's words catch Niffe's attention. She silently rises from her kneeling position, almost hypnotized, realization crossing her face. Niffe drops suddenly to her knees.

NIFFE (V.O.)
Andoni! Fuck me.

She returns to her mini notebook and resumes a note she has already begun. Andoni rapidly puts back on his mask and runs to the front.

CLOSE UP: NOTEBOOK

The words, "The lead terrorist screams, "Bring tears to their eyes, Bring them down..." are scrawled across the page.

Masked agent 1 shouts confidently in Euskera.

Niffe finishes writing: "Bring them to justice."

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE AGENTS AND NIFFE

Masked Agent 2 and 4 shake small cans of gasoline onto the flags at the center.

THEY EXTEND THE PATH OF THE GAS TRAIL TO THE BACKS OF THE NEAREST HOSTAGES, BUT IT QUICKLY RUNS OUT.

NIFFE
(whispering)
They are going to burn us down.

Agent 2 motions for Agent 4 to return to the aisle.

He returns with cooking oil and it is poured over the heads of the remaining Hostages while a slow WHIMPER sweeps across the prone crowd.

Niffe SNAPS more rapidly as the WHIMPER covers up the noise. She kneels to fiddle with the new camera, trying to meter the lighting with unfamiliar equipment.

Agent 1 pulls out a cigarette and Agent 3 quickly runs to light it.

MASKED AGENT 1
(in Euskera)
For our homeland!

The agent lights the center of the pile of flags. The Hostages begin to WAIL.

Niffe snaps with the large camera, able to move freely in the distraction afforded by the commotion, extending the lens far into the side aisle.

MASKED AGENT 1 (CONT'D)
(in Euskera)
Get out of the way, you idiots.

The other agents join Masked Agent 1 as he kicks the individuals at the center of the crowd, negotiating the growing flames.

The crowd inches to either side, parting like opposing waves.

The Agents quickly run to the front and disperse in opposite directions toward emergency exits.

Niffe slumps against the wall.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE, LIBRE PENSAMIENTO, MADRID - DAY

It is Saturday and the editor is in casual clothes. He is getting ready to lock up his office, juggling a portfolio and briefcase.

Niffe rushes up to the door, Maria's camera bag in her hands.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
This will only take a moment.

The editor pushes the door open and walks inside, frowning.

NIFFE
(in Spanish)
I know you want me to concentrate completely on the current assignment, but I have a bit of a dilemma.

EDITOR

(in Spanish)

What could possibly warrant you not being on a train or plane as we speak?

NIFFE

(excitedly)

I was picking up some snacks for the trip and a story literally fell into my lap.

EDITOR

(in Spanish)

If you are talking about the flag burning in the supermarket, it is already in the headlines. Besides, we're not a daily newspaper. We want something with substance.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

You could run this series of black and whites and it wouldn't matter if you were *National Geographic* or *People*. Let me just borrow the dark room for the day and it will all make sense by about 4:00 PM.

EDITOR

(in Spanish)

You should have called last night.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

It was really late.

EDITOR

(in Spanish)

I know you have a history as a photographer, but I hired you as a writer. We have staff for that.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Look, I'm not looking for credit. Think of it as a gift. I only want these out there.

EDITOR

I don't understand.

NIFFE

That's the problem. I don't understand the whole situation either. I do have a personal connection, accidental in this case, to one of the perpetrators. If you want to run this editorial, consider it a favor, for a round-trip ticket to Ireland.

The editor leafs through take out menus on his desk.

EDITOR

Alright, show me the negatives before you develop anything. I'll have to at least put your name down for the photography. We can't print a full length story under 'anonymous.' This isn't an art journal.

NIFFE

If you must. I'll just put myself down for another boyfriend.

Niffe walks out quickly.

INT. MOVING TRAIN - DAY

Niffe sits in front of a viewing car window surrounded by mostly vacant seats. A rural landscape passes by the window in a blur.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Three days later."

The foot ledge in front of her is laid out with typed papers covered in hand-scrawled notes in a myriad of colors.

She starts to pick up one stack of paper when a cell phone RING breaks the silence.

NIFFE

(in Spanish)

Hello.

A slight pause follows and the voice at the other end of the line answers in a faint British accent.

MAGAZINE EDITOR (V.O.)

Is this Niffe Asjholt?

NIFFE

This is. What can I do for you?

MAGAZINE EDITOR(V.O.)

I'm hoping the conversation can concern what we can do for each other. I'm the executive editor for the London-based *Visage*. Your last articles in *Libre Pensamiento* caught our attention, but your artistic and documentary photography is what truly sparked our interest. It is published under Niffe Kionne, is it not?

