

ZUGZWANG

Written by

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INT. LADY'S OFFICE - EVENING

A photo of a naked, LONG-HAIRED WOMAN draped over a bed with an unidentifiable person between her legs. The woman's eyes seem to find the CAMERA making it feel that she is looking right at us. Two glasses are set down on top of the photo.

A beautifully manicured hand fills both glasses with expensive brown liquor. The hand belongs to LADY, a well-dressed woman in her thirties who hands a glass to MR. BAUER, a man approaching fifty who dresses lavishly, as he dabs at his eyes with his pocket square.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Detective Lady Maclava is about to embark on the greatest mystery of her life. I know it, she does not.

MR. BAUER

(chuckling)

They say don't shoot the messenger...but my first emotion is rage towards you.

Lady sits on the edge of her desk and assumes a somber expression. She lights two cigarettes and hands one to Mr. Bauer. As she opens her mouth to soothe, Mr. Bauer polishes off his drink and throws the glass across the office. It shatters. Lady flinches only slightly.

LADY

Come on now. I've just had those walls painted, Mr. Bauer.

Lady gets up and fills a new glass for Mr. Bauer. Her drink is untouched. Mr. Bauer gulps the liquor down and stands shakily.

MR. BAUER

She'll go right back to the rural hole where I found her. She'll die on the same dirt-poor land where she was born.

Lady's posture stiffens, but she smiles.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE (RECEPTION AREA) - SAME

Lady walks with Mr. Bauer to the exterior office and waiting area.

The interior design and whatever technology we glimpse (phones, typewriters, etc.) resembles a mix of mid-century modern futurism and brutalism.

In the waiting area, Lady's junior associate, the twenty-something, BISHOP, types at her desk. "Lady Maclava, Private Investigator" can be seen etched on the opaque glass window of the door.

LADY

Of course, you have the power to make her suffer. The clever move might be to hold onto it. Speak softly, walk with a big stick and whatnot.

Mr. Bauer looks at Lady sadly. Pats her cheek condescendingly.

MR. BAUER

You're a good influence, my dear Lady. Is there a discount for when it's bad news?

Lady smiles with all her teeth.

LADY

There is a discount for my friends. Don't worry about the balance, just remember who takes care of you.

MR. BAUER

Of course!
(to Lady and Bishop)
I'm off to the crocodilo fights. The boy they have tonight is a minister's son. A minister I don't like, so I'm rooting for the crocodilo.

Mr. Bauer leaves the office with pep in his step as Lady and Bishop exchange a look expressing their mutual distaste.

BISHOP

Mistress number three...

LADY

Four. The thing about bills is that they have to be paid.

BISHOP

But you just gave him a discount...

LADY
And the thing about relationships
is that they are worth more than
money.

Bishop smirks as Lady returns to her office.

BISHOP
(to herself)
So many life lessons from my boss.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE - SAME

Lady cleans up the shattered glass. As she's picking up the last shard, she cuts her hand on a piece of glass she hadn't noticed.

LADY
Gods!

Lady takes a bandage from her desk and applies it to the wound, then goes to a small altar holding a candle, a ceramic jar, a photo of a man in his thirties and a sealed letter. Lady holds up her hand.

LADY (CONT'D)
(to the altar)
I bring you a blood offering today.

Lady lights the candle and places her untouched bourbon on the altar.

LADY (CONT'D)
And your favorite poison. May it
serve you in death, though it never
did in life.

Lady picks up the letter and takes a deep breath. It is addressed to her, Lady Maclava. She turns it over and looks at the unbroken red wax seal. A crest with a heart organ on it. She picks up a letter opener and is about to open the letter when...

A commotion takes Lady's attention away.

BISHOP (O.S.)
She is busy sir! You cannot go in.

ERNESTO (O.S.)
It's important.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE (RECEPTION AREA) - SAME

Lady walks into her reception area to see ERNESTO, an agitated man in his early twenties, standing in front of Bishop.

ERNESTO
Please, let me see her!

BISHOP
I was just telling Mr...

ERNESTO
...Saroshe.

BISHOP
That we are not taking any more clients this evening.

ERNESTO
Are you Detective Maclava?

Lady looks at Ernesto and takes in the close cut hair, the hat he's mangling, his shoes and the hint of a tattoo peeking out at his collar.

Lady walks up to Ernesto and moves his shirt to see the ink clearly. It's a fleur-de-lis.

LADY
You're an officer in The Guard.

Ernesto nods cautiously.

Lady pauses before grabbing her coat.

LADY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I have an important appointment this evening.

Lady tosses Bishop her coat who catches it. Bishop's confused but plays along.

ERNESTO
This can't wait.

LADY
Then you should've come earlier in the day.

Lady and Bishop move to the door, forcing Ernesto to move too.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE HALLWAY - SAME

Lady locks the door behind her and goes downstairs. Bishop follows with a glance back at Ernesto.

EXT. LADY'S OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Lady and Bishop emerge from a side door of the building into a bustling evening in Cidade Portuaria (Port City). Buses, trolleys and cars with long flowing lines, large tail fins and wrap around windshields move down the street, bikers and pedestrians abound. Well-to-do mom and pop shops line the High Street.

A faded billboard advertises Cidade Portuaria with the tagline "Welcome to your playground." and depicts wealthy-looking people being served drinks on the beach under whimsical cabanas while palm fronds sway in the breeze.

A sign posted on an iron fence reads "Crocodilo Fight Tonight" In the distance a man faces down a Crocodilo, surrounded by a crowd.

BISHOP

Lady, I have to get home.

LADY

One drink, Bishop.

Lady walks a few steps and turns into the main entrance of the building, which is a lively bar called SAUDADES.

Bishop goes to a payphone on the corner and makes a brief call before following Lady into the bar.

In the distance a Crocodilo roars and a man screams.

INT. SAUDADES - LATER

Lady and Bishop sit at a table with nearly empty beer glasses.

LADY

I'll get the next round.

BISHOP

You said one.

Lady is already half way to the bar where a group of hip, early twenty-somethings are in an animated discussion.

LADY
(to the bartender)
Two Birre Pretas.

The BARTENDER pours two dark beers as Lady looks at the group next to her at the bar. The youngest of the gathering, probably in her teens, is MALIKA. She is gesturing as she speaks with great intensity. She wears an army-style jacket with a forest green patch on it depicting a cashew tree and the words 'Modelo Nordico'.

LADY (CONT'D)
(to Malika)
What's with the patch?

MALIKA
(defiantly)
I support Modelo Nordico.

LADY
Which of their platforms do you agree with? Their use of child soldiers or their penchant for massacring innocent Novo Estadoans?

MALIKA
Modelo Nordico is not responsible...

LADY
No, they're not responsible, that's for sure.

A YOUNG MAN steps tentatively in between Lady and Malika. Lady pushes him aside.

LADY (CONT'D)
I'm talking to the lady with the cool patch on her cool jacket. You think you're controversial, chatting about socialism at the bar on a Friday night. Supporting Modelo Nordico in Acorporaçao territory. You think it's all a bit sexy and dangerous? You're a fucking idiot.

Lady pours Malika's drink in her lap. The bartender rushes over as Bishop approaches behind Lady and shoots the Bartender a placating look.

LADY (CONT'D)
(to the Bartender)
I don't think she's old enough to
drink.

BISHOP
(to Lady)
Let's head back to the table, boss.

Lady tears the patch off Malika's jacket. Malika looks at Lady in her eye, but says nothing. CAPTAIN, a man in his sixties wearing a well-decorated royal blue Guard uniform stands up from his table watching the event.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Pick up the drinks.

Lady takes the two beers off the bar. Bishop takes hold of Lady's shoulders and steers her towards their table.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
And we're off.

Lady and Bishop pass the uniformed Captain.

LADY
Captain.

CAPTAIN
(grinning)
Same old temper.

LEO, another Guard officer at the table, LAUGHS.

LEO
You've got to learn to control
yourself. This is the city, not the
tribal squat you were born into.

As Lady twitches towards the table of Guard officers, Captain smacks Leo in the back of the head and he performs contrition.

CAPTAIN
Shut up, Leo.

BISHOP
(to Lady)
Leave it.

Bishop successfully gets Lady and the drinks to their table where she guides her to a seat facing away from the bar.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
 My tia's best warning to me:
 Nothing good comes after the first
 drink. She must've learned that
 lesson a hundred times.

To Bishop's surprise, all the fight has gone out of Lady.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
 Boss?

LADY
 It's the three-month anniversary of
 Dad-o's death.

Lady raises her beer to Bishop.

LADY (CONT'D)
 And that is why I'm forcing you to
 drink with me.

BISHOP
 In that case, we're probably not
 drinking enough.

Bishop motions to the Bartender with two raised fingers and
 pantomimes doing shots. The bartender brings over two shots,
 sets them down roughly, and leaves. Bishop holds hers up and
 waits for Lady to take hers in hand.

LADY	BISHOP (CONT'D)
Maisha Marefu.	Maisha Marefu.

They both drop their shots into their beers and down them.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
 If it's any consolation, having a
 living dad can be a real drain.

As Lady laughs she notices, Ernesto entering the bar and
 discretely greeting the chastened group of young
 revolutionaries. He orders a drink and takes it with him. As
 he passes by Lady's table, he slides her a PIECE OF PAPER.
 Ernesto continues walking to greet his fellow Guard officers.

Lady looks at the note Ernesto left, her expression
 unreadable.

INSERT - NOTE

The note is on Guard stationery which displays the motto, "A
 Life of Service" Ernesto has underlined these words.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

That's a heavy burden for someone
who hasn't dealt with her own shit.
I mean, how're you gonna serve
others when you haven't served
yourself?

INSERT - NOTE & MAP

As our view broadens, we see Ernesto's note rests on a map depicting a continent called Middle Kingdom, northeast of a heart-shaped continent called Eden. A shipping route from Novo Estado on the southeast coast of Eden to Sheena in Middle Kingdom is highlighted.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Bishop sets down a tray of coffees on top of the map on Lady's desk. Lady and Ernesto drink theirs black while Bishop adds cream and sugar. Ernesto raises his coffee to Lady.

ERNESTO

We drink it bitter.

Lady nods curtly and raises her cup slightly to Ernesto.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

There's a knock-off opioid made
cheaply in Sheena and sold by the
Triads. Every neighboring country's
opioid deaths have shot up at least
500% in the last year. Novo Estado
is next.

BISHOP

(disturbed)

500%? How many people is that?

LADY

When's the first shipment?

Ernesto nods and indicates on the map.

ERNESTO

It lands here for the first time
tomorrow night.

LADY

Why don't you bring this to your
colleagues?

ERNESTO

My colleagues are facilitating the entire thing.

Lady sits, taken aback for a moment before standing up and going to the window. She looks out over the street where armed Guard officers watch passers-by. Behind the guards a YOUTH surreptitiously hangs a forest green poster that reads "La Jefa" with a silhouette of a woman, fist raised on the fence.

LADY

You know why I'm a success?

Ernesto begins to answer but Lady continues.

LADY (CONT'D)

I came to this city knowing that one side is as corrupt as the other. There is no one to trust. That's why I've survived. That's why I thrive.

ERNESTO

Forget sides. What about people? What about communities? These drugs will destroy families, human souls.

LADY

You weren't listening. I said I don't trust anyone. That includes you.

ERNESTO

You don't have to trust me. I have proof.

Lady turns around and Ernesto is right behind her. He hands Lady a clear plastic bag with two-toned crystals in it, a photocopied letter in Cantonese, translated to English and copy of a Cidade Portuaria port schedule.

Ernesto points to the circled shipment on the schedule.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

It arrives tomorrow.

