

CASE 1638: RECALL

PUBLIC SAMPLE

ORIGINAL 113-PAGE FEATURE SCREENPLAY



THE HUMAN ENTRY

After a joke candidacy makes a conspiracy-theorist podcaster mayor by forty-three votes, a jar of brown tap water leads him to an energy company's buried contamination.

FORM

Feature screenplay

STATUS

Complete · unproduced

RECOGNITION

First Place, 2026 Scriptapalooza Screenplay Competition

SAMPLE

Title page and first ten screenplay pages

USE OF THIS SAMPLE

This controlled public sample is provided for reading and professional evaluation. The complete work, synopsis, proposal, series map, screenplay, or supporting apparatus is supplied directly upon an appropriate request.

CASE 1638: RECALL

CASE 1638: RECALL – PART 1: THE INSTALLATION

MONOCHROME. Hard. Digital. High-contrast. The monochrome of a deposition tape.

INT. GIL'S TRAILER – NIGHT

A hand reaches for a glass.
BROWN WATER. Sediment swirling.
The hand lifts the glass. Tips it. DRINKS. Brown water down a chin we haven't seen yet.
The glass comes down. CLINKS against a desk like evidence.
A voice – GIL's voice, but we don't know that yet:

GIL (V.O.)
Now you know what it tastes like.

BLACK.

HARD CUT TO COLOR – warm, saturated, alive.

EXT. LUCERO RANCH – DAWN

Warm desert light. A ranch that has survived everything except prosperity.
MIGUEL (20s), Mrs. Lucero's grandson, steps onto the porch with coffee. Half asleep.
MRS. LUCERO (70s) is already in her wheelchair. She's been up since four.

MRS. LUCERO
Miguel. Look at the pasture.

MIGUEL
I'm looking at it, abuela. Same as yesterday. Same as every—
He stops. Sets down the coffee.

MIGUEL
Abuela. The ground is— the ground is WET. It's not supposed to be wet. There's something coming up.

MRS. LUCERO
And yet.
He walks toward it. Stops twenty feet away.

MIGUEL
It's brown. The water coming up is brown.

MRS. LUCERO
Get inside. Call the county.
Miguel runs. Stops. Turns back.

MIGUEL

Should I bring the mason jars?

MRS. LUCERO

What mason jars?

MIGUEL

The ones Rosa Padilla gave you. Twenty years ago. She said keep them in the shed. She said if anything ever came out of the ground, fill the jars first and call the county second.

Beat.

MRS. LUCERO

Bring the jars.

Miguel runs.

MRS. LUCERO

(watching the brown water spread)

Thirty years I kept those jars in the shed. Thirty years I thought that woman was out of her mind. Every spring I almost threw them out and every spring something told me don't.

TITLE CARD: TWO MONTHS EARLIER

EXT. POLLING PLACE — DAY — THUNDERSTORM

Rain hammering a community center. A hand-painted sign — VOTE HERE TODAY — losing its fight with gravity and wind. Three cars in the lot. Someone's bike chained to a rack with an optimism that borders on delusion.

INT. POLLING PLACE — CONTINUOUS

Two POLL WORKERS at a folding table. It's 6:45 PM. They have processed the democratic will of thirteen human beings.

POLL WORKER 1 does a crossword. POLL WORKER 2 stares at the ceiling. DOLORES VEGA (60s) knits in a corner, watching the door the way a sphinx watches the desert.

POLL WORKER 1

How many is that now?

POLL WORKER 2

Thirteen. Out of fourteen hundred registered. That's not a turnout.

That's a support group.

The door BANGS open. A CLUSTER of people — six, seven — soaking wet, laughing. One wears a t-shirt: "QUESTION EVERYTHING." Another has a podcast logo: "KEEPING TRACK — with Gil Padilla."

PODCAST LISTENER 1

Is this where we vote for the chemtrail guy?

POLL WORKER 2

Sign here. Vote for whoever you want. Please don't—

They're already taking selfies. They're already livestreaming.

PODCAST LISTENER 2

(to phone)

The town is called GREEN WATER. The water guy lives in Green Water. I can't. I literally can't.

They vote. They whoop. They leave in a cluster of laughter and the absolute certainty that this is a joke.

PODCAST LISTENER 1

(as door closes)

Six votes MAX!

Quiet returns. Rain continues.

Dolores counts the signatures on her own sheet. Her knitting needles pause for one beat. Resume.

TIME CUT: 6:58 PM. Poll workers packing up.

POLL WORKER 1

Final count?

POLL WORKER 2

(counting, recounting)

Forty... forty-two.

Dolores stands. Walks to the table. Picks up the signature sheet with the care of a woman who has handled official documents for thirty-seven years.

DOLORES

May I?

Poll Worker 2 shrugs. What does it matter?

Dolores takes a pen from her cardigan and writes something small and precise.

DOLORES

You miscounted. Forty-three.

POLL WORKER 2

I counted twice—

DOLORES

And I've been counting in this office since before you were born. Forty-three.