NIFFE

Very perceptive of you.

MAGAZINE EDITOR (V.O.)

The series of articles in next month's issue will focus on the Iberian Peninsula and the intimate relationship one of its terrorist groups has developed over the last 20 years with a group much closer to home. We need someone who can get close to the individuals that can sympathetically capture these leaders, their homes, their neighborhoods.

NIFFE

Photographically? I have to be honest, I'm working with a borrowed camera right now. Borrowed from a friend.

MAGAZINE EDITOR (V.O.)

Our company is accustomed to providing our guest photographers with the appropriate equipment.

NIFFE

While I do have a certain affinity, even first love, for photography. I have a job tying me to Madrid currently...

TRAIN ANNOUNCER(V.O.)

Passengers with a destination in Dublin can begin making their way to the highlighted exits.

MAGAZINE EDITOR(V.O.)

But traveling is undoubtedly always looming on the agenda. We can offer a very real chance for you to quickly transition into full time staff photographer within the next month. But it is important that any photographs published for this story be from a guest photographer, someone with no past ties to our publication.

NIFFE

I'm very intrigued by your offer.
Let me get back to you.

INT. QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, BELFAST, IRELAND - DAY

Tracking the source of current Irish pop MUSIC, we explore a spacious mahogany interior crowned with many elaborate candelabras dangling from the high ceilings.

Students punctuate the long media tables and balconies from several floors overlooking the atrium.

A few table lamps compete with the strong afternoon sun which cuts sharp slats of light through the necks of those sitting at the tables..

One table has the largest stacks of books and greatest chaos of research material.

CLOSE UP: BOOK TITLED "VASCONIA"

At this table, shadowed by the overhanging balcony, a woman sits with her head bowed toward a stack of papers.

Her elbow supporting a close examination of the text in front of her: a print out from a microfilm.

CLOSE UP: TANGLE OF HEAD-PHONE WIRE AND UNKEMPT HAIR

A finger brushes through long hair and is temporarily caught in the cord.

Another hand with a double looped necklace crossing the wrist jerks the headphones off the head.

As Niffe is lost in thought, Fingers fondle the vintage key pendant on the necklace Niffe received previously.

The MUSIC abruptly stops.

Niffe reaches to the chair beside her and ruffles through a small zipped case of tickets and receipts. One reads:

"39 EUROS, 10 TIP, 49 TOTAL, SIGNED: ZUZEN SAGREDO AGNELLI"

Niffe looks up at several flags of the Irish state covering skylights, caught in the draft of the fans.

NIFFE
(to herself)
Damn him to hell.

Two students sitting at a nearby table look at Niffe and return to their reading.

A tear runs down Niffe's cheek.

CLOSE UP: ARTICLE ON TABLE

Sitting by the receipt is a highlighted and noted article entitled "Proceso de Burgos: Terrorism defined by the Franco Regime"

Niffe pulls the article into better view and reads past an underlined section to a list of names of those found guilty in the trial. Her finger stops at the last name: 'Otxagabia.' She pulls out Zuzen's business card from her wallet and sees that the last names match.

ANGLE ON: ENTIRE LIBRARY

Niffe jumps out of her chair, leaves the books nearby wide open, shuffles the stacks of papers back into her messenger bag and heads toward the door.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF NIFFE'S HOTEL, BELFAST - NIGHT

The front door of a small inn in the historic district of Belfast opens and Niffe steps out dressed in a trench coat and fitted above-the-knee dress.

There is enough drizzle in the air to quickly turn her shoulders a darker shade of khaki.

She steps into a narrow cobblestone street and heads up a hill to an intersection with several cabs idling.

Niffe walks up to the second black taxi in line and startles the DRIVER who appears to be immersed in a phone conversation. He motions to the cab she has just passed.

She peeks at the CABBIE, and the array of Virgin Marys lining the dashboard and gets in the back.

NIFFE

Hello. I need to go to Kelly's
Cellars.

CABBIE

(with a thick Irish accent)
Are you sure?

NIFFE

Absolutely.

Niffe pulls out several pounds sterling and lays the bills on the dashboard. The cabbie quickly pulls away and makes the first u-turn available.

When a commercial pipes in more loudly on the radio, he clicks the sound system off.

As the silence grows unbearable and the traffic appears to be thinning out, Niffe cracks the window and scans the passing street signs.

The cabbie furtively turns off the headlights, leaving only the faint red glow of the parking lights.

