



BLESSED NOWHERE

LOGLINE: After the devastating loss of her young son, a mother flees her hometown and, guided by happenstance, lands in a Mexican village. As she unravels and remakes herself among strangers, she must confront past ghosts and a truth she's been outrunning.

GENRE: Drama

PROLOGUE

We open on Abby WALSH (30s), staring up at sorrowful painted angels on the ornate ceiling medallion in her ramshackle Mexican flat. Thunder rumbles. For a brief moment, the angels come to life. Abby drags herself to the balcony to watch the storm roll in. Thunder and lightning give way to rain. She watches her neighbour MOJO (50s), on her own balcony welcome it, and soon VULA and SUE (20s) dance into the street below. The rain stops. A taxi takes up in front of the posada. A pair of sensible women's shoes step out. Abby registers concern and is about to call out to the unseen arrival when...

CUT TO BLACK.

TORONTO, THREE MONTHS EARLIER:

Abby is months into grieving the sudden loss of her young son, Joseph. Hollowed out and listless, she spends her days riding her bike through the city and stumbling through shifts at the local bar. At night, alone and drinking, she clutches small mementos of her son: a baby tooth in the locket she wears, the scent of his bedclothes, a nail clipping recovered from the carpet. She avoids those in her orbit, namely her mother RUTH (60s) and sister GLORIA (30s), who desperately want to console the inconsolable.

When Abby's fired from the bar, her last anchor is pulled, leaving her unthethered. Gloria suggests she take a trip, to which Abby numbly responds: "Mm-hm." But the idea takes hold.

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Then Abby receives a letter from Joseph's killer. It's the final push. She packs what she can into a backpack, gets in her car, and drives through the night crossing the U.S. border and heading south along America's endless highways.

For days she drives, spending nights in cheap motels or, taking her chances, sleeping in her car. An encounter with a gas station attendant sets Abby on a course south. He informs her she's on I-81, the "Road to Nowhere," a highway running all the way to Mexico. Nowhere sounds perfect. So she drives until the car dies on an Oklahoma highway. Dropped at a San Antonio bus station by a kind stranger, Abby stumbles upon another sign: a postcard for San Judas Tadeo, a village named after the patron saint of lost causes, the same saint hanging from her rear-view mirror.

On the bus, she meets LUCKY (50s), a hardscrabble and wayward traveller heading to the very same village. Abby is intrigued by Lucky, but mostly thwarts his attempts to connect.

When the bus reaches Tadeo, she bolts and finds a cab to the centre of town. She lands at dawn at the foot of the beautiful Parroquia of San Judas. Moments later, Abby encounters the trio who will become her accidental family: Mojo, permanent tourist with a painful past: DELILAH (50s), the theatrical owner of Hotel Los Vacios, whose crumbling posada seems to collect lost souls, and Luis (50s), a once-lauded chef now living quietly with his younger lover, ILARIO (30s). Mojo approaches Abby looking for Delilah's lost dog and gives her the rough location of the posada. "Up Golondrinas! No sign. Just big red doors! Look for the heart!"

After a tense call home, Abby finds Hotel Los Vacios, where she meets SUE (20s), a wayward traveller struggling with addiction, and tells Delilah she'll stay a few days at most. Delilah knows better. Soon Abby is drawn into the posada's strange little constellation of outsiders, joining them at the Toro Rojo, where expats and locals drink, dance and try to forget. There is pulque. Music. A mechanical bull. And for one night, Abby almost disappears into the crowd.

After a raucous night, Abby, Mojo and Lucky hitch a ride on a pickup truck. When it's time to hop off the moving vehicle, Abby falls and is knocked unconscious. She wakes the next morning in Mojo's apartment, scraped, bruised and battered. Mojo tries to connect, but Abby remains a closed book.

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But slowly, almost imperceptibly, Abby begins to heal. She settles into a life in Tadeo, attending a lavish soirée at Luis and Ilario's hacienda and falling further in with the crowd of charming misfits.

Then Ilario is brutally beaten in an act of homophobia. Mojo and Abby rush to the hacienda, where they find an apoplectic Luis, set on revenge, and a barely conscious Ilario. They stay the night, taking turns caring for him. As the night drags on, Abby becomes sick with typhoid. Wracked with fever, Abby is put to bed, but hours later, in a hallucinatory state, she departs the hacienda, drawn to the centre of town by its music.

Abby stumbles through centro, hearing voices, seeing strange faces, until she runs into Lucky. Together they make their way back to the posada. Feverish and broken, they let down their guards and fall into bed together, in what is Abby's first meaningful connection since her son's death. Afterwards, Abby steps onto her balcony and in a moment of both hallucination and magical realism, begins to float. First above the balustrade, then over the rooftops of Tadeo. She rises above the streets, weightless, until the town falls away and she lands in a desert dreamscape, in a recurring dream where she tries in vain to rescue her son.

The next morning Lucky leaves her a flower and a note.

Days become weeks. Abby returns to the hacienda and learns that Luis has taken revenge on Ilario's attacker. Now Luis must disappear. The motley myriad form a plan to get them to safety in a remote seaside village in Delilah's old car. Abby drives, Mojo rides shotgun, and Luis and Ilario are hidden in the back. As they cross the landscape, Mojo shares her own tale of loss.

When they reach the coast, Abby and Mojo say goodbye to Luis and Ilario and prepare to catch a bus back to Tadeo. They wait in the shade of a church, where Abby finally unburdens herself to Mojo, revealing how she lost Joseph. Abby falls apart and the two seek respite in the aquamarine ocean before heading back home.

This brings us to the timeline at the opening of the story.

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Ruth has arrived at Hotel Los Vacios to bring her daughter home. Just as she settles in, the Tadeo police arrive to question Abby about Luis and Ilario. Where are they? What does she know? This bolsters Ruth's case for Abby to return home at once. That afternoon, Mojo and Abby walk Ruth through Tadeo, showing her the strange, beautiful world Abby has fallen into.

That night on the rooftop, Ruth reveals she's read the letter from Joseph's killer. The letter Abby couldn't bring herself to read. Abby reels. But slowly, painfully, she begins to accept reality: Joseph is gone. This is her life now.

Later, a sleepless Abby and Ruth struggle with the heat. Abby heads downstairs to fetch water when Vula arrives after a night out. Vula returns to the room she shares with Sue. Soon after, Abby hears her panic. Sue has barricaded herself inside. The smell of gas prompts Vula, Abby and Delilah to break down the door. They find Sue blue and unconscious on the bed. They rush her downstairs, where Abby performs life-saving measures, resuscitating Sue just as the paramedics arrive.

In the early morning, while Tadeo sleeps, Abby sits by candlelight and writes a letter to Joseph's killer. And then we see what she has kept with her all along: the now-tattered newspaper clipping bearing the image of the flaming heart. The same heart painted on the red doors of Hotel Los Vacios. Happenstance? Or another sign from beyond?

Abby makes the decision to remain in Tadeo. Ruth has no choice but to let her go.

Abby sees her mother off at the bus station with a meaningful goodbye. She watches her mother's bus leave, then hops on a pickup truck back to centro Tadeo. There she watches the beauty of life around her: children playing, families joined hand in hand. She breathes it in with a mother's love. Her future still uncertain but no longer burdened by the pain she has been trying to outrun.