She returns to her corner. Picks up her knitting. The needles resume — steady as a heartbeat. Her hands have not trembled once.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBER — NIGHT

Fluorescent lights. Eight people in the audience. WADE SUTTER (50s, council president) at the podium.

WADE

In the special election for Mayor of Aguaverde, New Mexico, the results are as follows — and I want to note for the record that the phrase “as follows” is doing a lot of heavy lifting here.

He puts on reading glasses. Takes them off. Puts them back on.

WADE

Gilbert Padilla. Forty-three votes.
Laughter. Scattered at first, then confident.

VOICE (O.S.)

The podcast guy?

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)

The chemtrail guy? The one with the wall?

WADE

Total votes cast: forty-three. Voter turnout: approximately three percent. Charter minimum: forty-three.

Beat.

WADE

Don't ask me why it's forty-three. This election is valid by a margin of one vote. Nobody else filed. The position of Mayor was available for the low price of a filing fee and a pulse, and one person in this town thought that was a good deal.

VOICE (O.S.)

He got ALL the votes?

WADE

Mr. Padilla will be sworn in at next week's regular session. Forty-three votes is forty-three votes, regardless of the meteorological conditions under which they were —

He stops. The briefest recalibration — not uncertainty, but the effort of a man maintaining poise.

WADE

cast. This meeting is adjourned.

The gavel falls.

SANDRA WALSH (40s, city manager) sits at a side table. Her legal pad shows: "42" crossed out. "43" written above it. She looks at Dolores. Dolores doesn't look back. The knitting needles click.

INT. GROCERY STORE — CEREAL AISLE — DAY

Gil Padilla, holding court. His audience: MRS. APODACA (70s, sharp) and MRS. ORTIZ (60s, patient, phone perpetually recording for her son in Albuquerque). He's standing next to the Frosted Flakes. He's been talking for a while.

GIL

— and I'm not saying the vapor trails are DEFINITELY chemical dispersants designed to pacify the rural population. I'm saying LOOK AT THEM. Have you ever seen a cloud that

straight? Nature doesn't make straight lines. God doesn't make straight lines. You know who makes straight lines? Engineers. Government engineers. And you know what else government engineers make?

MRS. APODACA

Roads?

GIL

CHEMTRAILS, Mrs. Apodaca. I have a folder on my desktop called "Fluoride Truth" with four hundred and thirty-seven documents. The government is calcifying your ability to perceive reality, and the chickens are complicit.

MRS. APODACA

Gil, I've been doing my own research for sixty-two years. It's called living. It's called raising four children and burying a husband and paying taxes on time. I need to buy eggs.

MRS. ORTIZ

*(holding up phone,
recording)*

Keep going, Gil. My Eduardo loves these.

GIL

(leaning into the camera)

Tell your son the moon landing footage has inconsistent shadows — I'm not saying we didn't GO, I'm saying the FOOTAGE is fake because the cameras couldn't survive the Van Allen belt so they shot it in a studio in—

MRS. APODACA

*(already walking away,
laughing)*

EGGS, Gil. I am buying eggs.

She's gone. Gil turns back to Mrs. Ortiz's phone. Mrs. Ortiz still recording.

MRS. ORTIZ

My Eduardo says you're the funniest man in New Mexico.

GIL

Governance is stand-up with a filing fee.

A STOCK BOY (teens) appears with a pricing gun.

STOCK BOY
You're the mayor now, right?

GIL
Forty-three votes. I have a ninety-seven percent approval rating if you measure silence as consent.

STOCK BOY
I need to price the Grape Nuts.

GIL
Price them. But the eye-level products are the ones they WANT you to buy. The posture of liberty is vertical.

STOCK BOY
I put them there. It's literally my job.

GIL
Then you're part of it.
Gil walks away.

STOCK BOY
(watching him go)
That's the mayor.

EXT. CARRIZO STREET – DAY

Gil's truck idles in front of a small adobe house. A garden that was loved once. Rosa's house. Empty now. Gil sits behind the wheel. Engine running. Not getting out. His hand rests on the RECA form in the passenger seat – he carries it with him.

He puts the truck in gear. Then doesn't move. Sits.

FLASHBACK – INT. ROSA'S KITCHEN – 2002

ROSA PADILLA (50s) at her kitchen table. Filling out a form. Her fourth RECA application.

On the table: a glass of tap water. Subtly brown.

She takes a sip. Grimaces. Keeps writing.

She stops. Reads a line on the form. Reads it again.

ROSA
*(to the form, to the room,
to nobody)*
"Describe the source and duration of exposure." Two inches by three inches. They want my whole life in a box the size of a matchbook.

She writes. Small, precise. The pen pressing hard enough to emboss the next page.

A STAMP lands on the form. Red ink. DENIED.
 We see the stamp four times, rapid: DENIED. 1995. DENIED.
 1998. DENIED. 2002. DENIED. 2005.
 Each stamp is the same hand. Dolores's hand.
 Through the kitchen window: a truck passes. GIL's truck.
 Young Gil. He doesn't stop.
 Rosa watches the truck pass. Takes another sip of brown
 water.

