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Spring May 2017

Sonoran

Brandon Valencia
Loyola Marymount University

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Sonoran

Brandon Valencia

Loyola Marymount University, brandon.valencia023@gmail.com

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Sonoran

Written by

Brandon Valencia

A thesis screenplay presented to the
Faculty of the Department of
the School of Film & Television
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting

May 2017

SONORAN

A Screenplay

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Film & Television,
Loyola Marymount University of Los Angeles, California

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

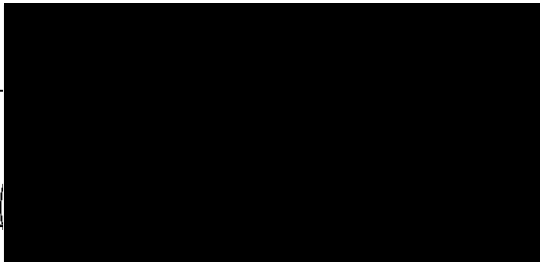
By

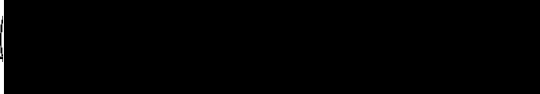
BRANDON VALENCIA

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy
for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Screenwriting

Student: Brandon Valencia Date: 5/04/17

Committee Co Chair (690):  Date: 5/04/17

Committee Co Chair (691):  Date: 5/04/17

Advanced Screenplay Project Title:

Sonoran

Criteria for advancement to candidacy:

Student has demonstrated sufficient ability and knowledge to complete the thesis project.

Approved to Candidacy

Not Approved to Candidacy

Comments

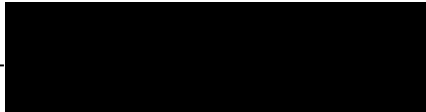
ADVANCED SCREENPLAY PROJECT APPROVAL

The Advanced Screenplay Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting submitted by the candidate fulfils the requirements and standards set forth in the University Bulletin by the Division.

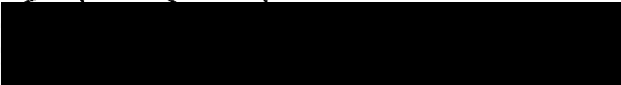
Screenplay Title: Sonoran

Student: Brandon Valencia Date: 5/04/17

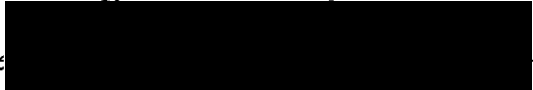
Committee Co Chair: SCWR 690 BETH SERIN

Signed:  Date: 5/12/17


Committee Co Chair: SCWR 691 Patricia K. Meyer

Signed:  Date: 5-4-17

Director of Graduate Screenwriting: Kavol Hoeffner

Signed:  Date: 5/4/2017

Dean: Stasha Uibari

Signed:  Date: 5/4/17

This feature length screenplay written by

Brandon Valencia

under the guidance of a faculty committee

from the School of Film & Television at

Loyola Marymount University, and approved

by the members of the committee, has been

presented to and accepted by the Graduate

School in partial fulfillment of the thesis

requirements for the degree of Master of

Fine Arts in Screenwriting.

Advanced Screenplay Project Committee:

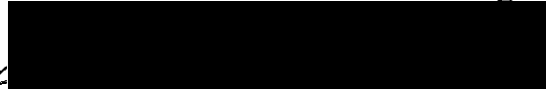
Committee Chair: Beth Serlin



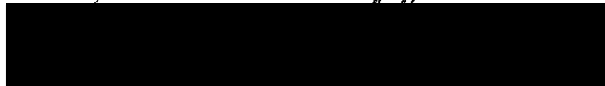
Committee Member: Patricia Meyer



Director of Graduate Screenwriting: Karol Hoeffner



Dean, School of Film & Television: Stephen G. Ujlaki



Date: 5/4/17

SONORAN

by

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FADE IN.

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY BARRIO - NIGHT

ELIAS "ELI" MARTIN, 10, Mexican-American, races past crumbling homes in his school uniform - terrified.

A MAN pushing his corn cart RINGS his bell. The neighbor's roosters CROW. An ELDERLY GRANDMA sits on her porch, smoking a cigarette, as the wind breezes through her MAYAN CHIMES.

Eli dashes to his house - coated in pink paint, with bushes full of white roses, and a handcrafted welcome sign that reads "Bless Our Home" in Spanish.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Eli storms inside, catching his breath.

His mom, DIANA MARTIN, 36, pokes her head out from the kitchen. She looks younger than her age and has long curls past her shoulders.

She holds a plate of grilled chicken with rice and beans.

NOTE: Italicized dialogue is spoken in Spanish but will have English subtitles.

DIANA

Eli, why are you home so late? It's almost dinner.

Eli's dad, FRANCISCO MARTIN, 37, construction worker with toasted skin, sits at the table. He takes the plate.

