

FORTUNE

An Original Screenplay

by

Aleta C. Barthell

WGA West Registered No.966746
12/22/03

Contact:
Aleta C. Barthell
1190 Encinitas Blvd. #168
Encinitas, CA 92024
Tel: (760) 635-3340

EXT. DESERT. MEXICO. DAY.

A hispanic man in his 30's, TOMÁS, struggles to walk in a barren desert--he is alone. He makes his way to a large boulder. He falls to his knees, then to the ground. He pulls himself beneath an overhang and into a sliver of shade that it offers. His hand falls open--buttons fall to the ground.

A bird flies in and takes one of the fallen buttons and flies away. As the bird flies, it passes a second man's body a mile away from the first. The bird flies higher; from here we see that there are six lifeless bodies that are dotting the ground. The bird climbs higher toward the sun; the light is blinding.

EXT. UPSCALE TOURIST CAFE IN MEXICO. DAY.

There are rows and rows of small cubby holes. They are wooden, weathered and worn. In most of the cubbies are slips of paper. Some are empty. There is the sound of scratching, then of wings beating. A bird's beak approaches one cubby, stops, the bird hops further down and chooses another cubby and removes a slip of paper from inside.

A hand enters the cage and takes the slip from the bird; the door quickly closes as the hand leaves.

VENDOR

Ah! Your fortune...Señora.

The VENDOR, a hispanic man in his forties, his face hidden by his hat, hands the slip of paper to a woman in her thirties, ELIZABETH. Elizabeth is a bright woman with a wry sense of humor. She is in Mexico as a vacationing tourist.

ELIZABETH

Gracias.

Elizabeth looks at the paper and smiles.

VENDOR

It is a good one, no?

Elizabeth nods and hands him some money.

ELIZABETH

Sí, gracias.

Her boyfriend, JOE, also in his thirties quickly turns around.

JOE

You already paid the man, Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

It's a tip, Joe! Some people live on tips!

VENDOR

Gracias, señora, gracias.

JOE

Come on, let's go.

ELIZABETH

Have you seen my sunglasses?

Joe stands in pained resignation as Elizabeth searches for her sunglasses. As she searches, she puts the slip of paper on the table.

The Vendor walks away with the cage, searching for new customers.

VENDOR

Fortuna! Find your fortune!

The still air is broken by a sudden wind, sending the surrounding birds into flight and causing the bird in the cage to sing noisily. Elizabeth's fortune is blown off her table.

INT. CAFE.

A 6-year old hispanic girl, CRISTINA, is underneath a table, sweeping. The wind blows dust into her eyes. She winces and holds them closed.

Elizabeth's fortune floats under the table in front of Cristina. Cristina feels the wind subside and opens her eyes. She sees the fortune and picks it up.

She hears a commotion across the cafe and looks in that direction.

POV. CRISTINA.

Elizabeth is trying to find the fortune. The cafe is closing.

JOE

For God's sake, Elizabeth, you
already read it!

ELIZABETH

But I want the slip of paper or
it won't come true.

JOE

I'll meet you at the car.

Joe leaves. The Vendor approaches, offering another fortune. Elizabeth refuses. Reluctantly she leaves, her eyes still scanning the cafe floor.

BACK TO SCENE.

Cristina looks down at the fortune in her hand.

EXT. ROAD FROM CAFE TO CRISTINA'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Cristina is walking down a dirt road. She is wearing flip flops. The road climbs, and we see houses perched on the hills where old tires are used as retaining walls. She sees something shiny on the road, a coin. She picks it up.

INT. JOE'S SUV. NIGHT. LATER.

Elizabeth is looking out the window. There is a sign reading "La Jolla 15 miles."

JOE

15 miles. We're almost there!

Silence.

JOE

Don't tell me you're still pouting.

Silence. Elizabeth continues to look out of the window.

JOE

Look, we can stop by Panda Express on the way home and get you a new one.

Elizabeth turns, looks at Joe, then looks back out the window.

INT. ELIZABETH'S CONDO. LA JOLLA.

A black cat is watching out the window as Joe's SUV pulls into the driveway. There is the sound of keys in the door. The cat turns and jumps down from the table. As he does this, his tail knocks over a beautiful Roseville vase that sits in front of a photo of a woman.

ELIZABETH (O.S)

Hello Pablo! What have you been...oh, Pablo! Jesus Christ! That was a Roseville...it was mother's!

EXT. MEXICO. CRISTINA'S HOUSE.

Cristina is seated expectantly before her uncle, AGOSTO. They are beside a fire. Agosto is throwing branches, etc. into the fire.

AGOSTO

¿Y quieres saber lo que dice?
(And you want to know what it says?)

Cristina nods her head.

AGOSTO

Pues...vamos a ver.
(Well...let's see.)

Agosto throws in one more branch. He dusts his hands off on his pants and pulls out a battered pair of reading glasses from his shirt pocket.

Cristina hands him the fortune. Agosto struggles both to find light to read and to read the small print.

AGOSTO
 "Tendrás buena fortuna"
 (You will have good fortune.)

Cristina's face breaks into a broad grin. Agosto hands the fortune back to her and places his hand on her head.

AGOSTO
 ¡Vas a tener buena fortuna,
 Cristina! ¡Que bien!
 (Good fortune for you, Cristina.
 Good!)

¿Me ayudas con esto?
 (Can you help me with this?)

Smiling, Cristina hops up and helps Agosto throw a large branch onto the fire. They step back and watch the sparks fly into the sky.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING. LA JOLLA, CA. NEXT DAY.

There are fireworks exploding over a dark screen--a screensaver.

Elizabeth is sitting at her desk, reading a memo.

POV. ELIZABETH.

The memo reads: "Due to the decrease in sales, we are removing authorization for the use of overtime by all employees, and require that all vacation requests scheduled for the next month be temporarily postponed."

BACK TO SCENE.

Elizabeth looks at the calendar on her desk. An entire week has been highlighted and "VACATION!!!" is written on it.

EXT. CRISTINA'S HOUSE. DAY.

Agosto cleans large plastic containers that hold their water supply.

Cristina leaves her house. She is carrying a red handkerchief wrapped around her lunch. She stands waiting for Agosto.