Lady looks up at him.

LADY

Where do you get your information?

ERNESTO

I'm Leo Carvalho's assistant. When the Triad representative showed up for a meeting, I copied the information and pocketed the drug sample.

BISHOP

Won't he miss them?

LADY

Leo's dumber than sand on the beach.

ERNESTO

I replaced them with my wife's bath salts. If he samples the product, our problems are solved more quickly than I could have hoped.

Lady SNORTS with laughter.

LADY

You don't seem to lack the courage to confront The Guard on your own.

Ernesto touches a beautiful chess set laid out mid-game.

ERNESTO

This is pretty.

Ernesto paces, dragging his fingers across the bar cart, an ornate clock, a shelf of leather-bound books. Lady frowns at the intrusion.

ERNESTO (CONT'D)

The whole office is...well-appointed.

Ernesto stops to look at the photos of Lady with several well-dressed and glamorous people.

LADY

(impatient)

Your point?

ERNESTO

It's not a question of courage, Detective. It's a question of resources and relationships and...I thought you would care.

LADY

Why would I...?

Lady is cut off when a CAR BACKFIRES outside. Lady, lightning fast, reaches into a drawer for her gun as Ernesto puts his hand to his heart.

BISHOP
It's only a car backfiring.

EXT. LADY'S OFFICE - LATER

Lady watches as Ernesto exits the side door of her office building and into a downpour. He walks down the street as though it were a beautiful night. A street light flickers and goes out.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE (RECEPTION AREA) - A LITTLE LATER

Lady locks the office door and turns to Bishop.

LADY
That was fun!

Bishop is putting on her coat.

BISHOP
Fun?

Lady pours herself more coffee and sits down at the half-finished chess game. She pats the seat across from her and beckons to Bishop. Bishop takes her coat off and drags herself to the offered seat.

LADY
Even though we're not taking the case, it's fun to think about the adventure.

BISHOP
I don't understand.

Lady looks at her office the way Ernesto did. Seeing it for what it is.

LADY
Working with the Acorporação party's show poodles to help them find out if their lovers are faithful is lucrative and protective, but dull.

BISHOP
And morally compromising?

LADY

Your first interview, you said your passion was to become a private investigator.

BISHOP

To solve important mysteries. Not to...

Bishop looks guilty and doesn't finish.

LADY

Oh this isn't what you signed up for? Well let me tell you, no one pays you for important mysteries.

Lady considers Bishop.

LADY (CONT'D)

Anyway, I don't think Ernesto's telling us everything. Which means his intelligence is unsafe. I saw him eyeing that Modelo Nordico group at the bar. He's as idealistic as you.

Bishop crosses her arms as Lady loses herself in thought. Lady gets a gleam in her eye at the prospect of the chase.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

This is where Lady takes the bait. It's not the pursuit of justice that compels her, but the possibility of revenge.

Lady waves the air as if banishing her own enthusiasm.

LADY

You can't trust someone that good looking. Good looks make you reckless, because you've been given too much that you haven't had to earn.

BISHOP

(to the chessboard)

Or people want to possess you and too much is taken away.

Lady's not listening to Bishop.

LADY

I don't do pro-bono work anyway. What was he thinking coming to me?

(MORE)

LADY (CONT'D)

Find someone revolutionary-minded
who wants to topple the patriarchy,
the oligarchy and any other
institution preventing Novo Estado
from becoming a functioning state.
Goat shit.

BISHOP

Mr. Bauer and his mistresses?

LADY

He's in a position to return the
favor.

Lady makes a move on the chess board.

LADY (CONT'D)

Check.

Bishop makes a move.

BISHOP

The Novo Estadoan people could use
a favor.

Lady makes a move.

LADY

I don't have power. I have money.
It's not the same. Anyway, it's
nice for me to be able to afford an
associate, don't you think?

Bishop makes a move.

BISHOP

Check mate.

Bishop gathers her purse and coat and heads for the door.

TITLE: ZUGZWANG (A situation found in chess in which a player
must make a move that puts them at a serious, often decisive
disadvantage)

INSERT - MAP

A map of a world with a continent at its center, this
continent is in the shape of a heart organ. There are
unreadable names in hieroglyphic languages. The continent is
erased and redrawn upon as the Storyteller speaks, showing
hieroglyphics disappearing and roman languages appearing. The
continent is labelled Eden. We identify a country on its
southeastern shore, Novo Estado. We see Estado, a country on
the shore of Thirstheart, a continent north of Eden.

We zoom in on Novo Estado as boundaries within that country shift allegiances, different parties take over (mostly Acorporaçao and Modelo Nordico), places are renamed. As we zoom in once again within Novo Estado, we notice more and more of the countryside is turning from Acorporaçao into Modelo Nordico territory. We land on Novo Estado's capital, Cidade Portuaria, right on the shore. It is clearly marked as Acorporaçao territory.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

I'm going to tell you a story you'll recognize, no matter what time or place you came up in. This continent is Eden, and this country, is Novo Estado, former colony of Estado, now under its own governance. A democracy, if you use the term loosely. The Acorporaçao Party currently holds power. Their main opposition is the Modelo Nordico party. Novo Estadoans generally share a deep mistrust of the political system because the fact is, both parties have been filled with corruption, violence and in-fighting. And while those at the top of whatever party is in power know luxury, most Novo Estadoans lack the necessities to survive, let alone thrive.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA MONTAGE - NIGHT

Almost abandoned shots of the city at night as MAIN TITLES appear onscreen. We see more of the technology and architecture of the city and it continues the trend of organic space-age meets geometric concrete - all slowly crumbling.

EXT. LADY'S OFFICE OVER THE BAR, SAUDADES - NIGHT

EXT. THE MALECON (and the ocean beyond) - NIGHT

EXT. CIDADE JORNAL (The Newspaper Office) - NIGHT

EXT. PIER 42 (Cidade Portuária Port) - NIGHT

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA PLAZA - NIGHT

EXT. NOVO ESTADO NATIONAL LIBRARY - NIGHT

EXT. CIDADE PORTUÁRIA TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

EXT. CIDADE PORTUÁRIA GUARD OFFICES - NIGHT

EXT. NOVO ESTADO GRAVEYARD (& CHURCH) - NIGHT

EXT. TRABALHADOR BOROUGH (Worker's Neighborhood)- NIGHT

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

The people in the capital city, Cidade Portuária, are better resourced than those in the countryside, but it's a cutthroat metropolis where one survives by wit and cunning or by brute force. In the city, survival takes on a different hue. Sure you might have enough to eat and a roof over your head, but urban-dwellers are still human and humans are just wild animals at heart. While the folks in Cidade Portuária might seem fat and happy and high on the food chain to someone from a farming village, but then you gotta ask the question, what did they do to get there and what do they do to stay there?

EXT. MALECÓN - LATER

Lady walks home along the ocean. She sees two MEDICS moving a body. Lady glimpses the face and it looks eerily like Mr. Bauer's lover, in an unfortunately similar position to the compromising photograph. As Lady looks at her, we feel the dead woman is staring back at us until the medics cover her face.

Not looking where she's going, Lady trips over a lump of rags and falls to the ground, catching herself with her hands and accumulating her second wound for the evening.

Lady pulls a handkerchief out of her bag and dabs at the blood on her hands. She hears MOANING and turns to see that the bundle of rags is a HOMELESS WOMAN lying on the ground.

HOMELESS WOMAN

You kicked me.

LADY

You're lying in the middle of the sidewalk and I tripped.

HOMELESS WOMAN

I'm hurt.

LADY
 (not sorry)
 I'm sorry about that.

The homeless woman shakes an empty bottle at Lady.

HOMELESS WOMAN
 I need medicine.

Lady looks around her. She sees other homeless people under ragged blankets, lying as still as the dead.

The Homeless Woman begins to hum a melancholy song to herself as Lady eyes a faded billboard advertising Cidade Portuaria with the tagline, "Your secrets are safe with us." It depicts revelers dancing on the beach in the background while a man, with his arms around two women, winks back at us as they make their way towards the party.

A group of teenagers deface a royal blue campaign poster for Acorporaçao, the logo is a stark urban skyline, rising out of the sea.

In the distance, Lady sees the PORT, with stacks of shipping containers and docked freighter ships. Lady looks sad for her city.

She sees the MEDICS who are leaned against their ambulance, smoking, next to the body of the young woman.

LADY
 (to herself)
 How did she die?

HOMELESS WOMAN
 They all die the same in this
 neighborhood. Overdose.

Lady taps her hand against her side. Thinking. She moves quickly towards a PHONE BOOTH and steps inside.

The Homeless Woman continues to sing her song of suffering.

HOMELESS WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Cuidado Menina, Cuidado menina,
 Quem ve caras, Nao ve coração...

INT./EXT. MALECÓN (PHONE BOOTH) - LATER

Lady speaks quietly into the phone.

LADY
He told me it was all being
coordinated through The
Guard...Through Leo.

INT./EXT. STATELY STREET (PHONE BOOTH) - SAME

Captain is in his dressing gown in a phone booth outside a
stately home on a tree-lined street.

CAPTAIN
That idiot couldn't coordinate an
outfit.

INTERCUT LADY AND CAPTAIN

LADY
Yes, but should you look into it?
He had evidence.

CAPTAIN
You really want to take him down.

LADY
Absolutely. Don't you?

CAPTAIN
I live by the keep-your-friends-
close-keep-your-enemies-closer
credo.

LADY
Right. Ok.

CAPTAIN
It's all yours. I know you're
getting itchy to do something
meaningful. Go crack open a real
case. And this just might get you
back in the good books.

As Lady shifts, her shirt moves and reveals that she too has
a fleur de lis tattoo.

LADY
Thank you, Captain.

CAPTAIN
But Lady, be smart. Be careful.

INT. CIDADE JORNAL - LATER

FLORENCE, a middle-aged woman who's seen it all and doesn't like what she sees, sits at her desk in the mostly empty newsroom typing with one hand and eating chips with the other.

LADY (O.S.)

Florence.

Florence yelps and throws her chips in the air. When she sees Lady standing in front of her, her face settles into a decidedly grumpy frown.

FLORENCE

There's an invention called a phone.

LADY

This is on my way home. You want a scoop?

Florence continues eating potato chips and SLURPS her coffee.

FLORENCE

Like the last time?

Lady suppresses a smile.

LADY

I wasn't trying to manipulate you, Florence. Only help my client. Listen, I'll tell you what I know and you make the call whether you want to be there. Do you have a pen?

Florence rolls her eyes as she grabs a pen. What a dumb question.

EXT. PIER 42 - THE FOLLOWING EVENING

Lady, both hands bandaged now, peers from behind a shipping container, watching as crates are unloaded from boat to truck, under the guidance of several Guard officers.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

And so Lady has laid the game in which she hopes to catch a rook, using her best pieces.

Through binoculars, Lady sees a police officer pry open a wooden crate, taste the contents and smile at his colleague. Lady goes to her bag and removes her camera, when...

FLORENCE (O.S.)
Looks promising.

Lady starts. Florence stands close behind her watching the unloading and loading. She has a medium format camera around her neck and smiles at Lady's surprise. Lady rolls her eyes and puts her own camera away.

LADY
Maybe.

Lady's POV through the binoculars: Leo, in civilian clothes, reaches into the open crate and takes a bagful of the crystals inside. He walks out of sight.

LADY (CONT'D)
Did you see?

Florence shakes her head no.

LADY (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
Come on.

Lady walks quickly to get Leo back in her sights. Lady climbs to the top of a shipping container where she can look down on Leo standing over the Homeless Woman who Lady tripped over the night before.