But Eli heads straight to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM

He washes his hands, scrubbing RED SPRAY PAINT off his fingers with a handful of soap - but it won't come off.

DIANA (O.S.)

Eli, hurry up and come eat.

He trembles, afraid to face his parents.

INT. KITCHEN

Eli slides between his parents at the table. Diana pours him a cup of orange juice. Francisco devours the rice and beans.

FRANCISCO

(to Eli)

I'm going to have the day off tomorrow. I can pick you up from school and we can do something fun, what do you say? We can go out to the lake and catch some fish, like we used to in the summer.

He rubs his son's hair. Eli returns a faint smile.

DIANA

He has homework to do, right, Eli? Let's just be thankful -

KNOCK-KNOCK. A fist bangs the door.

DIANA (CONT'D)

(to Francisco)

Were you expecting company?

COP (O.S.)

Police.

Eli slides his chair back, ready to make a run for it.

Horrified, Francisco grabs Diana's hand.

FRANCISCO

Diana, take Eli to the bedroom and stay there.

DIANA

Francisco, don't open it.

KNOCK-KNOCK.

COP (O.S.)

LAPD. Open the door.

FRANCISCO

Please, just go. I'll handle this.

Francisco rises from his seat. Heads toward the door.

Diana takes Eli's hand. She notices the red paint and rushes him to her room.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Francisco opens the door and sees a VETERAN COP and his YOUNG PARTNER waiting for him.

VETERAN COP
Is your son home?

FRANCISCO
(broken English)
I'm sorry?

VETERAN COP
I'd like a word with him.

Veteran Cop waves a can of RED SPRAY PAINT.

INT. FRANCISCO AND DIANA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Eli sits on the edge of the bed, scared stiff, with Diana.

VETERAN COP (O.S.)
Alright, sir, if you're not going
to respond, I'm going to need to
some ID. Now.

Diana covers her mouth in horror. She rummages through her closet - packing clothes and photo albums into a suitcase.

DIANA
What did you do?

She grabs Eli's paint-stained hands.

DIANA (CONT'D)
*You were out with those graffiti
boys, weren't you?*

Ashamed, Eli pulls his hands away.

Diana opens a drawer and grabs an envelope full of CASH - their life savings - and tosses it inside the suitcase.

She stops at her night stand. TEARS stream down her face.

Diana reaches inside her jewelry box and pulls out a GOLDEN CROSS NECKLACE.

EXT. ICE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Eli squeezes a barbed wire fence enclosing a jail yard.

He sees a row of MEXICAN ILLEGALS, shackled in handcuffs, in line to enter the bus - including Francisco and Diana,

TWO ICE OFFICERS stand behind them, guarding the line.

Eli's ANGRY TEARS drop down to the golden cross necklace wrapped around his fingers.

Crying, Francisco and Diana face their son, waving him goodbye.

A SOCIAL SERVICES WOMAN nudges Eli's shoulder, escorting him back to her car.

But Eli refuses. He reaches his hand out to them with the necklace dangling.

OLDER ELI (V.O.)

I was a ward of the state since I was ten years old. Alone in world I felt like a stranger to.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS - NIGHT

SUPER: THIRTEEN YEARS LATER

ELI, now 23, reclines on a bench, overlooking the gorgeous view of the campus with its lonely hallways and dimmed lights shining the gothic buildings.

He's more slender, with a chiseled jaw and combed black hair.

On his cheap, Goodwill-bought laptop, he types his GRADUATION SPEECH.

ELI (V.O.)

I was passed place to place,
guardian to guardian, with no hope
in sight. But that wasn't the life
I wanted. I had to find a way to
make mom and dad proud. Now I stand
before you as Magna Cum Laude on my
way to med school --

He jerks his laptop aside and runs his fingers through his hair - frustrated.

He checks his phone - 11:55 pm.

He dials his MOTHER'S phone number but he hears her voicemail instead: *"This is Diana, I'm unavailable to take your call, please leave a message at the tone."*

ELI

(into cell)

Hey, Mom. I'd thought I'd try calling you again. I'm stuck on this speech and I need your words of wisdom. Anyway, the graduation's in two weeks so I'm gonna be busy working on this thing. Call me back when you get this. Love you and Dad.

He hangs up. He grabs his laptop and continues writing. But now it won't turn on.

He presses the power button again. Nothing. He keeps pressing it. Checks the battery - dead.

INT. NORTH HOLLYWOOD. ELI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eli enters, carrying his broken computer. Framed posters of BOB MARLEY and BATMAN cover his walls, along with CPR and SAFETY TRAINING COMPLETION CERTIFICATES.

His roommate, LARRY MCCORMICK, 22, a stylish nerd trying too hard to be a hipster, fixes a computer's hardware on the coffee table while video chatting online.

LARRY

This baby here's the future. 6K video monitor, high speed graphics, three hundred gigs of memory. This is all everyone needs and then some.