NIFFE (CONT'D)

(politely)

If there is something wrong with
your headlights, sir? I can get
another cab from here.

The cabbie doesn't reply, quickly locks the doors, and pulls into a parking lot.

Niffe begins dialing a number on her cell phone in the folds of her lap.

Before she can finish, the back door is jerked open and she is pulled out by her shoulders to a standing position by a Second Abductor.

She twists out of his hold and elbows the underside of his jaw. He falls backward onto the curb.

Suddenly, the cabbie is at Niffe's side. He grabs her violently by the other arm. A gag chokes her first scream.

The Second Abductor winds an old school bandanna from his pocket into a blindfold which contrasts with the streamlined gag in her mouth.

He drops a bag over her head and the Cabbie snaps handcuffs onto Niffe's wrists.

As they walk several hundred feet across the parking lot to a warehouse near a river, Niffe ceases struggling and the Abductors loosen their grip slightly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ABANDONED WHISKEY DISTILLERY OFFICE, BELFAST - NIGHT

Niffe sits in a revolving chair of a glassed in office overlooking the factory floor of a distillery.

Her arms are locked uncomfortably behind her, but her blindfolds have been removed and her oddly calm expression is caught by the green glow of a desktop computer from the late 1980s.

Another man, SEAMUS, approaches with a flash light, weaving through and highlighting the shiny, convex metal of the storage containers and tearing cobwebs from in front of him as he walks.

The Cabbie stares out the glass walls at the approaching man while the Second Abductor powers on a second computer and rummages through Niffe's purse.

Seamus climbs up the spiral staircase and enters the office.

CABBIE

I think we have more whiskey
available here than you bargained
for, tourist.

SECOND ABDUCTOR

Name is Niffe Asjholt. There's a
press badge in here: Libre
Pensamiento. She must have a
phone...but I can't find it.

SEAMUS

Search her.

CABBIE

We were just waiting on your
orders.

SEAMUS

Then I'll do the honors.

Seamus pulls Niffe to standing and frisks her, checking her pockets and even her shoes.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)
Completely clean, no wires.

CABBIE
What did you expect? She looks like one of those reporters armed only with ideals without the guts to really fight for what they believe in.

SEAMUS
They must take some sort of pacifist oath.

SECOND ABDUCTOR
I wouldn't be so sure.

He gestures to his bloody nose and bruised chin.

SEAMUS
She has no idea her captors are actually those who she seeks. Let's cut her a a break. And what's this s&m nonsense?

Seamus unbuckles the gag from NIFFE'S mouth and chucks it at the Second Abductor.

CABBIE
Precautions: the same reason I borrowed another cabbie's car.

SEAMUS
I just hope this little incident doesn't put me in the shithouse with the Army Council.

CABBIE
Trust me, they'll promote you.

SEAMUS
So you must have a list of contacts. What did her phone reveal? A bunch of code?

Seamus kneels until he is at eye level with Niffe and tilts her chin towards him.

SEAMUS (CONT'D)
She doesn't strike me as a brilliant code-maker and breaker.

SECOND ABDUCTOR

No gun or mace, just her slinky
little dress and heels for weapons.

SEAMUS

Now that just doesn't seem right,
does it?

CLOSE UP: NIFFE'S BOUND HANDS

Her cuticle bleeds as she slowly untwists the filigree from
the key pendant hanging around her wrist with her nail and
begins to feed the filigree into the handcuff lock.

Seamus pulls Niffe to a standing position and spots a couple
drops of blood on the tan leather cushion of the seat.

SEAMUS

Why is my captive bleeding?

Seamus spins the chair towards the CABBIE.

CABBIE

She clocked O'Brien pretty hard,
check her elbow.

Niffe's handcuffs drop to the ground and she wheels around
to the Cabbie who is blocking her path to the door and kicks
him in the ribs.

He falls back into the corner of a file cabinet. As she
grabs the door handle, the chain on the key around her wrist
catches on the lever of the door handle and it snaps.

The Cabbie and the Second Abductor chase her out the door as
Seamus picks up the key and examines it. The Second Abductor
gains on Niffe.

Seamus opens the door and walks out onto the landing as the
second abductor grabs Niffe.

SEAMUS

(yelling)

Hold on.

Seamus steps into the office, thumbs through an address
book, and dials from the desk phone.

INT. MEDIUM SECURITY PRISON WAITING ROOM, BILBAO - NIGHT

Zuzen, along with a couple other people sit on a row of plastic seats. A glassed in booth and entrance can be seen behind him. A uniformed prison guard sits beside the door.