The Homeless Woman pours two-toned crystals into a piece of foil, lights the bottom and inhales the resulting smoke through a glass tube. Florence finally reaches Lady a moment too late to see. Lady points towards Leo.

LEO
Well?

The Homeless Woman smiles at him, relieved.

HOMELESS WOMAN
I feel better.

Lady climbs back down from the shipping container and approaches the group of Guard officers as they load the last of the crates into the truck. Leo arrives at the group at the same time.

LADY

(to Leo)

I told you, you would curse the day
you met me.

LEO smiles wide.

LEO

Eh! It's bush girl. What are you
tiptoeing around here for?
Shouldn't you be on a stakeout to
incriminate some gold-digging night-
woman?

The officers in The Guard LAUGH. Lady walks over to a crate
and snatches a crowbar out of the hands of one of the
giggling officers.

LADY

Oh, Leo. We'll see who's laughing
when this is over.

She smashes open the crate.

Cheap plastic doll parts pour out all over the dirty
pavement. Unfazed, she uses the crowbar to smack at the pile,
breaking several toy parts.

Florence has arrived on the scene and takes photos.

Lady climbs into the truck and opens another crate. No one
moves to stop her. She kicks two crates out of the back of
the truck. They break on the ground and plastic toys and bags
of cheap candy spill out. Lady now notices, that one or two
of the guard officers are eating from bags of candy. She
takes in the scene before her. Doubt fills her face.

Florence snaps a photo.

LEO

(smiling wide)

Why are you destroying the youth
shipment? Don't you remember what
it was like to be poor with no
playthings or sweeties? I'll have
to discipline you for all this
damage and ruckus.

Lady blinks as Florence's camera flash goes off in her face.

FLORENCE

Thanks for the scoop.

In the distance, unseen by Lady, an identical truck surrounded by Guard officers, drives off.

Lady looks towards the shipping container where the Homeless Woman's body is slumped over. Lights from the passing truck illuminate her face and her glassy, empty stare.

Florence looks at Lady with a sort-of-smile on her face and continues to take photos of Lady standing amidst the damage.

STORYTELLER (O.S.)

It's a hard lesson when we think
rather well of our skills, only to
be shown incontrovertible proof
that we can be easily
outmaneuvered.

INT. LADY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Voyeuristic photos of people in compromising positions dry on a clothing line in Lady's kitchen like a series of bad romance-noir covers. Lady cradles the phone against her ear.

LADY

...all that to say, I'm sorry. I
got a bad tip.

INSERT - CIDADE JORNAL NEWSPAPER

A photo of Lady at the pier graces the front page, along with the headline "Private Detective Destroys Sheena Children's Donation for The Townships" by Florence Patel

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

I gave you permission to chase this
down and you brought a jorno?

LADY

...I thought you'd want it on the
record.

CAPTAIN

My protection is like an umbrella.
If you move outside the area of
coverage, you get wet.

LADY

Leo put on a show though. He did
have some drugs. It's like it was
for my benefit. It felt like a
trap.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)
You've had it out for Leo for a long time and he knows it. You made some rash decisions. That's been a pattern with you lately.

LADY
...Ok, Cap. You're right. Sorry again.

Lady hangs up.

LADY (CONT'D)
Stay in your lane, Lady.

Lady pushes the paper away and takes a bite of toast as she stares out the window at a bird in a tree.

The bird flies in and lands on the newspaper, pecking at crumbs. The bird seems to look directly at Lady as it poops on the paper.

LADY (CONT'D)
Stupid bird.

Lady shoos the bird outside and folds the paper over, covering the bird shit.

She looks more closely at the page she just revealed, showing The Obituaries.

INSERT - PHOTO

Ernesto's smiling face looks up at Lady. Lady snatches up her phone.

INT. BISHOP'S KITCHEN - SAME

Bishop wears a head scarf and a robe. She drinks her coffee and reads the newspaper. She also has photographs hanging up to dry in the background, in many ways, Lady's miniature.

BISHOP
To what do I owe the early morning pleasure?

INTERCUT LADY AND BISHOP

Lady stands over her newspaper reading.

LADY
Ernesto Macardo died yesterday after a long battle with addiction.
(MORE)

LADY (CONT'D)

Another victim in the raging drug crisis gripping Cidade Portuária. Back page of the City News.

BISHOP

What raging drug crisis? Ernesto said the drugs hadn't even arrived in Novo Estado.

Bishop looks at her copy of the paper.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

And it looks like he gave you a bad tip. All you found last night were toys and candy?

LADY

Yes, thank you, Ms. Detective-for-the-people.

BISHOP

Why didn't you tell me you were going?

LADY

Macardo...Have you ever heard that last name?

BISHOP

No. He said his name was Saroshe. Why would he lie?

LADY

Macardo is familiar to me...Mr. Night could help.

BISHOP

I'm sure he could.

LADY

It's unavoidable. I'll have to pay him a visit. Call you back.

BISHOP

Unavoidable, is it?

Lady has already hung up, leaving Bishop listening to a dial tone.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

At least she's motivated.

INSERT - PLAQUE

Marque Sabana, Novo Estadoan military commander, politician and revolutionary who led Novo Estado to freedom and established the Acorporaçao party for the people.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA PLAZA - LATER

Above the plaque, an imposing statue of Marque Sabana, a young, tall, strong-looking man wearing a camouflage uniform, holding an AK-47 in one hand and a farm tool in the other and standing guard in front of an imposing, yet crumbling neoclassical building in a large square.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

When has a big bronze statue ever aged well? This guy *was* a revolutionary and he *did* establish the Acorporaçao party for the people, but he died richer than the colonial governor he overthrew, ruling over a populace poorer than before the revolution.

A furtive youth plasters the statue with a forest green poster that reads "La Jefa" with a silhouette of a woman, fist raised.

INT. ARMAND PODERET'S OFFICE - SAME

Leo saunters into a luxurious office, filled with cultural artifacts and a man in an expensive suit, Armand PODERET. Leo sits across from Poderet, opens a box on the desk, selects a cigar for himself and begins smoking without invitation.

LEO

Someone needs a spanking.

PODERET

Please excuse me, but I'm not sure who you are?

LEO

Cut the jabber. I know you pretend to be holed up in this museum all day, but your ears are on the street more than anyone.

The two men wait each other out. Poderet sits in stillness while Leo fidgets and moves around.

PODERET

I like Detective Maclava's style. A discrete servant of the bourgeois elite. Who will spy on your friends and loved ones, if not her?

Poderet pushes an ashtray towards Leo.

LEO

(laughing)

Ah see see. The ruse has been dropped! The man knows all.

(sobering up)

She's a liability. We have to castrate her.

Poderet frowns at Leo.

PODERET

A threatened bee will sting, while an unmolested one will go on making you honey.

LEO

Your softness works on the ministers, whose greatest fear is missing dinner, but Lady is hot pink in a rainbow. Unexpected. Unheard of. Are you getting my transmission? She's hungry like a tiger on a vegetable diet.

PODERET

What we detest in others is that which we fear in ourselves.

Leo slams his fist on Poderet's desk. Poderet does not flinch.

LEO

Maclava went after the Guard again!

Poderet gestures to a newspaper on his desk.

PODERET

And found nothing.

LEO

There's too much gold on the table to let Lady come in telling tales of false idols. La Jefa is gaining weight. Our enemies circle.

Leo takes a folded paper out of his breast pocket and hands it to Armand Poderet.

PODERET

Well. I won't pass up an opportunity to be owed a favor.

Poderet signs the paper and hands it back. We see briefly that Lady's name is mentioned.

LEO

I owe no man a debt. Here I am, opening your eyes to how the tough ones do it. Showing you how to walk the walk. Favor me, for showing you what it takes to come out top dog.

Leo leaves his cigar smoking in the ashtray and walks out.

Poderet watches him go with mild curiosity.

EXT. NOVO ESTADO NATIONAL LIBRARY - NIGHT

Lady approaches a turn-of-the-century European-style building.

INT. NOVO ESTADO NATIONAL LIBRARY - NIGHT

CHESTER Night, early forties and energetic, speaks on the phone as he quickly skims an open book at the reference desk in a large library that looks like it was richly furnished decades ago but is now showing all the signs of wear.

We see the page he's reading from titled 'MegAgra', including a blurb and a map of all its locations.

CHESTER

MegAgra has been doing business in Novo Estado for almost 50 years, since the end of colonial rule. It was established in Thirstheart, in Estado, and is still based there...No, it's not a Novoestadoan company...Thank you for calling. Good evening.

Chester puts the phone down and wonders aloud to ELIZABETH, a smartly dressed twenty-something librarian nearby.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

So many calls about MegAgra from the campo. Odd isn't it?

Before Elizabeth can answer, the phone rings again.

CHESTER (CONT'D)
Hoot Owl Hotline at Novo Estado
National Library. What answers may
I provide?

Lady turns on the light in the phone booth in the lobby of the library and Chester sees her. He smiles sadly as Lady's voice comes through the phone.

LADY
I have a mystery for you.

CHESTER
Mystery is your modus operandi.

LADY
Truly.

Lady hangs up and approaches Chester.

CHESTER
Long time.

LADY
I've been so...

CHESTER
Busy.

LADY
Yes.

CHESTER
How is your dad-o?

LADY
He died.

Chester puts his hand on top of Lady's.

CHESTER
I'm so sorry. Who is taking care of
you?

Lady takes her hand away.

LADY
Long before my father died, I was
taking care of myself.

CHESTER
I meant, do you have support?

LADY
I'm fine Mr. Night.

CHESTER
I'm glad. Well then, Ms. Maclava,
what can I help you with?

The phone RINGS.

CHESTER (CONT'D)
Elizabeth? Can you take charge of
the phones for a while?

Elizabeth, emerges from the stacks and answers an already
ringing phone.

ELIZABETH
Hoot Owl Hotline at Novo Estado
National Library. How can I help?

Lady scrutinizes Elizabeth.

CHESTER
Ms. Maclava?

LADY
Right. I need to review the country
genealogy records. I heard the
government keeps highly detailed
accounts of its citizens' ancestry.

Chester pulls Lady quickly out of ear shot of anyone in the
room and walks briskly through a door and down a hall. Lady
jogs a little to keep up.

They pass a YOUNG PERSON putting 'La Jefa' flyers inside of
books.

CHESTER
I don't know what you're talking
about and if the government did
have records, they certainly
wouldn't keep them here.

LADY
Where...

Chester puts his finger to her mouth, silently shushing her.
He points to audio recording devices around the room.

An armed MAN IN GUARD UNIFORM eyes Lady and Chester as he
passes, patrolling through the library, of all places.

CHESTER

If you want to know about your
family tree, go find the oldest
person in your family and ask them.
I'm sorry I couldn't be more
helpful.

Chester looks around before pulling Lady into a
claustrophobic room, filled with shelves of institutional-
looking tomes. He writes on a piece of scrap paper with a
pencil.

CHESTER (V.O.)

Most of the library is under
surveillance.

Lady writes back.

LADY (V.O.)

Why?

Chester writes.

CHESTER (V.O.)

Wisdom can set you free and is
therefore dangerous to the state.

Chester rips up the paper and points to the placards on the
shelves indicating the alphabetic organization. Lady walks to
the 'M' section and pulls down a volume, setting it on the
table.

Lady opens the book, finds Macardo and follows along to
village of origin, "Amada".

Lady looks up to Chester in surprise. Chester looks at where
she's pointing and goes to another section labelled
'Genealogy by village'.

He opens a volume to a beautifully drawn tree that shows all
the family connections in Amada. As Chester holds the book
open, Lady finds Macardo and then Maclava. They are shoulder
to shoulder and the tension between them is palpable.