ELI

Can I borrow your other laptop?

Larry takes off his headset.

LARRY

What happened to yours?

ELI

I kinda smashed it writing my speech. Or maybe it combusted 'cause of how terrible it was.

Larry ends his video chat and heads to their dinner table, filled with RAMEN NOODLES and TACO BELL wrappers.

He grabs a TEQUILA BOTTLE and two glass shots.

LARRY

Well, you're not an English major
so no one will fault you if it's
the worst speech ever written.

ELI

I'm just trying not to sound like a
pretentious asshole.

LARRY

You want to be a spinal surgeon.
Pretentious asshole comes with the
territory.

ELI

That doesn't make me feel any
better.

LARRY

It's not supposed to. But this is.

They toast and chug the tequila. Eli coughs - he can't hang.

INT. ELI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

His PHONE ALARM wakes him up. He snoozes it and checks the
time: 5:00 AM.

He wipes his eyes, checks for any missed calls - but there
are none.

Half asleep, he sits up in bed. He turns on the light,
shining his decorations - the United States and Mexican flag
hung side by side.

INT. BUS - MOVING - DAY

As the sun rises, Eli sits back, tilting his head against the
window. He observes --

THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY HOOD. LIQUOR STORES. CREDIT UNIONS.
ABANDONED SHOPS. A CROWD OF WAITRESSES, CLERKS and MAIDS
waiting at a bus stop. An OWNER opens his restaurant. SCHOOL
KIDS cross the street by themselves.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

In the middle of a morning PRE-MED LECTURE, Eli drops his
head, struggling to stay awake.

The PROFESSOR points to the chart of a skeletal spine.

PROFESSOR

Can someone tell how different risk factors like smoking or having grade 3 spondylolisthesis will affect surgical outcomes? Mr. Martin?

Eli jolts from his slumber.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Stay with us, please. I'm sure a dying patient will wait for you to get your rest.

Eli returns his attention to the power point.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

At his internship, Eli replaces the IV BAG above an ELDERLY PATIENT'S bed.

She extends her hand and drops her food tray on the ground.

Eli SIGHS. He grabs a broom from the corner of the room and sweeps the spilled jell-o.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET - DAY

Eli hops off a bus and dashes to a SENIOR LIVING CENTER, tying an apron behind his back.

He calls Diana on his cell. He hears her voice message again: *"This is Diana, I'm unavailable to take your call, please leave a message at the tone."*

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Eli rinses a dozen DISHES, spraying each dirty plate with a hose before adding it to the tray.

He places the tray inside the dishwasher, wipes the sweat off his forehead. He checks the time on his phone - 8:55 PM.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET - NIGHT

He sees his bus TAKE OFF without him. He chases after it, waving his arms, but it's no use.

He takes a deep breath in the middle of the street, waiting for the next bus.

EXT. TACO STAND - NIGHT

Eli sits by himself at a table with an empty plate.

The cook, OSCAR DUARTE (55), heavy and mustached, hands Eli another plate of tacos.

OSCAR
Here, Eli.

ELI
Thanks, Oscar.

The only OTHER MEXICAN CUSTOMER smokes a cigarette, wanting to be anywhere but home.

INT. ELI'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eli continues writing his speech on the dinner table, surrounded by Larry's laptop and several ANATOMY BOOKS.

Larry's knocked out on the couch with an empty Pizza box lying flat on his stomach.

Eli opens his Facebook page - zooms in on a picture of his parents - PRESENT DAY Franciso and Diana in Mexico.

EXT. ELI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eli sinks into his bed, checks the time on his phone again: 2:00 AM.

He checks his missed calls: nothing from his parents.

He sets his ALARM for 5:00 AM. Turns off the light. He lays in bed and tucks Diana's cross necklace underneath his shirt.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS - DAY

Eli heads to class in the middle of an ANTI-LABOR PROTEST. DOZENS of COLLEGE STUDENTS hold PICKET SIGNS that read "FAIR WAGES, FAIR LIVING", "GREED NO MORE" and "JAIL REYNOLDS".

He pushes through, looking for someone. He spots JESSICA REYNOLDS, 25, leading the protest. She's spunky with a no-nonsense attitude that scares the boys away.

ELI
Jessica. How's everything going here?

JESSICA

We're hanging in there. We've been out here since the morning but we're just about to --

ELI

Yeah, that's great. Listen, can I see your anthro homework before class starts?

JESSICA

I thought you'd be out here to help us? We're going to be protesting Silver Lining all day today.

ELI

Silver Lining?

JESSICA

The fashion company?

ELI

Yeah, I know what they are. My mom and aunt work there, back in Mexico. I didn't know their office was here.

JESSICA

You should stay. We could really use you.

ELI

Sure, after class, maybe. How long are you guys going to be out here for?

JESSICA

As long as it takes for the CEO to agree to pay fair wages to his workers. Like your mom and aunt.