Zuzen's cell phone rings and he pulls it from his brief case.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SEAMUS

I seem to have someone you have been looking for.

ZUZEN

This line isn't exactly secure. I'm setting up a visit with a friend at the prison.

SEAMUS

Your girlfriend, the reporter you mentioned, she seems to be here in Belfast. I wouldn't have recognized her but she had a key that looked very familiar.

ZUZEN

Why the hell is she with you?

SEAMUS

One of the magazines is doing a cover story on the relationship between E.T.A. and the I.R.A. They parade as liberal but most the time they are just interested in an entertaining story. I have someone on the inside.

ZUZEN

Now that's useful. Did it ever occur to you that I might be hoping for my own insight into Libre Pensamiento. It's in my country. Did I mention I was at a prison? Can you try not to use Goddamn proper names?

SEAMUS

Alright, don't get your panties in a wad. You want me to let her go I suppose.

ZUZEN

I want you to never have had her.

SEAMUS

Don't worry, I just had a couple friends question her. I heard some nasty rumors.

ZUZEN

The magazine she writes for is liberal, maybe not revolutionary, but I can respect their slant.

SEAMUS

Or you can respect her sexuality?

ZUZEN

I want you to apologize, and then let her go.

SEAMUS

Done. Best of luck with your 'visitation.'

INT. ABANDONED WHISKEY DISTILLERY OFFICE, BELFAST - SAME

Seamus waits a second and slams the phone. He takes a deep breath.

He steps outside and motions to the second abductor to join him in the office.

SEAMUS.

(In Gaelic)

Put her in the taxi and bring her back home, blindfold on, unharmed. Oh, and give her my sincere apologies and let her have her fare back.

The second abductor nods and runs after Niffe.

Seamus turns to the desk, flicks the switch on a light table and lays the key carefully on the table and begins winding the filigree back in place.

INT. PRISON VISITING AREA, BILBAO - MORNING

Zuzen sits at a long table punctuated by privacy screens. Several more rows extend in front of him and people sit waiting on one side.

A prison guard leads a row of jump-suited prisoners who file into the seats opposite their friends and family.

IKER, in his early forties with a thin frame and closely cropped hair and glasses stands in front of Zuzen, unsure of whether he will sit down.

The HUM of the conversations around them picks up and Iker finally sits.

IKER
(in Euskera)
I gave up seeing my wife and
daughters for this meeting.

ZUZEN
(in Euskera, scoffingly)
I'm truly grateful. You honor me
with your presence, my martyr.

IKER
(in Euskera)
Don't mock me. You know I cannot
allow my family to suffer while I
waist my life to this place.

Iker scoots his chair closer to Zuzen and drops his voice.

IKER (CONT'D)
(in Euskera)
I'm prepared to offer them a false
lead, anything that can shorten
this prison term. I've been here
for eleven years.

ZUZEN
(in Euskera)
We keep tabs on all our members,
don't doubt that for an instant.

Zuzen grabs Iker's wrist under the table. The veins on his forehead pop out as he squeezes. Iker stares straight back at him, clearly in pain.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
(in Euskera)
But, if you think for one instant
you can spout out some shit and the
upper echelons of the Public Guard
are going to set you free before
they send a semi-automatic after
whoever you just ratted on, then
you are living in a fantasy world.

CLOSE UP: ZUZEN'S HAND

Zuzen slips a capsule into Iker's hand and delicately closes his fingers.

ANGLE ON: BOTH MEN

ZUZEN

(whispering, in Euskera)

Now treat that with gentle care. It's your daughters' savior.

IKER

(in Euskera)

What?

ZUZEN

(in Euskera)

We don't advocate compromise. You knew that when you built those bombs. You recited it like a mantra when you arrived at the judge's house before the paperboy.

IKER

(in Euskera)

You have my daughters?

ZUZEN

(in Euskera)

Osane likes horses and plans to be an astronaut. Her favorite color is orange. Terese doesn't say much but she's clearly brilliant, loves math. She says her favorite color is black, but she says it with defiance.

Iker buries his head in his hands and begins to sob.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)

(in Euskera)

Maialen, she's studying to be a nurse. The whole organization knows that. She's one of us now. A lot happens in eleven years. She likes burgundy, the color of sacrifice for our homeland.

IKER

(in Euskera)

Have you abducted her too?

ZUZEN
 (in Euskera)
 She's on an assignment. She has no
 idea.

IKER
 (in Euskera)
 Please, the others are
 innocent. They are twelve and
 fourteen. They don't even know
 Euskera.