Lady separates from Chester and takes out her camera. Chester
picks up and opens a large volume. As Lady snaps a photo of
the Amada page, Chester closes the volume loudly to cover the
sound.

Lady looks at Chester, trying to say everything she wants to
say with her eyes.

Chester nods his acceptance of her silent professions and
Lady leaves.

INT. LADY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lady is developing the photos she took at the library when there's a knock at the door. She opens the door to the Captain hulking in the frame, hat in hand.

LADY

Bad news.

Captain nods as he enters.

CAPTAIN

I did everything I could, but the ministers want someone to be held responsible. They want to make an example of you, so no other citizen detective is tempted to take on The Guard.

LADY

Can't you protect me? I've done everything you've asked me to. For years.

The captain opens a box on Lady's kitchen counter. He removes a cigar and puts it in his mouth, waiting. Lady fishes a lighter out of her pocket and lights it for him.

CAPTAIN

Everything I've asked you to do was to shield the people of Novo Estado from criminals. And now I'm here to give you advanced warning.

LADY

But you could help me if you wanted to.

CAPTAIN

You let your personal feelings get in the way. I thought you had mastered yourself, but I was wrong.

Lady stares lost in thought before straightening up and putting on her brave face.

LADY

I understand. You've protected me and now I'm on my own.

CAPTAIN

Don't be like that.

LADY

I'm speaking the truth. You owe me nothing. Thank you for being like...like a father to me.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

She means it.

Captain looks taken aback. He looks around the room, searching for words.

CAPTAIN

You're welcome...Listen you'll have to accept what the ministers decide regarding the port incident, but you can do yourself a favor by not digging any deeper.

LADY

I understand.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Lady moves through the street and into a brick building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - LATER

Lady attempts to pick the lock of a door when the door opposite opens and an OLDER MAN steps out into the hallway. Lady walks away from the man further down the hall.

When the Older Man has rounded the corner, Lady returns and enters apartment #37.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Lady enters a small one-bedroom apartment that has all the trappings of a bachelor's pad. A couch, a TV, a takeout box on the coffee table.

The incongruity is a large book shelf on the far wall that looks like it belongs in a museum. One shelf contains masks, another intricate ceramics, a third ornate jewelry. Lady looks over the artifacts with curiosity but stops cold when she sees a ceramic miniature of a village with an arched sign over the entrance that reads, Amada. Frozen, she stares at the village miniature.

Lady is set back into motion when she hears singing coming from the hallway. Like lightning she steps into a closet as Leo enters the apartment, continuing to sing an old lullaby.

LEO
Minha pomba preta, quero te
encontrar, ela foi embora pra outro
lugar

Leo takes off his jacket and collapses on the couch, exhausted. His gaze falls on his shelf of treasures right next to the closet. Lady can see him through the slats as he gets up and walks over to the shelf until they are inches from each other.

Leo puts on a mask bearing an expression of agony and continues to sing his song as he does a menacing kind of war-dance. He's interrupted by the phone RINGING.

LEO (CONT'D)
Gods!

Leo grabs the phone and answers without taking off the mask. He faces the closet as he talks.

LEO (CONT'D)
Leo speaking...indeed, I do...I
love our adventures...I'm already
there.

Leo hangs up and jingles his keys in his pocket as he walks to the closet.

He opens the closet and would be face to face with Lady if he weren't busy removing his mask and putting it back on the shelf. Before he turns back to the closet he sees his jacket draped over a kitchen chair.

LEO (CONT'D)
Jacket!

Leo closes the closet, grabs his coat and goes out of the apartment. Lady, still in the dark breathes out heavily.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUÁRIA TRAIN STATION - DAY

Lady drinks coffee and watches people bustling past through the crowded train station. Steam trains come and go.

BISHOP
Lady!

Bishop is running towards Lady, jostling people along the way.

LADY
What is it?

BISHOP
They want to take away your
license.

Bishop shoves a letter into Lady's hands.

INSERT - LETTER

On the official letterhead of The Office of the High Court of
Novo Estado.

Lady scans the letter quickly.

LADY
(reading)
...is ordered to stand trial for
interfering in the business of The
Cidade Portuária Shipping
Association and destruction of
private property. Her license to
practice private investigation is
hereby suspended until said
trial...

BISHOP
A guard officer delivered it by
hand to the office.

LADY
OK. I'll pay you through the next
month and give you a
recommendation.

BISHOP
Thanks, but...there's nowhere else
to go.

Lady pauses. An idea. The right one.

LADY
Take over the shop.

BISHOP
Lady...

LADY
We'll sort it out in a few days,
ok?

A bell TOLLS and a train billows steam. Lady looks at the
train preparing to leave the station and gathers herself.

BISHOP
(a little flustered)
Going somewhere?

LADY
The best coffee in the city is in
this station. So I often come here,
and have a cup...

BISHOP
I thought carry-away coffee gave
you a stomach-ache.

LADY
Everything gives me a stomach-ache.
I come here to watch the comings
and goings of my fellow Novo
Estadoans, always feeling apart
from them, because I'm already
here, in the capital, where I'm
meant to be. I don't need to scurry
from place to place anymore. Even
when Amada was destroyed, I stayed
here, in Cidade Portuária. But now
I'm thinking maybe it's a gilded
cage.

BISHOP
It is boss.

Lady has a thousand yard stare and continues as though Bishop
didn't speak.

LADY
I paid to have dad-o's ashes
shipped to me, so I wouldn't have
to go and see and remember. But, my
sweet innocent Bishop, it seems the
earth from which I sprang, isn't
done with me yet.

Lady gets up and boards the train.

BISHOP
I'll come with you!

But the doors are already closing.

Bishop watches as the train pulls away.

FLORENCE (O.S.)
I got pictures.

Bishop startles and then rounds angrily on Florence who is standing there with a camera around her neck.

BISHOP

Of course you did, Florence. It's what you do. Snoop around and take photos.

FLORENCE

You're confused. That's what you and Miss Lady do. I am a journalist. I find the truth.

Bishop walks away without bothering to respond.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

(calling after her)

La Jefa is getting stronger. Tell your partner.

BISHOP

(calling back)

I don't have partners. I have masters.

INT. TRAIN - MOMENTS LATER

Lady selects a seat and settles in. Two Guard officers enter the car and Lady turns her face away. After they pass, she turns and watches them.

Lady turns her attention to the swiftly passing scenery out the window.

A woman balancing a basket on her head, walks in the opposite direction of the train.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

Lady, wearing a Guard uniform and sweating, walks quickly towards the door of an abandoned factory.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

Lady enters slowly with her weapon drawn. A SHOT echoes in the empty space.

Lady runs towards the sound and rounds a corner to see a dead woman tied to a chair and a MAN IN GUARD UNIFORM holding a gun.

The Man in Guard Uniform raises his weapon towards Lady, but she is fast. She shoots and kills him. We see Lady's gun is marked with the etching of a cashew tree.

Lady turns away from the scene, still sweating and breathing heavily but stony-faced.

BEGIN FLASHBACK WITHIN A FLASHBACK:

EXT. NOVO ESTADO FOREST - DAY

A YOUNG CHILD (we cannot determine the gender) with close cropped hair is sweating and breathing heavily. We see the child is holding a gun marked with the etching of a cashew tree. We see the child raise it shakily. We hear SCREAMING. The child pulls the trigger.

END FLASHBACK WITHIN A FLASHBACK:

INT. CIDADE PORTUÁRIA GUARD OFFICES - DAY

A framed photo of the Man in Guard Uniform who Lady killed is on a table in the Guard offices, surrounded by flowers and candles. Officers work in the bull pen while, behind a wall of glass, Lady sits in a chair across from Captain, dressed in Guard uniform. Captain towers over Lady and yells in her face for the whole office to see.

INT. CIDADE PORTUÁRIA GUARD OFFICES - CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - SAME

LADY

He was a monster.

CAPTAIN

His father is the head of the biggest employer in the country and one of the Guard's biggest allies. Someone has to take responsibility.

LADY

You sent me...

CAPTAIN

You murdered one of your own. Even if I wanted to keep you on, the other officers would mutiny. They don't feel safe.

LADY
Captain...

Captain has angled his body so his back faces the bull pen.

CAPTAIN
(quietly)
You kill too easily. I've seen you.
It's not just one incident.

LADY
I'm trying...

Lady kicks over a chair in frustration.

CAPTAIN
This is what I mean. You don't fit
here. We protect the people.

LADY
This is the only place I fit.

Lady gestures at the officers.

LADY (CONT'D)
Every one of those officers is a
killer.

CAPTAIN
Listen. You're not losing me as a
friend. Think about the private
sector. We could help each other. I
can use your talents for things
that can't be done in the public
eye.

Lady looks slightly stunned.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(whispering)
A life of service.

Captain gestures to the motto on the wall in the station that
reads, "A life of service." Lady stands up, resolved.

LADY
A life of service.

Lady makes to leave.

CAPTAIN
Lady, your badge and gun.

Lady tenderly puts her badge on the Captain's desk.

LADY

The gun is mine. I've had it since
I was a child.

Lady takes the bullets out of the gun.

LADY (CONT'D)

But you can have these. I'm done
killing.

Lady exits the office and walks past the officers in the
bullpen who stare silently after her. Leo stands by the
doorway.

LEO

See you never, I hope.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. TRAIN - SAME

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

A person can live many lives and
still not be the best version of
themselves. No one walks a linear
path. All we can do is look
backwards from our death bed. Only
then can we see.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

Now approaching, Amada.

Lady exits the train.

EXT. AMADA STATION - SAME

Lady walks away from the train station, past the ticket booth
where the TICKET SELLER eyes her as she passes.

EXT. DIRT PATH - LATER

Lady walks down a path lined with native plants, sweating in
her silk blouse and tailored suit.

EXT. AMADA VILLAGE - LATER

Lady stands looking out over what used to be a village. An
arched sign over the village entrance reads, Amada. Huts
burnt and destroyed everywhere.

Household items broken and left to decay out in the open. Lady thinks she can hear screams of agony drifting on the breeze. Her face is hard.

Lady walks with purpose to one hut. There is no door and the walls are precarious but the roof remains. She goes inside.

INT. HUT - SAME

Lady walks around the small space. There is a framed photo of a WOMAN, wearing a wedding ring and holding an infant, and another of the Young Child from Lady's flashback and the man from the photo on Lady's office altar. Lady takes both of the photos out of their frames and tucks them in her bag.

She runs her fingers along a book shelf and selects a book titled 'Eden Noir' by Surety Ngwenya. She opens the book which is not a book, but a hiding place. She takes out the ring that the Woman in the picture was wearing and puts it on her own finger.

Lady turns around and her eyes fall on a spot on the wall with a splatter of dried blood. Her face breaks and her body is racked with a silent scream before she breathes in sharply and recomposes herself.

Lady walks out of the hut into the too-bright sunlight.

EXT. AMADA VILLAGE - SAME

Lady walks around the ghost town.

LADY

Hello?

INT. VILLAGE COMMUNITY BUILDING - SAME

Lady enters one of the only concrete structures. A school and community center.

A few flyers are posted on a bulletin board. Most homemade. One printed.

INSERT: FLYER - "Cotton is king again. Find out how you can profit." A logo that says MegAgra is on the bottom.

LADY

Hello? Ola?

EXT. AMADA VILLAGE - SAME

Lady walks to the outer edge of the village abutting a forest. She calls out to the emptiness.

LADY
Is no one left?

A twig snaps behind Lady and she spins around. She sees movement in the trees and moves towards the forest.

