

KISS ME, STAY CLOSER

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL MEXICAN BORDER TOWN - NIGHT

Thunder rumbles and street merchants hawk their wares to bored tourists. A radio plays a lonely love song *en Español* while local children dance barefoot.

From an alleyway, TODD ASHFORD (30s) watches the mingling of money and poverty. His hands are smooth from avoiding honest work, and his eyes are hard from seeking out easy targets.

Speaking of... JACKLYN LEWIS (27) waits for her man's attention. She's scruffy and worn. Maybe she's strung out, maybe just tired from a decade of bad decisions.

JACKLYN

Todd, baby, you're amazing. Hug me!

Todd doesn't even hear her. He's too busy measuring twice. His eyes are trained on the border crossing. Compared to other crossing points, there is minimal security.

TODD

Hush now babe, take it down a notch. I checked it out - a dusty laid-back farm town. No sniffer dogs.

JACKLYN

Hug me.

Todd gives an absent-minded embrace. A stark contrast to WORKERS coming back across the border. Their KIDS come running with cheers and hugs.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

Look at them. And I been deserted all my life. First dad.

Jacklyn realizes Todd is still ignoring her.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

Now you.

Todd rolls a joint and shoulders a GYM BAG.

TODD

It'll be a breeze. C'mon Jack, prove it, do this for me. Heroin's gonna upgrade our whole lives to first class. Are you in or out?

Jacklyn slumps down and plunks on her ass.

JACKLYN

With all that moolah maybe we can search America for him. For my dad.

TODD

We're good then?

JACKLYN

Course it's all a question of morals. As in, maybe we don't have any?

Todd's tense, waiting to see where Jacklyn will land. He's got dollar signs in his eyes. Jacklyn looks past him, and raises her voice, as if something has grabbed her attention.

Something that won't let go.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

Stay close to me.

Todd hugs Jacklyn.

TODD

Of course. Whatever you say.

The clouds clap and lightning dances in the blue-grey sky. There's ill omens, and then there's on the nose doom-weather.

JACKLYN

It was bad back in the day. All the cool kids bullied me, for what? Because I didn't have a dad, that's what.

Todd relights his joint, annoyed at having to corral Jacklyn back on point.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

Family's everything. Especially when you don't have one.

TODD

Ancient history now.

Jacklyn grabs Todd's shoulders and forces him to make eye contact.

JACKLYN

Is this gig foolproof?

TODD

Trust me.

JACKLYN

Yeah, your lips are movin' then you
lie, lie, lie.

The noises on the street get louder. More thunder, more people, street vendors yelling and small fires crackling.

There's black magic in the air, telling you that *shit is about to go down*.

Jacklyn tunes out street noises and distractions. Suddenly she pushes Todd away and looks toward the shadows, as if seeking validation.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

There's that little voice inside
me...

Todd flicks his joint at the wall and rifles through his pockets.

TODD

Sink or swim babe.

Todd counts a wad of cash.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'll make you square with the
world.

Todd opens up his arms, offering another hug. Jacklyn relents and slumps into his chest.

TODD (CONT'D)

Over here in the dark.

They move further into the alley and Todd opens up his gym bag. Inside is pounds and pounds of heroin.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Without warning, the sky lights up as bright as day. The flash is followed by the BOOM of thunder. Two MEXICAN GIRLS race home to beat the storm.

Todd strokes Jacklyn's body, but not for any intimacy. He's measuring again.

Todd pulls strips of duct tape off a roll, cutting pieces with a jack knife. He tapes packages of heroin to her body, and covers them with her clothes.

TODD

A frickin' breeze, you'll see. No worries from the cops. They're brain dead.

There's still a couple of smaller packages of heroin left. Todd stuffs these in Jacklyn's bra, and then panties.

JACKLYN

I coulda been somebody. It ain't fair.

Todd disregards Jacklyn's misgivings, ignores her attempts to connect emotionally. He thinks she's high.

Or maybe he just doesn't give a damn.

TODD

Yep, you're gonna make us both filthy rich! We're facing pretty easy odds, all things considered.

Jacklyn looks past Todd again, at that same spot in the shadows... then shoves Todd away and retches. A vein pulses in her throat as she dry heaves. She holds up four fingers.

JACKLYN

I'm scared shitless.

She shares a desperate hug with Todd, who quickly offers her some gum. Jacklyn obliges, chews and blows bubbles. POP.

Todd grabs a stick and draws in the dirt. He points out the border, entrances, exits, and a nearby train crossing.

TODD

You see this? Is this making a connection? Focus baby - Main street, train crossing, escape route.

Todd pokes Jacklyn with a stick. She nods and grabs a beer out of the gym bag. She chugs it. Todd checks the heroin again, adding more duct tape when needed. He slaps it on.