ELI

Who's the CEO?

JESSICA

My dad.

He shoots her a surprised look.

INT. WILSHIRE BUILDING. MEETING ROOM - DAY

C.E.O. LOUIS REYNOLDS, 52, an age-defying, cross-fit executive, peeks through the blinds, monitoring the crowd.

A metallic "SILVER LINING CLOTHING CO" logo is engraved on the wall.

His C.O.O., TIM MARKS, 49, nerdy and bald, slams his mug at the end of the table.

TIM

Sir, she's still down there.

Louis pinpoints Jessica standing in the middle of the protest, waving her picket sign.

LOUIS

Why is she doing this? She's making me look bad.

TIM

With all due respect, sir, you're doing it to yourself if we don't get this handled.

Louis holds a meeting with the BOARD OF DIRECTORS - five middle-aged suits looking to make a quick buck.

LOUIS

This needs to end before the news crews come out.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET

Louis and Tim exit the building and approach the cheering crowd. They clap LOUDER.

Jessica and Eli meet him halfway. She lowers her sign.

JESSICA

Mr. Reynolds.

LOUIS

Cut it out. Just stop.

ELI

I should probably go --

Jessica grabs Eli's arm.

JESSICA

You know why we're here and we're not going to leave until you agree to our terms.

LOUIS

You're just like your mother, you know that?

Jessica returns a blank stare.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Alright, what do you want?

Jessica raises her sign in front of him. It reads, "LIVES OVER PROFITS".

JESSICA

Thailand, Haiti, China, Indonesia, Mexico. Silver Lining's got branches in all of these countries and each one of them has violated international human rights laws.

LOUIS

I can pull your allowance. Do you want that?

JESSICA

A woman killed herself during work hours in Mexico, and her family is suing you for millions. Can't say that's good for business.

ELI

I have to go to class --

JESSICA

Stay.

A Protestor hands Jessica a sign with a picture of CHRISTINA HERNANDEZ, a Mexican Silver Lining factory worker, with her birth and death date underneath: "1995-2017".

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Her name was Christina Hernandez. She chose death rather than work another hour for you. She was my age and his family's your employees.

Jessica points to Eli.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Go ahead, say something obnoxious.

Louis refuses to look Eli in the eye.

LOUIS

Look --

JESSICA

We're demanding that you update health codes at all of your factories, inspect outdated machinery --

LOUIS

This is not how I raised you.

JESSICA

Raise the minimum to a decent living wage.

(to Eli)

I don't think your mom's living too well, right?

LOUIS

Aha! See, that's a government issue - not up to me. Why don't you go boycott those countries?

JESSICA

Is this really what Grandpa would have wanted when you took over his company?

The Protestors BOO Louis and Tim - startling them.

LOUIS

Silver Lining clothing company is handling the Hernandez lawsuit. You can protest all you'd like.

(to Eli)

Kid, we're trying to do better.

JESSICA

Try harder.

Eli phone interrupts them - it's an UNKNOWN number.

ELI

(to Jessica)

I'll see you in class.

He eyes Louis, then heads through the crowd.

LOUIS

(to Jessica)

I really miss you. You should come home sometime.

Louis and Tim head back inside the building.

Jessica raises her sign higher and returns to the rest of the Protestors.

Free of the crowd, Eli takes the call.

 ELI
 Mom?

 MARTHA (O.S.)
 Elias?

Eli covers his other ear to listen closer.

 ELI
 Mom?

 MARTHA (O.S.)
 Elias, it's me, your Aunt Martha.

 ELI
 (heavy Spanish accent)
 *Aunt Martha, where's my mom and
 dad?*

 MARTHA (O.S.)
 Aren't they with you?

 ELI
 No? Why would they be here?

INT. FACTORY. CUTTING ROOM. GUERRERO, MEXICO - DAY

A sweatshop nightmare.

Dozens of FEMALE EMPLOYEES cut and sew T-SHIRTS and SWEATERS at the SILVER LINING CLOTHING COMPANY FACTORY.

They're exhausted, working overtime in a dark room, full of outdated sewing machines. Their bodies glisten with sweat and grime. They breathe loudly for more oxygen.

MARTHA, 45, on her cell, powers down her sewing machine.

INTERCUT: PHONE CALL

 MARTHA
 *They wanted it to be a surprise to
 see you graduate. They left two
 weeks ago and I haven't heard from
 them since.*

ELI

What are you saying?

MARTHA

*I went to their house earlier today
and they weren't there. My love,
they're supposed to be with you.*

ELI

With me? I'm sorry, I have to go.

He hangs up. Eli paces - frantic.

INT. FACTORY. CUTTING ROOM - DAY

Martha turns off her phone and wipes a tear.

Her co-worker, JULISSA ALVAREZ, 32, dark-skinned, with bags under her eyes, SEWS the neckline of a sweater.

She notices Martha sniffing.