LADY (CONT'D)
Don't leave. I need your help.

An OLDER WOMAN comes out from behind a tree and beckons to Lady silently. Lady enters the forest.

EXT. AMADA FOREST - SAME

When Lady's eyes adjust to the shade of the trees, she sees the Older Woman who called her, and a dozen others carrying baskets and foraging for roots, berries and fungi.

LADY
Auntie, Are you from Amada?

The Woman looks blankly at Lady.

LADY (CONT'D)
(in a tribal language)
Are you from here?

The woman nods her head. Lady takes out the newspaper obituary with Ernesto's photo and shows it to the Woman.

LADY (CONT'D)
(in a tribal language)
I'm looking for this man's family.

The Woman points to an older man.

Lady walks over to the elder, who gathers food as Lady speaks to him.

LADY (CONT'D)
Tio? What are you doing in the forest?

TIO

Look with your eyes, girl. They destroyed our farms, our gardens, our homes. The forest is the only place to find food.

LADY

Nobody lives in this place anymore? You won't rebuild?

TIO

No. We got the message the first time.

LADY

Did you know my father?

Lady holds the photo from her father's hut out to Tio. He looks and nods.

TIO

You're Lady. He nattered on about you constantly. But you haven't been back since...Our grandfathers were brothers. My son, Ernesto and my daughter Fallah, are your cousins.

LADY

Ernesto Macardo.

TIO

He went to the city to be in the Guard. Your father would tell all the children in the village about your adventures and Ernesto couldn't get enough. He followed you.

Tio smiles, remembering his child.

LADY

It is my duty to tell you, Uncle. Ernesto is dead.

Lady holds out the obituary to him. Tio sways. Lady catches him and lowers him to the ground. She offers him a cigarette which he accepts.

They sit together on the ground smoking.

TIO

The gods are angry with us. They
come to our homes in the night to
murder us. They take my son.

LADY

It wasn't the gods, it was weak
humans grasping at power.

Lady lets Tio have a moment, then...

LADY (CONT'D)

Do you know what your son was doing
in the Guard? He sent me on a wild
goose chase that got me suspended,
and then he turns up dead.

Tio's stare turns cold. FALLAH, a younger woman listening to
the conversation, approaches timidly. She is unkempt and
appears off-balance.

FALLAH

My brother was investigating the
Guard. They are smuggling drugs
into the country.

TIO

You're a fool, Fallah.

Fallah ignores her father and continues her wild-eyed rant at
Lady. Fallah stands too close and speaks too loudly, not
noticing or caring that everyone has stopped to watch her.

FALLAH

He wrote me letters.

Fallah pulls a roll of letters out of her bag. She hands one
to Lady.

FALLAH (CONT'D)

The Roman States are exporting
their prison systems and a private
prison requires criminals to fill
it up.

She hands another letter to Lady.

FALLAH (CONT'D)

So the Guard bolsters the drug
trade and boost arrests.

Fallah takes the letter back from Lady and opens it. There
are pages of data. She shows them to Lady.

FALLAH (CONT'D)
There's proof.

Fallah shows another page.

FALLAH (CONT'D)
The state profits from the prisons
and the Guard receives an even
bigger share of government funding.

LADY
(disdainfully)
You're very like your brother.

FALLAH
Ernestinho knew the Guard was
rotten, but he stayed so that he
would have enough information to
burn it all down.

LADY
Alone?

FALLAH
There are others. There are always
more oppressed than oppressor. We
just have to unite.

TIO
(to Lady)
My son never would have given you
bad information. I know that.

FALLAH
Ernestinho was also investigating
what happened here.

LADY
What happened in Amada? The
opposition party killed everyone
and burned this place to the
ground. We know Modelo Nordico is
responsible.

Fallah puts her basket down and looks at Lady directly for
the first time.

FALLAH
Why would Modelo Nordico attack us?
They're fighting for the people.

LADY
(sharply to Teenager)
The people?!
(MORE)

LADY (CONT'D)

You're too young to remember the long reign of terror from Modelo Nordico. They took me as a child a few years younger than you and forced me into their army.

Lady shows the picture of her father with the short-haired child.

LADY (CONT'D)

I had lice and decided the quickest relief was to shave my head. When Modelo Nordico came to Amada the first time, I was playing soccer with the village children and they collected all the boys and mistakenly took me with them. My childhood ended in an instant.

Lady snaps her fingers in front of the Fallah's face.

FALLAH

Why didn't you tell them you were a boy?

LADY

Better to be a soldier than the alternative.

The older folks murmur agreement.

LADY (CONT'D)

They're animals and they are doing it all over again. They are why Eden will never progress.

The Older Woman nods her head sadly.

TIO

So it is.

FALLAH

ThirstHeart is why we'll never progress.

LADY

(threatening)

That's an old excuse. We've been in charge of our own destiny for years and haven't done any better than Thirstheart did. If I know anything, I know Modelo Nordico is the enemy.

EXT. AMADA VILLAGE - LATER

As Lady walks swiftly back through the village, muttering to herself about wasted time, a MAN IN COVERALLS smashes the fence surrounding the community with a sledgehammer. In the fields next door a massive tractor churns the earth and prepares it for planting. There is a MegAgra logo on the side.

LADY
(calling out)
What are you doing?

The Man In Coveralls looks up and walks towards Lady.

LADY (CONT'D)
Why are you destroying the village?

The Man In Coveralls doesn't answer but continues to walk towards Lady, holding his sledgehammer.

LADY (CONT'D)
Who are you?

The Man in Coveralls breaks into a run. Lady turns and flees. She runs through the field and the Man in Coveralls follows.

EXT. AMADA FIELD - SAME

As Lady puts distance between herself and the Man in Coveralls, the Tractor makes a turn to pursue her. The Tractor closes in and almost plows over Lady when she reaches the safety of the forest. She yells at the Amadans.

LADY
Run! They're coming!

The Amadans scatter.

EXT. AMADA FOREST - SAME

Lady runs as quickly as she can through the trees. She hears screams behind her and heavy breathing closing in on her. Branches rip at her clothes and her face.

EXT. AMADA STATION - TWILIGHT

A train waits at the station. The Man in Coveralls watches the station with great attention. A bell signals the train's imminent departure.

Lady emerges from the cover of the trees, dashes past the Ticket Seller and runs onto the train just as the doors close.

Lady looks out the window at the Man in Coveralls and he looks back at her. In an instant he slams his sledgehammer into the doors. The glass splinters but doesn't shatter as Lady recoils away from it. As the train pulls away, the Man in Coveralls stares after Lady, who doesn't look away.

INT. SAUDADES - LATER

Lady moves through a packed dance floor, cleaned up, freshly bandaged and wearing a dress, as music with a deep bass track vibrates through the speakers. Lady holds a drink and smokes as she collapses into a booth, alone. She watches the bar patrons dance with abandon while she remains coiled tight.

PODERET
Detective Maclava?

Lady smiles curtly at the well-dressed older man in front of her, Armand Poderet.

PODERET (CONT'D)
I'm Armand Poderet, Secretary of
Trade for the Acorporaçao party.

LADY
You mean for the Novo Estadoan
government?

PODERET
Indeed.

Poderet sits and gestures to Lady's ring.

PODERET (CONT'D)
Amadan isn't it?

Lady nods.

PODERET (CONT'D)
I'm a connoisseur of the many
cultures of Novo Estado. It's my
business to know our country and
its people. I'm always thinking,
what do we have to offer, what do
we need to grow?

LADY
That sounds wise.

PODERET

I'm not wise. I just can't stop the wheels turning in this old brain. I'm always trying to envision something better.

LADY

How can I help you, Mr. Secretary?

PODERET

I have a case. It concerns the Cap...

LADY

I'll stop you right there. My license has been suspended.

PODERET

My colleagues tell me you're the best. Very discrete. Very resourceful. And as a higher up in the government, I'm certain I could have your license reinstated.

Lady looks Poderet in his eyes and holds his gaze. Searching.

PODERET (CONT'D)

There's so much I can influence. So many services I provide. I could get you out of jail. I could get you out of the country if I wanted to.

LADY

I think the powers that be want me to accept my punishment with humility and resignation.

PODERET

Beware those that seem to be your friend, Lady. You do not see the wolves in your house. I do.

LADY

I'm starting to.

Lady sees Chester crossing the packed dance floor.

LADY (CONT'D)

If you'll excuse me, I see a true friend.

Poderet produces a business card and hands it to Lady.

PODERET

Take my card. I need someone with your talents in my corner and you probably need someone with my talents in yours.

Lady smiles at him.

LADY

Thanks. It was nice to meet you, Mr. Poderet.

Lady slides out of the booth and walks towards the dance floor. She makes her way to the center and to Chester. She takes his hand and pulls him into a dance. He obliges delightedly.

CHESTER

Where did you come from?

LADY

The past.

CHESTER

And you've arrived in the present finally?

LADY

Not yet. I'm still stuck on ancient history, aren't I?

CHESTER

That's up to you.

Chester breaks the spell of intimacy their close dancing has cast, by spinning Lady away from him. Their dance becomes fun and impressive and draws eyes from the crowd around them.

When the music ends, Chester and Lady make their way smiling to the bar. Lady buys drinks. When she pays, the photo of her and her father falls out of her wallet.

Chester snatches it up.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

You and dad-o?

Lady snatches the photo back. She looks at it and softens.

LADY

I held a grudge against him until the day he died. That's why I joined up with the Guard.

CHESTER

The moment when we realize our
parents can no longer protect us,
creates a rift. Maybe it can only
be healed if you become a parent
yourself and realize how powerless
you are to keep your own child
safe.

Lady's attention is drawn to the door where Malika has just entered, looking nervous. She pays for a takeout order.

LADY

(to Chester)

Thank you for the dance. I've got
to run.

CHESTER

Wait...

Lady kisses him on the cheek and follows Malika out of the bar.

EXT. SAUDADES - SAME

It's foggy. Lady looks around and spots the shadow of Malika rounding a corner. She trots to catch up to her. When Lady rounds the corner, Malika is far ahead of her. Lady picks up the pace. Malika takes another turn. Lady follows her and calls out down the street.

LADY

I just want to talk.

Malika turns to look at her and waits for her to catch up.

LADY (CONT'D)

(breathless)

You fixed your patch.

Malika doesn't answer, but turns and keeps walking.

LADY (CONT'D)

I want to help.

MALIKA

Help who?

LADY

You people. Ernesto's cause. I
don't know exactly.

MALIKA

He thought you could be brought around. I don't feel the same way.

LADY

Brought around to what?

MALIKA

Helping us fix the problems in Novo Estado.

Lady laughs. Malika picks up the pace leaving her behind. Lady jogs again to keep up.

LADY

Sorry! Sorry. It sounds so naive. Fix the problems in Novo Estado. Where do you even begin?

Malika gestures up to her right.

EXT. NOVO ESTADO GRAVEYARD - SAME

MALIKA

Here.

Malika walks through the gates of the graveyard and the sound of music can be heard before they round the corner where Lady sees the Ousmane Sembene film, 'La Noire', projected onto the wall of a mausoleum.

Lady looks disturbed as she trails Malika through headstones, past people on blankets watching the movie and into an old church.

INT. CHURCH - SAME

MALIKA

(whispers to Lady)
The church.

Lady rolls her eyes, but as she looks around at the church that has been half taken over by nature, she is overwhelmed with the beauty. Dozens of young, hip, people sit in dilapidated pews. Stained glass distorts the light. Folks have brought their own food and drink. It's like an indoor picnic.

In the front, holding a small notebook and speaking to the crowd is MILLIE JORNAL, early forties, wearing a worn but well cared-for suit made of indigenous textile.