ZUZEN
 (whispering, in Euskera)
 Surely these innocents have more
 value than one worthless prisoner's
 life.

Zuzen stands up. Most of the other visitors are still seated
 around the room.

IKER
 (pleading, in Euskera)
 Please? Have mercy?

ZUZEN
 (in Euskera)
 I'll send you a picture in my next
 birthday card. That's tomorrow
 isn't it? You can see how much fun
 they are having on their vacation.

Iker stands up, his body shaking. He grabs Zuzen's sleeve.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
 (in Euskera)
 I've got to go now. You know I have
 a flight to catch.

Iker falls on his knees, grovelling and clutching at Zuzen.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
 (in Euskera)
 Guards.

The nearest guard steps forwards and restrains Iker.

Zuzen leans back towards Iker and whispers in his ear.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
 (in Euskera)
 Careful. Their precious lives
 depend on you.

Zuzen turns to the guard.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
(in Spanish, to the guard)
I'm really worried about him. Keep
an eye on this gentleman.

EXT. ALEXANDRA GRAVING DOCK, BELFAST - DAY

Niffe sits in the shadow of the C-class light cruiser, HMS Caroline sitting decommissioned and moored permanently in the water.

Behind the ship, industrial cranes punctuate the industrial skyline of warehouses and barges.

SUPERIMPOSE: "The next day."

She snaps candid documentary of locals she picks out through small throngs of tourists in the early morning light.

Niffe turns her attention to the fishing boats in the distance and CAIBRE approaches her unawares. He sits down on the bench a few feet away.

CAIBRE
Niffe, that's such an unusual,
literally breath-taking name.

Niffe glances at Caibre and continues snapping, the film's audible shutter CLICK breaks the silence.

NIFFE
My father gave it to me.

CAIBRE
Your father is a gifted man.

The roll is finished and begins winding with a WHIRR. Niffe allows the camera to hang around her neck and stairs at Caibre.

NIFFE
Do you know him?

CAIBRE
No, but I do know that he raised
you on his own. And you didn't
follow in his footsteps whatsoever.

NIFFE

I wonder who is doing the interviewing here.

CAIBRE

I respect those that choose their own paths.

NIFFE

I find the they are the only people in whom I have any interest.

CAIBRE

My father was a priest briefly. I am not Catholic, barely agnostic, and yet I so firmly believe that the Irish people and the beautiful traditions and even the wild homelands deserve to be freed from British rule.

A child runs along curb beside the water, trailing a metallic balloon, as his younger friend chases him.

NIFFE

Do you believe separating the secular-religious issues from Irish Republicanism and Nationalism is possible?

CAIBRE

A slow and arduous journey, but necessary for my cause.

NIFFE

Shall we begin here or somewhere with less wind?

Niffe pulls out the tape recorder from the messenger bag slung across her body.

CAIBRE

I am very open about what I believe, but there are a couple reasons I have not found myself a prisoner of war during the worst of the Troubles and discretion is one of them.

NIFFE

I am at your command, I would never jeopardize a friend of Maria.

CAIBRE

Perhaps you have heard of the Ward family?

NIFFE

Most definitely, I was actually hoping to visit the landmark while I was here.

CAIBRE

I know you didn't have much warning for this assignment: My relationship with the Libre Pensamiento editor has not been entirely positive in the last few years.

NIFFE

He can be prickly at times.

CAIBRE

A long story, for another time.

Caibre drops his voice slightly and scoots closer to Niffe.

CAIBRE (CONT'D)

The Wards, on the other hand, are heroes of mine that have found their selves facilitating peace talks and compromise between the British and the Sinn Féin and even the I.R.A. with hospitality and selflessness.

NIFFE

Sounds like I could create a whole separate story about the Wards.

Caibre takes out a cigarette from a metal case and rolls it in his palm.

CAIBRE

The wards have retained their neutrality and lives by staying out of the papers. I hope you understand.

He returns the cigarette to his case, pulls out a cigar and offers one to Niffe. She hesitates and takes one.

NIFFE

Completely. You might have discovered I am predominately a

NIFFE
contemporary arts writer and
critic, I'm in new territory here.

Niffe allows Caibre to snip the end of her cigar.

CAIBRE
I'm sure you won't mind a brisk
walk through a couple blocks of the
historic district?

NIFFE
That would be divine.

Caibre lights their cigars and the two stand up and walk
towards the sidewalk. The brisk sea air almost steals
Niffe's scarf.