ROSA

(quiet)

Mijo...

He's already gone.

INT. GIL'S TRAILER — NIGHT

The wall is small. Maybe twenty items. Printouts from
 conspiracy websites. A bumper sticker: "QUESTION
 EVERYTHING." A map of New Mexico with pins that form a
 pattern only Gil can see.
 He sits at his desk. USB microphone duct-taped to a desk
 lamp. Livestream software. Counter: 11 VIEWERS.

GIL

(into mic)

Forty-three people voted. I got all
 forty-three. My margin of victory was
 infinity percent. I was supposed to be
 a joke. I was supposed to get six votes
 and then everyone would laugh and Wade
 Sutter would install whoever he'd
 already picked because Wade Sutter
 always wins because Wade Sutter IS the
 system. The system doesn't need to
 cheat when the system IS the candidate.

The counter drops to 9.

GIL

I'm going to audit the water system in
 Aguaverde, New Mexico. Every invoice.
 Every permit. Every contract Rayborn
 Energy has signed with this town for
 twenty years. And I'm going to find the
 blank line. There's always a blank line
 — a place where someone was supposed to
 check and didn't. The blank line is the
 system's signature, and the signature
 says: nobody's watching.

He holds up Robert's Rules of Order, bristling with post-it
 notes.

The counter drops to 7.

GIL

I've been studying. Chapter nine:
 "Motions That Bring a Question Again
 Before the Assembly." You fight the

system with the system. Chemtrails,
 they deny. Fluoride, they laugh off.
 But a properly filed motion to table? A
 quorum call at 9:47 PM on a Tuesday?
 Boring is where they hide. Boring is
 where I'm going to find them.
 The counter drops to 5. Gil glances at it. Keeps going.

GIL
 Episode two-forty-four. Subscribe.
 We're going to audit a water system and
 it's going to be the most boring,
 dangerous thing you've ever watched.

INT. DESTINY'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

DESTINY PADILLA (30s) sets enchiladas in front of Gil. He's
 looking at his phone.

DESTINY
 Eat.

GIL
 I'm in the pre-eating phase. The eating
 is imminent.

DESTINY
 Schrödinger's enchilada. It's
 simultaneously eaten and not eaten
 until you commit to a fork. Eat the
 food, Dad.
 He eats.

DESTINY
 So you're going to audit the water
 system.

GIL
 It's in the charter. Article something.
 Sandra showed me. There's a whole
 section on audits. It's the most boring
 section. It's the most IMPORTANT
 section. Boring is where they hide,
 Destiny. Nobody checks the verification
 line. That's the whole architecture –
 put the truth in the boring part and
 nobody finds it.

DESTINY
 I'm not worried about the audit. I'm
 worried about what happens when you
 start seeing 1638 in every number and
 you stop sleeping because the wall
 needs another pin.

GIL

That's not going to happen.

DESTINY

It already happened. With the podcast. With the RECA applications. You get a thread and you pull it and you don't stop pulling until there's nothing left but the pull. You don't even want it done, Dad. You want to keep pulling.

GIL

That's called investigation.

DESTINY

That's called what Grandma did. And she died doing it. And you carry her case number around like a rosary and you think I don't notice but I notice everything, Dad, because I'm a nurse practitioner and noticing things is what they pay me for. Poorly. They pay me poorly for it. But they pay me.

Silence.

GIL

Your grandmother was right about the water.

DESTINY

I know she was right. I'm seeing kids at the clinic with rashes I can't explain on a street where the tap water smells like rust. I know she was right. The question is whether being right is going to destroy you the way it destroyed her.

Gil looks at her.

GIL

What street?

DESTINY

(catching herself)

I can't tell you that. That's patient information and I'm not going to be the next person in this family who loses her career to a file cabinet.

GIL

A file cabinet didn't kill your grandmother. A blank verification line killed your grandmother. A form that

nobody signed killed your grandmother.
A system that stamps DENIED on people
who are already dying killed—

DESTINY

Stop. Eat.
He eats. She watches him.

DESTINY

I'm not saying don't look. I'm saying
look with your eyes open. Not with hers.

GIL

I'm not crazy.

DESTINY

I didn't say crazy. I said worried.
Different diagnoses. Different co-pays.
She opens the door.

DESTINY

When you prove she was right — after
the audit and the evidence — what do
you do with all that space on the wall?
Gil doesn't have an answer.

DESTINY

Goodnight, Dad.
She closes the door.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBER — DAY

Gil's first official meeting. Tie from a YouTube tutorial.
Robert's Rules of Order with forty post-it notes.
Wade runs the meeting — every motion anticipated, every
vote preordained.

WADE

Item seven: renewal of the Rayborn
Energy municipal services contract.
Reviewed and in compliance. Do I hear a
motion?

COUNCIL MEMBER

So moved.

WADE

All in favor—

GIL

Wait.
Wade pauses.

GIL