MALIKA (CONT'D)
That. Is La Jefa.

Lady whips around in surprise, but Malika has gone to flop down with her friends and is already opening her takeout bag, pulling out drinks and handing them around.

Lady leans uncomfortably against a far wall. She sees Elizabeth from the library who waves at her. TWO YOUNG MEN slip in behind Lady and take seats.

MILLIE JORNAL
What Novo Estado has now for a government is a murderous gang that has slaughtered democracy and cut off its face to wear as a mask.

Affirmations from the crowd.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. NOVO ESTADO FOREST - DAY

We recognize the Young Child holding a gun in Lady's previous flashback, who now wears a mishmash soldiers uniform and stabs a man brutally.

END FLASHBACK

MILLIE JORNAL
What Novo Estado *needs* is for its people to rise up and demand the government work for everyone, not a select few, who cater to powerful men on other continents and pine for a time when colonialism was thriving. This time, imagining themselves as the colonial power, and the people as producers for their ends and always under their boot.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA STREET - EVENING

We recognize a younger Lady in Guard uniform, beating a man on the street senselessly as her colleague looks on with approval.

END FLASHBACK

Lady is intensely focused on Millie Jornal.

MILLIE JORNAL

Look what the government has done to the townships. It rules from the city, keeping us moderately happy by promoting a feeling of superiority over the farmers, the healers and the craftspeople. The laborers. Those who act, those who do. Since when does talk trump action? We have silenced the doers because we love the sound of our own voices.

FLASHBACK:

INT. LADY'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Lady laughs with Mr. Bauer as he shows her a smiling photo of his mistress and then another woman and another. The smile plastered on Lady's face mimics the false smiles of Mr. Bauer's conquests.

END FLASHBACK

The crowd shows their agreement with shouts and applause.

MILLIE JORNAL

So we in the city don't rise up when our ancestral lands are razed to the ground, to plant cotton and mine for precious metals. Neither of which can be eaten. But both can be sold to other countries and the profit goes back to the same dozen or so officials to hoard. No resources ever go back into the townships. No education. No services. Our own Novo Estadoan villages are raped and ravaged, the people discarded.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. AMADA - DAY

The back of Young Child version of Lady looking out over a verdant and bustling Amada.

The back of Lady in her city clothes looking out over a burned-out and deserted Amada.

END FLASHBACK

Lady is now riveted by Millie Jornal's speech. Millie is connecting parts of Lady that have been torn apart for her entire adult life.

Millie closes the speech as though a pastor at her pulpit.

MILLIE JORNAL

Those are my thoughts for the evening. I thank you for ending the day with me and reflecting on the journey that lies ahead. I hope to see you tomorrow. I hope you bring your friends. In closing, "Quia Humanitas"

ALL

Quia Humanitas.

MILLIE JORNAL

Modelo Nordico for the people!

ALL

For the people.

EXT. NOVO ESTADO GRAVEYARD - NIGHT (LATER)

Millie Jornal emerges into the night alone and lights a cigarette. A gun is pointed at her head. She looks into the shadows as Lady steps into the light.

MILLIE JORNAL

Detective Maclava.

LADY

Murderer.

Lady cocks the gun and aims when Malika all of a sudden disarms her from behind.

MALIKA

What is wrong with you?

Lady rubs her wrist.

LADY

I need her to talk.

MALIKA

You only know violence. You need new tools in your toolbox.

LADY
It's not loaded.

Malika checks and then tosses the gun back to Lady,
disgusted.

LADY (CONT'D)
(to Millie)
This new generation. It's like
speaking to a foreigner.

MILLIE JORNAL
I'm starving. Let's find something
to eat. It's harder to kill someone
when you're full. Proven fact.

EXT. MRS. LAFORE'S FOOD CART - LATER

Lady, Millie and Malika accept containers of roasted piri
piri chicken over french fries from an old woman operating a
late night takeout joint out of a makeshift food cart parked
near the graveyard.

The three of them make themselves comfortable as they dig in.
Millie looks at Mrs. Lafore serving Two Young Men from the
church.

MILLIE JORNAL
Best piri piri chicken on the
planet.

Lady stares at Millie, impatient.

MILLIE JORNAL (CONT'D)
You know, Amadans were in support
of Modelo Nordico, just like other
small villages all up and down Novo
Estado, who had been lied to and
disenfranchised by Acorporaçao.
They saw that we were offering
something better.

LADY
Then why did they take me?!

Millie looks at Lady trying to understand and it suddenly
dawns on her.

MILLIE JORNAL
They took my brothers too. Almost
thirty years ago. I never saw them
again.

(MORE)

MILLIE JORNAL (CONT'D)

So maybe come from a place of gratitude, that you have a life at all.

Millie holds Lady's gaze for a moment.

MILLIE JORNAL (CONT'D)

After "independence" the small group of revolutionaries who defeated Estado and called themselves Modelo Nordico, became power drunk and incestuous, fighting each other for power instead of fighting for a better country for all of us.

LADY

I don't need a history lesson. What makes your Modelo Nordico different?

Millie takes her time chewing her chicken. Wielding the power of silence.

MILLIE JORNAL

We'll see. We'll see if we can learn from the mistakes of the past. Right now, I confess we're still on the well-travelled road. It's what happens after our revolution is won that matters. Will we fall into the comfortable trap or will we forge a new path?

Lady, Millie and Malika eat in silence.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

This is where Lady grows a conscience, or rather, when she began to hope. Maybe the two are the same. Hope and conscience. When Lady encountered someone willing to be vulnerable, to say that all they can do is to try their best. She had, up to that point, only heard empty promises.

LADY

If Modelo Nordico didn't destroy Amada, who did?

MILLIE JORNAL

Ernesto was trying to find out. I think he wanted your help with the Guard as a pre-cursor to getting your help with Amada. Both of you were from there. It's fitting that you're continuing his work.

LADY

He was wrong about the drugs.

MALIKA

Are you crazy? We were exactly right about the drugs. We've tracked a delivery from the ports every night since they set you up with the children's shipment. You gave them a distraction and now their operation is running like clockwork.

LADY

Ernesto set me up!

MILLIE JORNAL

Malika went to look for Ernesto. She found his jacket in the alley by Saudades, covered in blood. Yet the papers say overdose. Curious isn't it?

Malika looks at her fingernails, lost in the memory.

LADY

I know the Captain of the Guard. He's been trying to end corruption for decades. I've been helping.

MILLIE JORNAL

And that is why we have misgivings about you, Lady.

Malika riffles through her bag and pulls out a folder of photos. The first shows the Captain at the port next to Leo and a crate that we see is full of drugs.

MALIKA

This is a couple hours after they made you look like a fool.

Lady drops the folder, enraged.

STORYTELLER

This is a moment. Not where Lady becomes better, but where she realizes she has been bad. Not a bad person. Bad at her job. Bad at the thing she took pride in. And maybe for the first time, she asked the question: What does it take to be good?

Millie and Malika continue to show Lady photos. Behind them the Two Young Men eat their food in the shadows, without speaking to each other.

EXT. LADY'S STREET - LATER

Lady is unlocking her door when the Two Young Men from the park approach. One grabs Lady's bag while the other restrains her. The one with her purse punches her hard in the stomach.

STOOGES 1

Time for you to leave Cidade Portuária.

Lady, in a stunningly deft and nimble move, twists out of the first man's grip and pushes him over the railing where he grunts as he lands on his back. Like lightning, Lady punches the second man.

LADY

Who are you?

Lady lunges for the man and grabs his shirt, tearing it. He pushes her away as the first man yells.

STOOGES 2

Let's go!

48 Both men take off running, Lady reaches inside her jacket and pulls out her gun. Breathing heavily, she points it at the retreating men with plenty of time to shoot. She aims at them but doesn't fire. When the men are out of sight Lady lowers her gun and opens the chamber, spinning it to reveal there are no bullets.

Off Lady's face, considering...

INT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Lady and Bishop fire at targets in front of them. They bring their papers forward and Lady's is good, but Bishop's is great.

LADY
I don't know who to believe.

BISHOP
I'm glad my intuition is not total
shit.

LADY
Yes, that's what matters here.

BISHOP
Boss, If I am going to take over
your agency, at the bare minimum, I
should be able to trust my gut.

Lady looks at Bishop and nods her acknowledgement.

LADY
Don't call me boss.

Lady and Bishop unload their guns.

BISHOP
I'm going to miss you.

LADY
I'm not going anywhere. You just
don't work for me anymore.

BISHOP
Right.

Captain and Leo pass by Lady and Bishop too closely, invading their personal space. Lady stares them down. They smile at her. Leo shows her his weapon with the Guard crest on it, a fleur de lis.

LEO
You like our shiny new weapons?
More deadly. For protecting the
people from enemies of the state.

Bishop looks at the target in Leo's hand. He has terrible aim.

BISHOP
I'd be more worried standing next
to an enemy of the state.

The Captain steers Leo away, but he calls back to Lady.

LEO
How's Amada these days?

Lady's eyes bore into the retreating backs of Captain and Leo as Captain smacks Leo on the back of the head and exchanges angry words with him. The Captain turns and winks back at Lady. Bishop takes Lady's arm and steers her the other direction.

INT. CIDADE PORTUÁRIA GUARD OFFICES - DAY

Captain sits at his desk staring down the Two Young Men who attacked Lady. They look battered. Lady's purse is on the desk with the folder of photos given to her by Millie Jornal that incriminate Captain.

CAPTAIN

Thank you, you can go.

When the two men exit and close the door, they reveal Armand Poderet is sitting there at the back of the room.

PODERET

I'm learning so much.

EXT. TRABALHADOR BOROUGH - SAME

Lady walks through a cramped working-class neighborhood. Small living spaces and narrow streets are overflowing with people. Though it is not wealthy, it is colorful and well-loved, filled with plants and greenery. People in this neighborhood are using accessible and sustainable technology.

Lady looks up at a modest building. A MAN sits in front of the entryway, napping.

INT. MACARDO APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Lady knocks on the door of apartment 18. RAMONA, a young woman answers, expressionless.

LADY

Ms. Macardo?

RAMONA

Saroshe. I kept my name.

LADY

I'm Lady Maclava.

RAMONA

The detective. I know.

LADY

Your husband used your name when he introduced himself to me.

RAMONA

He wasn't sure he could trust you yet. He knew all of the cases you worked on and all the people you worked with.

Lady is taken aback but recovers.

LADY

I want to ask you about Ernesto, may I come in?

RAMONA

Let's walk. I can't bear it in here anymore.

Ramona hooks a key into her pocket and disappears for a moment returning with a toddler on her hip. Lady stumbles back as Ramona closes the door.

RAMONA (CONT'D)

This is Marco.

LADY

Hi Marco.

EXT. TRABALHADOR BOROUGH - MOMENTS LATER

Lady, Ramona and Marco emerge from the building, passing the still dozing Man.

LADY

Any idea what Ernesto was working on? Outside of the Guard.

RAMONA

No.

LADY

Do you...need anything?

RAMONA

I need Nesto.

Ramona breaks then. Lady goes to hug her but sees the formerly dozing Man approaching them quickly. Lady changes course and pushes Ramona and Marco out of the way just as the Man reaches them and stabs at them with a knife.

Lady's sudden movement, put her in the knife's path and the blade slashes across her cheek. She CRIES OUT.

A FRUIT VENDOR knocks into the Man before he can attack again and people begin to gather around Lady, Ramona and Marco. The Man flees down the crowded street.