SUNKEN GARDENS, CASTLE WARD, BELFAST - DAY

Ancient stone benches and stretches of the greenest moss
punctuate a flower garden grouped in concentric circular
beds populated with weeping willows and yews.

Glimpses of a beige eighteenth century mansion with brightly
colored trim are visible through the trees as Niffe and
Caibre walk down one of the winding paths.

NIFFE
This place is straight from the
substance of myth and legend, and
it's so amazing that it's closed
today.

CAIBRE
You are welcome to stay as long as
you like after the interview.

NIFFE
I have one more question, but it
has nothing to do with you, or
perhaps it does...

CAIBRE
Go ahead.

NIFFE
I wanted to ask you sooner but I
didn't want to endanger our
interview in any way: I need some
input as I would like to stay and
photograph Belfast and Derry for
several more days.

CAIBRE

I can understand that. I haven't left Northern Ireland in three years, by choice.

NIFFE

Last night I was on my way to meet a contact from the I.R.A. and I was abducted via Taxi just outside my hotel in the historic district. I know you have always maintained your distance from the I.R.A. despite your early involvement with the provisional Irish Republican Army.

CAIBRE

When I was 16 and 17, if you can call it involvement, it felt a bit more like brainwashing.

NIFFE

Yes, so I didn't think you could shed any light on this?

Niffe turns to face Caibre and they stop walking.

CAIBRE

Where did they take you? Was there a bribe involved?

NIFFE

I'm a contributing writer for *Libre Pensamiento*. If they had bribed me, it would have most likely been a drawn out affair because of that connection and my family connections of which you are already aware.

CAIBRE

My experience with the I.R.A. is that you don't get captured and show up on time the next day for your appointments, free of bruises.

Niffe unbuttons her right sleeve and rolls it up to expose her bruised elbow covered in several band aids and ringed fingerprint bruises on her upper arm.

NIFFE

I took a self-defense class in college, but the truth is that I

NIFFE

picked the lock on my handcuffs
and, by what seemed pure luck, they
rewarded me by driving me back home
and returning my cab fare.

CAIBRE

Maybe it was a whim...

NIFFE

Or a test? They took me to some
type of disguised meeting quarters
in a recently closed whiskey
distillery near the Lagan River and
the Belfast Lough. One minute it
looked like they had a fun filled
night of interrogation and maybe a
little torture - a couple bottles
of half-drained Irish whiskey were
waiting patiently in the office,
maybe awaiting a little
whiskey-boarding, then I escaped
and the leader shouted something in
Gaelic or Irish or Manx and the
other men suddenly treated me like
gold.

CAIBRE

The enterprise wouldn't necessarily
have been planned. The organization
is constantly inducting and
pursuing new members. They consider
themselves an army, and they are
just as hungry as Uncle
Sam. Sometimes potentials find out
more than they should know before
they are discovered to be morally
unfit.

The phone in Caibre's briefcase omits muffled RINGS. The
two pause as Caibre pulls the phone out, checks the screen,
and returns it to his jacket pocket.

NIFFE

The only thing that might have
shifted their attitude was a key
pendant I was wearing as a
bracelet. It was a gift and I
haven't been able to trace it's
origin. The key was large but
exquisite workmanship, with
elaborate filigree in bronze.

CAIBRE

Do you remember anything else about it? Who gave it to you?

NIFFE

It was just from a boyfriend, a small network of braille-like indentations were stamped or maybe hand punched on the working end.

Caibre's phone rings again and he reaches in his pocket to silence it.

CAIBRE

I'll ask around, but it doesn't sound Celtic or Gaelic. Keep your line open and I'll call the second I find out anything from the Army Council. I would highly recommend switching hotels - something visible, touristy.

NIFFE

I will.

CAIBRE

I hope my information was vital to your article. The combination of these two dissident groups is volatile, be wary, but don't back down.

NIFFE

I generally don't.

CAIBRE

Why don't you stay here for a while until I contact you with a suggestion for an alternate hotel? The current residents of the home have tea and pastries inside waiting on us, in case it rained, but I have an incessantly buzzing phone.

NIFFE

Farewell and my immense gratitude.

Caibre shakes hands with Niffe firmly, tips his hat, and begins walking towards the gate.

CAIBRE
Say hello to Maria for me.

INT. NIFFE'S STUDIO, FRIEND'S LOFT, LONDON - DAY

NIFFE stands amid the hybrid of an electrical shop and fine art studio patiently manipulating needle nose pliers.

The sound of a construction site nearby comes through the open window.

A spiral staircase can be seen through an opening in the far wall and blueprints stagger several of the walls. Shelves jut from the walls at acute angles, covered in books and magazines.