JULISSA

Everything okay?

Martha powers on the sewing machine, returning back to work.

MARTHA

*I'm getting worried about my sister
and brother-in-law.*

JULISSA

*Don't you worry, I'll pray for them
tonight.*

She adds the finishing touches to the hem of the sweater.

Julissa checks her phone - 4:00 pm. She turns off her sewing machine and tosses the sweater onto the finished pile.

She wipes her hands on her jeans and reaches for her purse.

MARTHA

*Where are you going? You don't get
out until seven.*

JULISSA

*I have an appointment with the
lawyer today. I have to leave early
if I'm going to make it on time.*

MARTHA

Does the boss know that?

Julissa turns around and sees their SUPERVISOR pacing at the back of the station, monitoring the rest of the workers.

JULISSA

As long as the daily quota's filled, he won't notice. I just have five sweaters left. Can you cover for me?

MARTHA

Be careful they don't catch you. You heard what happened to Christina. "Suicide", my ass.

She nods at the Supervisor.

Julissa pushes her chair in and dashes out the door.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Julissa enters, shakes the hand of the lawyer, DON LORENZO REYES, 65, heavy-set with uneven scruff.

JAIME

Doña Julissa. Please, sit.

She sits across from him in a desk stacked with immigration documents, birth certificate copies, and visa applications.

It's as if he's renting the room - no signs of family pictures or a framed attorney's license.

He offers her a bowl of mints. She declines.

Lorenzo pulls out her file, glances at it for a moment.

LORENZO

Doña Julissa, you wish to visit the United States to see your son?

JULISSA

Henry lives in Yuma, Arizona, with my younger sister. I paid for his papers five years ago, but I haven't seen him since.

She pulls out his picture from her wallet and shows it to him. HENRY, 10, is the spitting image of his mom.

LORENZO

Adorable child. I see here in your application that you've been employed at a maquiladora for two years - Silver Lining - and you have a home under your name. You are the current guardian of your niece and nephew, the children of your eldest sister, who's now deceased, correct?

JULISSA

Correct. She died of breast cancer last year. I've been taking care of her kids ever since. There's Quetzal, who's twenty-four and little Eva, who's ten. She goes to school every day, she's well fed, well-clothed --

LORENZO

And the young man? Does he work?

Julissa hesitates, looks away.

JULISSA

He works different jobs - mechanic, cashier, waiter. He helps me pay the bills.

LORENZO

I see. You wrote here that you can speak English?

JULISSA

*(rough American accent)
Yes. I try the best I can.*

LORENZO

You're well qualified, Doña Julissa, and there are no outstanding errors preventing your approval. However, there is one irregularity. You have three thousand dollars in your bank account. If this firm represents you at the American consulate, a new policy states that the minimum for visa approval is five thousand.

Julissa's taken aback. She tries to peek at her application.

JULISSA

There has to be some mistake.

LORENZO

*Did you have a time frame for
visiting your son?*

JULISSA

*It's his eleventh birthday next
month. I wanted to have my papers
ready by then.*

LORENZO

*Is there any chance you can
accumulate the necessary two-
thousand by then?*

Julissa lowers her head, ashamed.

JULISSA

*I make six dollars a day, Don
Lorenzo, working eight hour shifts.
It's taking me five years to save
for the three grand I have now.*

Lorenzo slides her application back into a folder.

JULISSA (CONT'D)

*Is there anything you can do? Some
payment plan? I can pay the rest
when I come back, I swear.*

LORENZO

*In some cases, there are
exceptions. You're thirty three,
right? You look younger.*

Lorenzo folds his glasses and slips them into his pocket. He gazes at her breasts underneath her wrinkled shirt.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

*There is, in fact, something you
can do instead, perhaps?*

JULISSA

I'm sorry?

LORENZO

*How badly do you want to see your
son, Doña Julissa?*

She catches his eyes staring at her chest.

Julissa rises from her seat - wipes a tear.

JULISSA

*Thank you for your time, Don
Lorenzo.*

She adjusts her purse and exits the office, leaving a baffled Don Lorenzo behind.

INT. ELI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eli, on his cell, sits on the edge of his bed reading off GOOGLE TRANSLATE and GOOGLE MAPS on Larry's laptop.

ELI

*Aunt Martha, are you sure that's
the last place my parents called
from?*

AUNT (O.S.)

*Yes. You can't be serious about
doing this.*

He types in his response.

ELI

I have to find them.

AUNT (O.S.)

*What if they're not there? You'd
risk your life.*

He types.

ELI

*And I ruined theirs. They had to
give up what they wanted thirteen
years ago because of me. I won't
let it happen again.*

He zooms in on Northern Mexico in Google Maps, getting a closer look at a remote village in the middle of the desert.

EXT. 24 HOUR TACO STAND - NIGHT

Eli approaches the counter. Oscar stops cleaning the grill to take his order.

OSCAR

The usual?