Jacklyn's a Christmas parcel bound for UPS next-day delivery.

JACKLYN

It ain't right, all this fuss over drugs.

Jacklyn bites her lip. Todd gives the thumbs up. Ready to go.
The thunder tries to give one last warning.

TODD
First time's the charm! Don't freak
out, maintain your cool.

JACKLYN
Is tonight the last?

Todd tries to ignore Jacklyn's question. She's focused now.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)
You don't have a flippin' care in
the world. I'm taking all the risk!

Todd kisses Jacklyn. It's obvious he's hoping this will
distract her from backing out or questioning the deal.

And it does. Maybe Jacklyn's naive, maybe she's high, maybe
she watched too many romantic comedies. For whatever reason,
she buys what Todd is selling.

TODD
I love you for doing this for us.

JACKLYN
You sure you're not just telling me
what I want to hear? Giving me
someone to make it all worth it.

TODD
It's gonna be a sweet homecoming.
We'll say bye to our checkered
past. We're all doing' the best we
can here - maybe we're talkin'
marriage. Just follow our plan,
stay alert. Now go!

As they start to move, Jacklyn looks directly into another
shadowy alley. She senses someone close by. Someone special.

JACKLYN
The best is yet to come.

The heavens finally open and the rain comes crashing down.
The border storm is beautiful, and Jacklyn can't take her
eyes off it. She can't move, she's crying and shaking.

TODD
Hey, hey, don't get hysterical. You
gettin' weepy on me?

Todd hugs her close again. His voice changes, not pretending to be soft anymore. He's done coddling her.

TODD (CONT'D)
Like I told you before. It's time
to get going.

Todd pushes Jacklyn out of the hug, aiming her at the border. Alone now, Jacklyn heads down the street. Todd watches.

EXT. SMALL MEXICAN BORDER TOWN - CONTINUOUS

The colors in the sky shift and change, the lightning turns green and purple and deadly.

Before Jacklyn can make it to the border, she is halted by a plainclothes POLICE DETECTIVE (30). He flashes a badge.

JACKLYN
(yells back to Todd)
It's a set up! They're stealin'
from us, plain and simple!

Todd hightails it, but MEXICAN POLICE quickly block his escape. He changes direction again and again as more police arrive.

Todd tries to sprint. The ground is turning into mud from the rain, sucking at his shoes every step of the way.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)
Wait. Wait for me!

Todd doesn't wait. He makes a desperate run for the border.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)
Now if you can't trust the cops,
who can you trust?

The Police Detective smiles at Jacklyn.

POLICE DETECTIVE
Just a moment ma'am.

The Detective cuts Todd off and tackles him to the ground. The arrest is swift and humiliating. The Detective hands Todd over to local Mexican police, and returns to Jacklyn.

JACKLYN
It's all brains, simple as that.

The Police Detective starts removing the heroin from Jacklyn's body. He's careful, almost tender.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

It's a breakdown of morals I tell ya. No respect for women.

POLICE DETECTIVE

Where you think he was running to?

JACKLYN

Likely back to his wife. Thinking I was some poor schmuck who likes to get pushed around.

POLICE DETECTIVE

Never.

Jacklyn hugs the Police Detective. He has mud all over his uniform from tackling Todd.

Jacklyn doesn't care. She's dirty now too.

JACKLYN

I think maybe we saved another young woman tonight. Those sick bastards prey upon innocence and trust.

POLICE DETECTIVE

Always more to save. Quick thinking by the way, pretending to throw up.

Detective holds up four fingers, just like Jacklyn did moments ago.

POLICE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Looks about four pounds just like you said. You have fun playing with him?

JACKLYN

If they think you're high, or messed up some kinda way, they don't worry you're a threat.

The Police Detective takes something from his back pocket and hands it to Jacklyn. She admires it.

It's a police badge.

JACKLYN (CONT'D)

My love, don't believe everything you hear.

POLICE DETECTIVE

Good work. But I still worry about you...

JACKLYN

Jealous?

The Detective twists his wedding ring around on his finger, back and forth.

POLICE DETECTIVE

I've got no reason to be, but...

Jacklyn hugs the detective. She slyly pulls something shiny from the Detective's back pocket. She holds her hand up, and replaces her wedding ring on her finger.

POLICE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid to lose you.

They kiss, and we realize they are husband and wife.

POLICE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Kiss me.

JACKLYN

Stay close.

The rain stops as the two embrace again. Sun breaks through the clouds and cleanses the scene. No darkness, no pain, no Todd. It's a peaceful and perfect new day.

One of the Mexican Kids from earlier sees Jacklyn and her husband hugging. She turns back on the radio from before.

Joyful and romantic, Mexican MUSIC fills the town again.

Jacklyn and her husband turn to the border and head for home.

They kiss.

FADE OUT.