Niffe moves with rapid precision, twisting the wires of a large grid of light bulbs. Clay and tools lie about.

A few pieces of industrial equipment are anchored to a metal table and labeled neatly.

As Niffe turns to glance at a model, the half-kitchen, wet bar, and living room are revealed. A phone RINGS.

Niffe ignores the phone and then finally picks it up on the tail end of the fourth ring.

NIFFE
Zuzen? Really? I can barely hear
you. I'll buzz the lift.

She places the light bulb grid against the wall and observes critically. She looks out the window at a construction site.

A buzzer goes off. Niffe leans the piece on the metal table below and opens the door and stares ahead, the angle of her neck defiant.

ZUZEN
Listen ...

Niffe starts to walk towards the other door. She motions for Zuzen to follow. He follows her through a short hallway with a view of a balcony.

As Niffe walks through a door covered in long strips of dark-tinted black plastic, Zuzen's gaze remains on the balcony.

NIFFE

Wait here a second, I forgot my
friend was on hold.

Then he snaps out of it. Niffe motions for him to take a
seat in the den.

There is total blackness that shifts to dim red light as we
follow Niffe through a short hallway.

ANGLE ON: THE ENTIRE DARK ROOM

The developing facility is neatly arranged, filled with
shimmering metal.

Niffe picks up a cordless handset.

NIFFE

Sorry that was my heart arriving on
a plate.

TORI (V.O.)

Niffe. You sounded in need of
whatever first aid I could
offer. What can I say, I'm
psychic.

NIFFE

Something like that.

TORI

(V.O. quieter)

He's tracked you down.

NIFFE

Worse. He's tracked me down, just
when I had finally began to forget
him.

TORI (V.O.)

How did you leave it?

NIFFE

I told him to come back
tomorrow. I was in an important
meeting.

TORI (V.O.)

And you haven't seen or heard from
him in how many days?

Water GURGLES in the background as niffe pulls fiber paper
out of a final automatic bath with tongs.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) The windows are covered in black electrical tape,
neatly layered.

B) A network of pipes, pans, and sinks covers the long
wall facing two large metal machines.

C) A large black and white mural is apparent across
the expanse of one wall, painted and peeling.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE

NIFFE

I don't know? Months? Actually,
he's waiting outside.

Niffe pulls photographic paper out of the final bath (a
shallow metal pan) and into a clear rinse box flowing with a
steady supply of water.

She walks to one of the enlarging machines, flicks the
button on an attached timer, and waits 20 seconds.

She maintains her focus as she talks to Tori. Zuzen is
visible, resting his shoulder against the door frame.

TORI

I'll let you get back to it...

Niffe puts down the receiver.

Zuzen steps into the room slowly.

ZUZEN

(dramatically)

I can't believe you're here. I've
been looking for weeks.

NIFFE

I've gotta close this door.

Zuzen steps aside into the darkroom. Niffe closes the door
almost completely, leaving a stark crack of light down the
center of Zuzen's face.

He closes it the rest of the way. Niffe turns back to the
enlarger.

NIFFE
I've been looking for you for
months.

ZUZEN
You really think you are God in
your new Rapunzel tower.

CLOSE UP: NIFFE

NIFFE
Loose the biblical bullshit. You
didn't return my calls for almost
two weeks.

ZUZEN
I'm here for you. Lets speak freely
and leave the past outside. I'm
sorry.

NIFFE
Freedom is my motto, but not
ignorance.

ZUZEN
Riddles seem like your motto.

NIFFE
Business is good. I'm trying to
focus on my current business of
art, and art involves untangling
riddles.

Niffe puts down the tongs at Zuzen's end of the table.

She kisses him lightly on both cheeks in more of a standard
friendly European greeting than passion. He returns the same
kiss.

ZUZEN
Who owns this place anyway? Never
heard you speak of it.

Niffe flips the enlarger on and a blurred elbow/ lower arm
holding a pen and a faded written letter appear; it is gone
in 10 seconds with the CLICK of the enlarger.

NIFFE
An old friend.

ZUZEN
A guy?

NIFFE

Pretty much an x-boyfriend and now
a good friend of my best friend.
He's in Nepal for weeks.

ZUZEN

(suddenly changing to a
positive tone)
Let's go by this park I saw on the
walk here.

NIFFE

From the tube?

ZUZEN

Yes. Filled with **birds**
unimaginable. We could get a
picnic. Someone could print the
rest of this story...

NIFFE

Not exactly. Technique is
important for art books.