ELI

I'm not here for food.

Oscar steps away from the cash register.

ELI (CONT'D)

I need some help. More than twenty years ago, you smuggled my parents into Los Angeles before I was born.

OSCAR

And this matters to me how?

ELI

They're missing.

Oscar faces him - giving him his full attention.

ELI (CONT'D)

They left two weeks ago to make it to my graduation. The last place my mom called my Aunt from was a village called Planos Cielos, way deep in the Sonoran desert. I need you to take me there.

Oscar bursts into laughter.

OSCAR

Get the fuck outta here, kid.

ELI

These are my parents. You have parents, don't you?

OSCAR

They're dead.

ELI

And I don't want mine to be. You've helped us out before. C'mon, what do you think?

OSCAR

I'm thinking you either order something, or leave me the hell alone. What I used to is none of your goddamn business, and I'm sure as hell not going back there.

ELI

Forget about it, then. I'll pay someone else.

Eli turns away but Oscar WHISTLES him back.

OSCAR

How much?

ELI

Twelve-hundred. That's how much
I've got saved up.

Oscar shakes his head. Chuckles.

OSCAR

Two grand. I know the place you
want to go, Planos Cielos. It's a
cheap price compared to what others
will charge.

ELI

You're out of your mind. Thanks for
nothing. And I'm getting my food
somewhere else.

Oscar FLIPS HIM OFF.

Eli walks away.

EXT. ELI'S APARTMENT SPACE - NIGHT

Behind his apartment building, Eli rummages through his
storage space - a beer pong table, chairs, and a STUFFED
BROWN BEAR.

Larry comes up behind him.

LARRY

That's Mr. Pawsworth.
(off Eli's look)
I brought him from home when we
first moved in. Don't judge me.

Eli pulls out a first aid kit and a flashlight.

ELI

Have you seen the generators?

LARRY

Wait - you're not seriously going?

Eli hands him Mr. Pawsworth.

ELI

I gotta find them. Even if it takes
going out in the middle of the
desert by myself.

LARRY

I thought you were going to hire someone?

ELI

I don't have the money.

LARRY

Maybe if you just wait a little longer --

ELI

It's been two weeks. If anything happens to them, how am I supposed to live with that? I have a chance to save them this time.

LARRY

Dude, you're going three hundred miles into the desert. What if you get lost? You're a pre-med major, you can't operate tracking satellites, you don't know coordinates Your GPS signal will probably fry. You need to think clearly about this.

ELI

What else is there to think about?

LARRY

Look, if you're going to go, at least be smart and have someone drive you who knows the area.

Eli returns to the storage closet.

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Eli places his mom's necklace on the counter.

Used guitars and bicycles cover the walls. Amps, stereos and trombone cases block the entrance.

The SHOP OWNER raises the necklace with cheeto-stained fingers and inspects it.

SHOP OWNER

I'll give you two hundred for it.

ELI

What? No, that's real gold.

SHOP OWNER

Maybe some girl would wanna put it
on her doll or somethin'.

ELI

It's worth twice as much as that. I
need eight hundred.

SHOP OWNER

(scoffs)

Most I'll give you is two-fifty,
and that's cause I'm feelin' nice
today.

ELI

Seven hundred.

SHOP OWNER

I ain't negotiating, kid, take the
two-fifty or go someone else with
this shit.

ELI

It's not shit, alright?

Eli gazes at the necklace, shining bright, then --
He snatches it from the Shop Owner's hand and walks out.

EXT. 24 HOUR TACO STAND - NIGHT

Eli returns to Oscar's order window.

Oscar GROANS - drops his frying pan.

Eli slides him an envelope full of cash.

ELI

I have sixteen hundred. I sold some
books and my TV. It's the most I
can come up with. I can pay the
rest when we come back.

Oscar counts the money...and tosses it at his feet.

OSCAR

Come back when you have the rest.

BAM! Jessica slams TWO THOUSAND dollars on the counter,
passes it to Oscar.

JESSICA

Here you go.

ELI
What are you doing?

Eli turns around and sees Larry sitting by the tables.

ELI (CONT'D)
What is this?

JESSICA
We're coming with you.

ELI
I can't let you do this.

JESSICA
You know who my dad is. It's people like him that are responsible for people like your mom and dad. Let me help you - let us help you.

ELI
(to Larry)
You said this was a bad idea?

Larry rises from his seat.

LARRY
Don't get me wrong, it totally is but those generators you were looking for are in my room so good luck taking them out...unless you let us come with you.

Eli shoots them a smile.

Annoyed, Oscar spits in the trash bin.

ELI
You do know we're walking literally into the middle of nowhere.

LARRY
UFO crash sights, buried treasure, chupacabras. What can go wrong?

Eli and Larry fist bump.

OSCAR
We leave in two days. Six am. Don't be late.

Jessica pats Eli on the shoulder and returns to the car.

Larry whispers in Eli's ear.