Lady feels gingerly around the wound on her cheek, until the Fruit Vendor bats her hand away, expertly applying a salve before beginning to stitch her up from a kit she pulls from the folds of her skirt. Ramona watches, shaking slightly. Lady and Ramona continue to talk within the protective bubble of the mostly women who surround them.

LADY

(to Ramona)

Do you have somewhere else you can go?

RAMONA

Yes.

LADY

You should go there.

RAMONA

Look around you.

Lady looks at the people surrounding them.

RAMONA (CONT'D)

This is my community. Since Nesto died, they have been there for me. When we were attacked, they protected us. Why would I leave?

LADY

I just mean...

Ramona covertly takes several folded pieces of paper from her pocket.

RAMONA

(whispering)

I'm not telling you what I know. I'm not exposing myself the way that Nesto did. Marco needs one parent at least. But this was in his pocket when he came home from your office. It's from the Captain's log book for the last month. He could have shown you this but he didn't.

LADY

Thank you...

RAMONA

Nesto thought you'd be the one to save Novo Estado. He said you would expose the corruption, connect the urban to the rural, champion the people.

Lady looks at Ramona like she's crazy. The Fruit Vendor finishes her work and places a small black bandage below Lady's eye. The group stays gathered around Lady and Ramona, listening.

LADY

He didn't know me.

RAMONA

I think that's true. But your father told him so many stories about you. You were like a superhero to him. You asked me what I need. I need for Nesto to have been right about you.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

When are we born into our purpose and when is it demanded of us? Lady, a not particularly outstanding detective, who wasn't a particularly outstanding Guard, who wasn't a particularly outstanding soldier and a child of absolute mediocrity is being asked to become great. Those who love us can sell us into bigger lives than we would have chosen for ourselves.

EXT. CROCODILO PARK - LATER

Lady cuts through a crowd gathered in the park for a crocodilo fight. She turns and looks behind her, scanning faces. None look friendly.

Lady passes a caged crocodilo being prodded into a frenzy by its handlers.

Lady looks behind her again but turns back around when she's jostled by a passerby. She feels her side where the person bumped against her and her hand comes away bloody.

Lady looks down at her pocket covered in blood.

The CLANG of metal and the ROAR of the crocodilo as Lady turns towards the animal that has been set free and is heading towards her.

Lady backs up and falls over. She holds her bloody side and feels a lump in the pocket. It's a chunk of raw meat.

The crocodilo snaps at her as she throws the meat at it, scrambles up to her feet and runs, as the handlers reign in the crocodilo behind her.

The crowd has been whipped into a frenzy.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE - EVENING

Lady stands over her desk, hands bandaged, eye bandaged, covered in dirt and blood.

She looks at the pieces of the mystery she hasn't solved: The Captain's log, Ernesto's obituary, the Amadan genealogy, the photos of her father and mother and map of Amada and the letter suspending Lady's license are all laid out.

Lady shoves everything away from her and flops back into her chair.

She picks up the photos of her father and mother and places them on the altar. She picks up the letter there, opens it for the first time and begins to read.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)

My daughter. My heart. I hope this letter finds you thriving in the big city. Here, it is beautiful. Spring has come and we've begun planting.

EXT. AMADA - DAY - FANTASY

We see Amada as it was. A community. Fruit trees. Gardens. Biodiverse fields in the distance. People gathering, working, playing.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)

We had a spot of trouble a few weeks ago, when a tractor arrived and began to plant our fields with cotton. I'm sure you'll at least remember that cotton is no good to eat and therefore useless to our village.

A Tractor arrives in Amada. The same one that chased Lady down.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)
The tractor driver had friends.
Your old colleagues, in fact. Now
what would The Guard be doing in a
rural village? Aren't they law
enforcement for the city?

A number of armed Guard officers stand between the village and their fields as the Tractor does its work.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)
What could we do? We let the
tractor plant and when the seeds
began to sprout we tore the tiny
plants from the earth.

Amadans gather together watching the Tractor plow their fields.

EXT. AMADA - NIGHT - FANTASY

The villagers all work together ripping plants from the fields by firelight.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)
The government must be behind it.
They sell our land to a corporation
and attempt to move us off of it
without choice and without
compensation. We resisted. This is
our home. It has always been our
home. A legacy I meant to leave for
you.

EXT. AMADA - SUNRISE - FANTASY

No one stirs in the village.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)
We have lived and farmed here for
generations. We thought we were
safe from the machinations of the
government, we didn't think we had
anything they would be interested
in.

EXT. AMADA FOREST - FANTASY

Movement in the trees. The glint of an eye or of metal.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)

Well, we were wrong. I was wrong all these years. I thought I was keeping my family and my ancestral land safe by not interfering in politics. I was only burying my head in the sand. I should have learned the first time.

Armed men light torches and move towards the village.

EXT. AMADA - FANTASY

Armed men, carrying the forest green Modelo Nórdico banner, set village buildings on fire. People run from their huts. Guns are fired. There is screaming.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)

This old man has learned a new trick at last. The whole village is supporting Modelo Nórdico. They are not perfect, but they have a plan that will be better for the people of Amada and Novo Estado, not just the people in power.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE - SAME

Lady grabs at the captain's log. She looks back a month to see that he was in Amada.

She grabs her father's letter and continues to read.

EXT. AMADA - FANTASY - SAME

An Armed Man raises his gun. It's a guard-issued weapon, we can see the fleur de lis crest.

LADY'S FATHER (V.O.)

I hope you are safe and well and carrying on the good fight. Come to see me soon, child. Much as you despise the dust of Amada, your Dad-o misses you and needs to look into your eyes once in a while to be happy. All my love, Your Father.

We see who the Armed Man is aiming at. It's Lady's Father. He looks like he knows exactly who has come for him. We see the Armed Man's face, it's Captain. We see Captain fire his gun.

INT. LADY'S OFFICE - SAME

Lady carefully folds the letter and places it back in the envelope. Shaking, she picks up the phone and dials.

INT. MR. BAUER'S OFFICE - SAME

Mr. Bauer is half-naked with a woman half his age when the phone rings. He answers the phone without really pausing what he's doing.

MR. BAUER

Bauer.

INTERCUT LADY AND MR. BAUER

LADY

Mr. Bauer, it's Detective Maclava.

MR. BAUER

Detective, I'm quite busy...

LADY

Can you check your records for an order around three months ago? A big uptick in ammunition.

MR. BAUER

I'm not at liberty to share that information.

LADY

I'm helping someone. The way I helped you. This person has influence, a person worth helping if you know what I mean.

Mr. Bauer gets a gleam in his eye.

MR. BAUER

Yes, I do.

Mr. Bauer opens a filing cabinet and flips through a ledger.

MR. BAUER (CONT'D)

3 and a half months ago yes there was an especially large order of ammunition, but it's not uncommon.

(MORE)

MR. BAUER (CONT'D)

There have been several large orders this past year. About as many as there have been villages attacked if you know what *I* mean.

Mr. Bauer's lady-friend lights a cigarette, infinitely bored by him.

LADY

I do.

MR. BAUER

Alright then, we didn't speak. Unless some higher up wants to express his gratitude, then you know how to connect me.

LADY

Understood. One last thing. Who placed these orders?

MR. BAUER

The only person who can, the Captain himself.

Lady hangs up and lights a cigarette, turning her head towards the door when she hears a noise. Lady pockets her letter and swipes everything else into a drawer. She removes her gun and locks the drawer.

The door handle to her office jiggles. Lady moves towards the door, gun pointed, but decides against it and escapes out the window and down the fire escape.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - SAME

Lady hears a gun go off and a door open in her office. She hurries down the fire escape and Leo's head emerges out of Lady's office window to see her duck in through the back door of Saudades.

INT. SAUDADES - SAME

Lady makes her way through the storeroom of Saudades and into the crowded bar. The Captain is there boisterously telling stories to his officers. Chester is there as well. He waves to Lady but she ignores him.

CAPTAIN

I told them, "Lay down your weapons before I blow you apart!"

The officers all laugh.

Leo is coming towards Lady gun by his side, Lady steps out into the middle of the bar. She points her gun at Leo. The Captain stands up.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
She doesn't keep bullets in her
gun. Shoot...

Lady quickly adjusts to the Captain. She shoots the Captain in the heart and his command stops mid-sentence.

Lady points her gun back at Leo and slowly backs out of the silent bar.

EXT. SAUDADES - NIGHT

Once through the door, Lady walks towards the ocean. She reaches the sea wall and climbs over.

EXT. BEACH - SAME

Lady walks across the sand to the ocean and into it up to her waist. Hands grab her from behind and pull her under water. Lady barely struggles against her attacker but resurfaces to see it's Chester who has dragged her down. He puts his finger to his lips.

Flashlights appear on shore.

STOGE 1
She didn't jump in the ocean.

Lady and Chester go under as the lights pass over the water.

STOGE 2
It's the best place to hide.

STOGE 1
Go in and get her then.

STOGE 2
I don't fuck with the ocean.

The other officer LAUGHS mockingly and they continue on their way.

CHESTER
What did you do?

LADY

I wanted to even the score. He would never have been punished enough for what he's done. He only brought suffering to this city, to this country.

CHESTER

How will your soul recover?

LADY

My soul was ripped apart a long time ago. It's in a thousand pieces.

Lady and Chester emerge from the ocean and collapse on the sand. All the fight has gone out of Lady.

Chester holds Lady's hand.

CHESTER

It's not for me to say, but perhaps it's time to heal, not deepen the wound.

Lady laughs a humorless laugh.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Tell the story.

LADY

When Modelo Nordico took me, my father came running out from his garden just as the truck was pulling away.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. AMADA - DAY

Lady's father, recognizable from the photo and flashback, sprints towards the field.

LADY (V.O.)

He ran for as long as he could and I watched him, a gun trained at my head, begging him to catch up...to save me.

Young Child we now recognize is Lady, is thrown in the back of a truck at gun point. A man holds a gun to her head and she silently watches her father running for his life but receding into the distance.

END FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEACH - SAME

LADY

He didn't, and I never forgave him. When I returned from that war, I wanted him to fight for me again and to win this time. But he gave me space instead. When Amada was destroyed, I thought it was the same people who took me. That Modelo Nordico had come to finish the job. I said to myself, this is Eden. And I was glad I had washed my hands of the place even as I lost my father for good.

Lady turns to Chester.

LADY (CONT'D)

Here I was thinking I'd escaped the enemy and made myself strong and safe. But it was the Guard, Chester. My chosen family. That stupid saying is true: All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. And I've done nothing my whole life.

CHESTER

Surely you haven't considered yourself good in a very long time.

LADY

I would have liked to be good.

CHESTER

I don't think there are good and bad people. Just messy ones.

Lady takes the rest of the bullets out of her gun and throws them in the water.

Lady pulls Chester to her and kisses him like it's her salvation.

Lady and Chester undress each other.

The moon reflects on the ocean.

CHESTER (V.O.)

Let's go to the library. One room is not under surveillance. No one will look for you there and we can figure out what to do.

INT. SAUDADES - SAME

Saudades is cleaned out. Guard officers speak to the bartender. The Captain's body lays where it fell, Leo glowers in the corner. Poderet walks into the bar and over to the Captain's body. Poderet bends down so his face is close to the Captain's face. He looks at the Captain's lifeless eyes with curiosity.

PODERET

(to the Captain's corpse)

You said yourself, that when someone is working against you, you need to act. Your mistake was that you wanted to witness the suffering you caused. Like a child torturing helpless animals.

(to Leo)

I told you not to stir the hornet's nest, but you didn't listen. I knew better, but I let you have your fun anyway.

Poderet takes the captain's lifeless face in his hands.

CAPTAIN

Don't worry. I know how to clean up a mess.