Niffe remembers her print and twirls around to pull two
larger sheets out of the developer bath and into the stop.

She look at the image with relief. Niffe gestures to the
cracked door, subsequent hallway, and balcony.

ZUZEN

To the right?

Niffe walks to Zuzen, spins him around and holds his wrists,
moving them with the directions.

NIFFE

The exit is straight ahead and then
you turn this way and then past the
first view, through the dining room
and cut right at the giant first
room you came to. Then the terrace.
You'll pass the espresso machine in
the kitchen on the way.

ZUZEN

Fair enough.

Niffe pulls two large photos from the a shallow bath. She
flops them onto an easel and squeegees both sides and then
pins them to a drying line.

We see black and white extreme close up portraits from Belfast from the newborn to the elderly in dark contrasts and deep tones.

The images are amplified by their arrangement with color images of political graffiti, some of it written in Gaelic. A few masked graffiti artists have been caught in action in the color images.

At the end of the line of color images, there is a picture with dramatically different subject matter: a shadowy long table laid out with a half-constructed fertilizer bomb.

Gloved hands hover above the table, in slight blur.

Niffe finishes and closes the door with a resounding BANG.

INT. LIVING SPACE, RESIDENTIAL STUDIO, LONDON - DAY

Niffe walks into the room.

ANGLE ON: ZUZEN THROUGH THE GLASS

Through a single-pane window, Zuzen is visible. He takes in the view and sips coffee.

A small flock of brightly colored birds almost lite on the terrace railing, causing a hand-crafted wind chime of mirrors and glass pisms to engulf the balcony in vibrant hues.

Niffe runs towards the double terrace doors and to the balcony and slows her step before Zuzen turns around.

EXT. TERRACE, RESIDENTIAL STUDIO, LONDON - DAY

Zuzen turns around, startled from his reverie as Niffe steps outside.

ZUZEN

Niffe.

NIFFE

I surprised you.

ZUZEN

No, delighted.

Zuzen's face breaks into a large, genuine smile.

Niffe sits on the railing comfortably near Zuzen, but not in touching distance.

NIFFE

The phoenix incarnate are
parrots. Escaped from owners over
the past few decades, at least the
ritzy unloving ones.

ZUZEN

Parrots in London.

PAN OUT TO DOWNTOWN LONDON, THE ISLAND, AND THEN TO WESTERN
EUROPE DURING THE NEXT DIALOG

NIFFE (V.O.)

I've found my serenity and the key
to my existence in the dark room
and the melting pot of London which
seems to keep the furnace of my
soul at the ideal temperature.
Because of where I came from and
what I've done, I can only be so
close to what you do.

ANGLE ON: NIFFE AND ZUZEN

Zuzen removes one hand from his pockets and lays his hand on
top of NIFFE'S on the balcony.

She stiffens slightly and he opens up his fingers to reveal
the antique key pendant he gave her.

The chain has been replaced by a multi-strand intricate
copper chain and the pendant has been repaired.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)

I knew you had lost it.

NIFFE

Can you tell me it's meaning,
because this holds some kind of
power I cannot explain like an evil
eye charm from Greece or...

ZUZEN

Only that it is beautiful and I
want you to have it.

NIFFE

That's not good enough. Since I met
you; through coincidence, fate, or
proximity to you ; I have
discovered that I can exist only so
close to terror. You vanished, and
you swept me back into your

NIFFE
world as soon as you re-appeared.
But, I can't exist within a lie or
in fear.

Zuzen turns away.

NIFFE (CONT'D)
I want you to know that I wouldn't
take back a single experience we
shared or my writing which I still
feel so passionate about, but I
have to be an artist now. I lied
about this apartment and why I'm
here because it just came so easy
when I first glimpsed your face.

Zuzen stands up to leave.

ZUZEN
I want to tell you everything...

Zuzen closes Niffe's fingers around the pendant.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
About myself, but there are too
many people I would place at risk.

Niffe stands up and opens the door to the interior of the
apartment.

NIFFE
I think that's the only way I could
silence the dreams and the
nightmares.

Niffe pulls the door closed.

ZUZEN
My father was one of founders of an
organization you were researching
before you came to London. He was
what you were searching for: the
link between E.T.A. and the I.R.A.

Niffe sits down, shocked. Zuzen follows suit. He grabs
both her hands in his.

ZUZEN (CONT'D)
I've ran away from them and
alternately killed for them, but it
took the possibility of losing you
to make me determined to escape.

Zuzen lets his forehead fall against Niffe's shoulder and begins to sob.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

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