LARRY

You know we're going to need
Matheson, right?

INT. GARAGE - DAY

MATHESON GRANT (24), athletic, frat-boy, with a surfer's tan living on his parents' Calabasas ranch, waves a CROSSBOW in front of Eli.

MATHESON

I'm in.

He decorates his walls with various HUNTING GEAR - rifles, camouflaged suits, binoculars, machetes and knives, along with handguns, pistols, and ammunition.

ELI

You realize I'm not exactly going
on vacation?

Matheson hands Eli the crossbow.

Eli examines it like a rare animal.

Matheson yanks a CASE behind him. He zips it open, pulling out a RAZOR and a BAGGIE OF COCAINE.

He SNORTS a line of coke, closes his eyes, enjoying the rush.

MATHESON

When do we leave?

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

At the crack of dawn, Eli, Jessica, and Larry sip on coffee while Oscar inspects his van's engine.

They're each strapped with an oversized CAMPING BAG, a tool belt, and baseball hats.

Oscar shuts the hood.

OSCAR

You ready? Let's get this over
with.

As they board the van, they stop at the sound of a WHISTLE.

Matheson runs from around the corner in a desert camouflage suit, face-painted like he's ready to kill the VietCong.

He carries a large DUFFLE BAG over his shoulder.

MATHESON
Hold up, wait for me.

JESSICA
You gotta be kidding me.

MATHESON
What the hell, you're going?

JESSICA
Imagine that, my reaction's the same.

ELI
(to Jessica)
We need him. He's the muscle.
Aren't you, Mat?

MATHESON
Damn straight.
(to Jessica)
This could be like our second date.

JESSICA
We had coffee. Once.

MATHESON
Oh, that's what you call "coffee"?

LARRY
Well, the cat's outta that bag.

Eli looks back at Jessica. She shrugs.

Matheson shrieks in excitement as he pushes Larry out of the passenger seat and hops inside. The van pulls away.

EXT. DESERT. SONORA, MEXICO - DAY

High winds ROAR through the barren wasteland. Tumbleweeds rustle past cacti for hundreds of miles. Flies hover above a BUZZARD'S CARCASS, rotting in the dirt.

The brutal sun scorches the SONORAN DESERT.

Two Mexicans - a MALE MIGRANT and his WIFE, mid 40's, scurry across the rugged terrain, illegally crossing the U.S./Mexico border.

Starving, dehydrated, and out of breath, they carry more backpacks than they can handle.

A BRIGHT RED LIGHT flickers between a pile of rocks.

BANG! A fired bullet echoes throughout the sunbaked prairie.

The Couple freezes. The Male Migrant rotates in every direction, but there's no one in sight.

The red light flickers faster.

Frightened, he creeps toward it when his torn boot stomps on a copper object.

He kneels and picks up a SNIPER'S BULLET, still hot. He breathes aloud, his heart racing.

BANG! Another round fires - SPLITS the head of his Wife as she falls dead to the ground.

MALE MIGRANT

Luisa.

The Male Migrant SCREAMS in agony, dashing to his wife. BANG! Another bullet pierces his neck, killing him in his tracks. He plunges to the dirt and drops his backpacks.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. HILLTOP - DAY

DALE FORGE, 65, looks at the dead bodies through his SNIPER SCOPE. He's a grizzly, bearded, grey-haired hunter with wild hair, sun-baked skin, and the letter "R" CARVED onto his right cheek.

He SPITS, grabs TWO BODY BAGS and rises from the dirt, standing tall with a left PROSTHETIC LEG.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Dale limps his way to the bodies. He retrieves a remote control from his pocket and flicks a SWITCH.

The red light - a SIGNAL INDICATOR - stops flashing.

Dale towers over the dead Migrants, without a hint of remorse. He zips open the body bags.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER. CHECKPOINT - DAY

Oscar SLAMS the brakes. A line of cars reach the checkpoint booth.

A BORDER PATROL GUARD inspects the vehicle of the car in front of them.

Eli looks out the window at the sign that reads "BIENVENIDO A MEXICO" (Welcome to Mexico).

Oscar rolls up to the Guard, shows him his ID. Eli takes a deep breath. They're in.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

The van speeds along a single road, surrounded by an abyss of sand and dust.

The heat wave boils the air, blurring the never-ending horizon.

BUZZARDS glide above canyons, following the van deeper into the heart of the desert.

I.E. OSCAR'S VAN - DAY

Oscar takes a sharp left off-course.

He drives the van past a hurdle of ditches, venturing farther from the main road.

Eli, Jessica, and Larry grab onto their seats, jostling side-to-side.

Matheson presses his hand against the dashboard.

MATHESON

Careful, amigo. I know you're used to crossing borders but let's take it easy there.

Oscar shoots him an irritated look - *this guy for real?*

Larry digs into his backpack and demonstrates a collection of gadgets to Eli and Jessica.