Leo watches with curiosity as Poderet straightens up and wipes his hands on his embroidered silk handkerchief before addressing Leo.

PODERET

Let's go.

LEO

She almost made history out of me.

PODERET

But she didn't.

Poderet is shredding his fancy handkerchief.

PODERET (CONT'D)

It all worked out.

INT. NOVO ESTADO NATIONAL LIBRARY (SIDE ROOM) - LATER

INSERT - PHOTO

Armand Poderet's headshot smiles out from the back of a book cover.

Lady, wearing men's trousers and shirt, sips tea and flips the book over.

INSERT - BOOK COVER "Modern Trade in Novo Estado" by Armand Poderet

Chester pours Lady the last of the tea from a teapot and leaves the room.

There is a display of books on local government to commemorate the anniversary of the end of colonialism. The room is decorated in the most patriotic and nationalist way possible. Lady SNORTS and rolls her eyes as she sets the book down.

Chester comes back with a tin of cookies.

CHESTER

They're good with the tea.

Lady takes a cookie.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

You're not safe in Novo Estado anymore.

LADY

I have to finish what I started.

CHESTER

Not right now. Now you have to hide if you want to live to fight another day.

Lady shows Chester Poderet's book.

LADY

What about Poderet?

CHESTER

Armand Poderet? He is the real librarian of Novo Estado. Access to all the information and the ability to manipulate it.

LADY

You know him?

CHESTER

He collects rare books so I let him know when anything comes in.

LADY

He offered to help me. I'm going to see him.

CHESTER

Ok. That sounds like an option. I'll go with you.

LADY

No. I'm going alone.

CHESTER

Still refusing any support.

LADY

I didn't stop loving you. I just didn't know how to show you.

CHESTER

You didn't know how to receive love back.

Lady takes another cookie.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Also you have a thing for authority figures and I am not that.

LADY

(teasing)

You have a thing for authority figures.

CHESTER

I do.

LADY

Wherever I go, I want you to come with me.

CHESTER

I have a friend in Estado. We can stay with him...

Lady kisses Chester as Elizabeth walks in.

ELIZABETH

Sorry! I...work here.

Lady and Chester break apart.

LADY
Wait for me here?

Chester nods and Lady exits.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA PLAZA - LATER

It's raining. Lady looks up at the ornate and imposing building.

INT. PODERET'S OFFICE - SAME

Lady sits in a shadowy corner of Armand Poderet's office.

Armand Poderet enters and sits behind his desk. Lady leans forward into the light.

LADY
Mr. Poderet.

Armand Poderet jumps, looks angry and then calm.

PODERET
Detective Maclava. To what do I owe the pleasure?

LADY
I need to leave Novo Estado. Tonight. You said you could get me documents. I can pay for them or...you mentioned wanting my help.

PODERET
Oh that. You've already taken care of that problem. Well hell. I suppose I do owe you.

INT. NOVO ESTADO NATIONAL LIBRARY - SAME

Chester reads Armand Poderet's Modern Trade in Novo Estado. Elizabeth passes through the room carrying a stack of books.

ELIZABETH
The guard of The Guard.

CHESTER
Who?

ELIZABETH
Armand Poderet. The captain of the guard is a figurehead.
(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Armand Poderet uses the institution
as his own personal army in his war
on democracy.

CHESTER

What youthful conspiracy is this?

ELIZABETH

Look it up. Every corporation that
does business in Novo Estado has
Armand Poderet as an advisor in
some capacity. Poderet does
whatever it takes to pave the way
for capitalism and trade.

Chester jumps up and goes to a reference section in the
library. He looks along the rows and pulls down a volume.

CHESTER

Aleeantz, Condor, Ephenedral,
Hartwell, Kratt, MegAgra...Amada
was Poderet?

ELIZABETH

Nothing happens in this country
without his say so. You know my
mother's head of transportation.
She can't get anything done between
our hedonistic prime minister and
the corrupt Poderet.

Chester looks stricken.

CHESTER

Lady just went to him.

ELIZABETH

Why did you let her? Go! I'll close
up and be right behind you.

INT. PODERET'S OFFICE - SAME

Armand leans forward in his chair.

PODERET

Do you know what I want for Novo
Estado? I want us to have the best
economy in Eden. A middle class.
Thriving cities. Exports.
International relationships. We
will be a global player. I love
this damn country.

LADY

So do I.

PODERET

Novo Estado has more diversity in its climates and resources and people than any Thirstheart country. Estadoan explorers came here because they were impoverished and we were rich.

LADY

Amen.

PODERET

And what did Novo Estadoans do? We let them.

LADY

That's an unfair assessment.

PODERET

We were tribal and they were united under a crown and a bottomless desire for power. Consolidated power. It's so easy to take a country when it is tribal. You can pick off the weaker tribes first, slowly getting bigger and fatter until you can take on the strong tribes and soon there's no competition left.

LADY

There was a ruthlessness that Novo Estadoans wouldn't adopt.

PODERET

You're smarter than that. This noble savage story, who does it help? The same thing is still happening. The distant forest-dwelling nomads, the people in huts on the fringe of our nature reserves illegally poaching to live, the rural farmers thinking they might support another party, are like the weaker tribes. Easily picked off for the good of the country. If people will not support consolidated power, we will never grow.

Lady's eyes burn as she gets up and goes to the door.

LADY

I see I've come to the wrong place.

She opens the door and Leo blocks her path.

PODERET

No. You've come to the exact right place. If you want to leave Novo Estado, I am the way. And tonight you *will* leave Novo Estado.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA PLAZA - NIGHT

Chester walks quickly towards the city building, visible only when he passes under a street lamp. He stops when a group of people exit the side of the building. Armand Poderet walks arm in arm with Lady and they are followed by Leo. Lady turns her face to Poderet and Chester sees she is bruised and bloodied. Lady, Poderet and Leo get into a waiting vehicle.

Chester runs back to his car and follows.

Chester's car is followed by another car.

EXT. PIER 42 - LATER

Armand Poderet escorts Lady out of the vehicle and through the shipping containers as Chester pulls to a stop a block away. Chester gets out of his car.

INT. PIER 42 - SAME

Poderet guides Lady through shipping containers and speaks to her as though giving her a tour.

PODERET

Do you know why this port is the busiest in southern Eden?

Lady looks at Leo and at Poderet and at the space. Seeking an exit.

PODERET (CONT'D)

When the Estadoans colonized Novo Estado, they knew how to build an empire. They knew about control and its relationship to power. Control the entry and exit points and you control the resources.

LEO
And the people.

LADY
The people are the resources in
this analogy, Leo. Keep up.

PODERET
Just so. You've become sharper
since I started watching you,
Detective.

LADY
When did you start watching me?

PODERET
When I realized you were the way in
to the Captain. That ass, no the
ass is a noble animal, that human
man was my next obstacle in
consolidating power in Novo Estado.
He had military coup in his DNA. I
arranged for Millie Jornal's camp
to find out the Captain's role in
Amada. I knew they were courting
you.

LADY
What a convoluted way to take
someone out. You don't like to get
your hands dirty I guess.

Poderet chuckles and shrugs. He's comfortable with that
statement. Lady's shoulders sag. Just when she had begun to
hope again.

LADY (CONT'D)
So I suppose Millie Jornal and
Modelo Nordico are in your pocket
too?

PODERET
You're not listening! I have
created an environment where
everyone is confused. No one knows
who to trust. What party or group
is responsible for wanton violence?
Who is pulling the strings? This is
how I've consolidated power.

Poderet is looking around for something. Chester lurks in the
shadows watching. A dark figure is behind him, also watching.

PODERET (CONT'D)
Progress must always win.

LADY
Whose definition of progress?

Poderet locates a shipping container and opens it. It's filled with plain, wood coffins. Leo retrieves one and Lady cringes as he opens it, then she realizes it's empty and looks even more terrified. Poderet gestures to the container filled with coffins.

PODERET
The casualties of our opioid epidemic are already piling up.

LEO
They'll dump this container onto the seabed and then claim it was filled with goods. We get rid of our corpses and get well-pay from the insurance company.

Lady stares blankly ahead. Poderet holds up Lady's gun.

PODERET
This instrument killed a man today.

LADY
No. I killed a man today. Maybe I'll kill another.

Poderet smacks Lady across the face with the gun and points it at her head.

PODERET
As you said, I don't love to do my own dirty work, but in this case it is penance for what I've allowed to happen and a reminder to be more vigilant in the future...

Bishop has crept up behind Chester and is about to speak to him when he bursts into the light.

CHESTER
Stop!

Poderet pulls the trigger and nothing happens. Chester runs towards Lady but Poderet grabs Leo's gun and shoots him.

Chester falls, dead. Elizabeth runs out from the shadows and to Chester's side.

ELIZABETH

No!

LADY

No!

Bishop emerges onto the scene and shoots the now unarmed Leo, felling him. Poderet looks at Chester.

PODERET

My librarian.

Poderet looks at the bodies of Chester and Leo and at Bishop pointing her gun at him and runs away. Bishop doesn't shoot but instead rushes to Lady who is at Chester's side.

BISHOP

(to Lady)

You have to get out of here.

Bishop hands her a passport and a ticket.

LADY

I can't go now. I have to kill him.

BISHOP

Leave it, woman! You'll never escape if you seek revenge.

Lady stares at her and Bishop stares back.

LADY

How did you find me here? Why do you have my passport?

Bishop looks Lady in her eyes.

BISHOP

Trust me enough to walk to the pier and get on the boat called COEUR. It will take you to Estado.

A car SCREECHES to a halt and car doors slam. Lady locks eyes with Bishop and then decides.

Lady turns to Chester, briefly touches his cheek.

LADY

Next lifetime.

Then the warrior inside Lady emerges and she stands up and straightens herself.

Bishop has picked up Lady's gun from where Poderet dropped it. She hands it to Lady.

BISHOP

Don't ever come back.

Lady doesn't reply but takes the gun and walks away.

Just as she's disappeared from sight, Florence runs in to find Bishop standing in the middle of the containers, looking out over nothing. Leo lays dead on the ground and Elizabeth sobs over Chester's body.

EXT. PIER 42 - SAME

Lady picks up the pace down the pier, walking faster and faster...

STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Poderet was wrong about progress always winning. It's change that always wins. Not for the better or for the worse. Only change.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA PLAZA - LATER

Poderet stands outside watching someone approach. Bishop steps into the light. They look at each other.

EXT. PIER 42 - SAME

Lady is helped onto a boat called COEUR by the Boat Captain, a woman from Estado.

EXT. CIDADE PORTUARIA PLAZA - SAME

Poderet opens his arms to Bishop and smiles. She embraces him.

PODERET

You finished up?

BISHOP

Yes. It's all sorted.

PODERET

Good girl.

EXT. PIER 42 - SAME

Lady stands at the back of the boat watching the lights of Novo Estado grow smaller. She tosses her gun into the ocean.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)
The world is always ending. The
question is not how do you survive,
but what do you do when you live
on?

EPILOGUE

EXT. ESTADO STREET - MONTHS LATER

We follow Lady from behind as she walks very fast down the sidewalk in an unfamiliar city. She turns into a building.

INT. ESTADO BUILDING - SAME

Still behind Lady we see her go up a flight of stairs and open a door that says "Eddie Dama, Private Investigator"

INT. PI OFFICE - SAME

We're still trailing Lady as she walks to her desk and as she turns towards us to sit down, we see she is very pregnant. She looks directly at us.

STORYTELLER (V.O.)
As you can see, my story isn't
over.

A KNOCK at the door and Millie Jornal steps into the office.

MILLIE JORNAL
I bring news.