He hands them an ADVANCED GPS SATELLITE.

LARRY

Check this out. A friend of mine, who works at Motorola, let me borrow this. It's a prototype that captures signal even from the farthest satellite.

(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)

If we were to pop a tire from where we are now, we'll be able to find the closest town for help.

Eli examines the GPS.

ELI

What else you got?

LARRY

Extra phone batteries, travel generators, some cooling packs, and a flare gun.

Eli hands Jessica the GPS while he takes the flare gun.

ELI

What do we need this for?

LARRY

Dude, haven't you seen Cast Away?

Eli hands it back to him. Larry refuses.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Hold onto it for now, I have a mess on my bag.

As Larry reorganizes his gadgets, Eli slips the flare gun in his pocket.

Matheson opens his duffle bag.

MATHESON

McCormick, we don't need them little toys. I got it all taken care of.

He pulls out a MACHETE.

ELI

Is that really necessary?

He drops the machete, takes out a CROSSBOW.

MATHESON

You like that, huh? Ain't no bean dip gonna mess with us now.

OSCAR

Quit it with that shit.

MATHESON

Lighten up, man. Check this out.

He puts the crossbow back in his duffle bag and grabs a GLOCK 37. He waves it in front of Oscar.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
It's loaded, too.

He cocks the gun.

OSCAR
Put that down.

Oscar slaps Matheson's hand out of the way, loses control of the van and CRASHES against the arm of a Joshua tree.

Everyone hits their heads against the ceiling.

MATHESON
Jesus, Juanito, what'd I say about taking it easy?

OSCAR
You call me that again, and I'll kick you off this van, you got that?

Matheson rubs his head from the pain.

MATHESON
How the hell do you go from smuggling Mexicanos to serving tacos? Aren't you losing a shit ton of money?

OSCAR
What do you know about making money, huh?

MATHESON
Dad's the head of a Ventura law firm. Some day, he'll make me partner.

Oscar bursts into laughter.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
What the hell's so goddamn funny?

OSCAR
Keep dreaming, there, buddy.
(to Eli)
Still hanging on daddy's nuts and he thinks himself a man.

Eli ignores him, staying out of their conversation.

MATHESON

What'd you say? If you gotta say something, hermano, you say it in English.

JESSICA

Matheson.

OSCAR

Eli, this asshole better shut his mouth before I shoot him.

MATHESON

English, goddamnit.

ELI

Matheson, you wanna shut the hell up?

Matheson turns to the window.

MATHESON

He started it.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

The van speeds deeper into heavy terrain, dozens of miles away from the main road, dodging a field of large rocks.

Suddenly, a LIGHT flashes underneath a tumbleweed --
RECORDING.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Dale Forge exits his truck and yanks a dead FOX lying between the two body bags.

He carries it over his shoulder - smothered in flies.

He limps toward his trailer in a sand patch, overlooking the Sonoran desert. Nothing in sight for miles.

Behind his trailer, he dries his laundry in a CLOTHING LINE and powers his electricity with dual high-powered generators.

He hears a BEEPING SOUND from inside. He drops the dead fox inside a freezer chest by the porch and rushes inside.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

The mounted heads of a RAM, a WOLF and a MOUNTAIN LION hang on his wall.

A pile of rotten coyote meat lies on the sink. Near his bed is the WATCH STATION where SIX COMPUTER MONITORS surveil different locations, rotating the footage.

The location on the bottom right MONITOR #1 - PLANOS CIELOS...with Oscar's van pulling in.

EXT. PLANOS CIELOS - DAY

Oscar hits the brakes. Eli and Jessica jumps out, carrying only their water bags.

JESSICA

Eli, wait.

They dash toward an abandoned GHOST TOWN a mile away.

Matheson takes a sip of his canteen but leaves his water bag on the passenger seat.

Larry straps on his gadget-filled backpack.

MATHESON

Why are you taking all that for?
We'll only be here a minute.

Larry unstraps his backpack, leaves it in the van.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. PLANOS CIELOS - DAY

Up ahead, Eli reaches Planos Cielos - a ransacked village with destroyed SHACK HOMES marked with graffiti.

"RUN" is smeared with blood red spray paint on a broken down wall at the entrance.

Inside the homes, built out of bricks with aluminum roofing, he sees torn couches and broken pipes on the floor.

Eli pokes his head inside every shack home - no one's there. He panics, losing breath.

Jessica catches up to him.

JESSICA

Eli.

INT. SHACK HOME - DAY

Eli KICKS a door open.

ELI
Mom? Dad?

Nothing. Only cockroaches scurrying along the walls.

He spots a landline telephone on top of a stool. He picks it up - there's a static dial. It CONNECTS on and off.

He dials Martha's number but it doesn't connect.

Eli SLAMS the phone down, tosses it across the room.

JESSICA
Hey, we're just getting started.

ELI
There's nothing out here.

Jessica holds his hand.

JESSICA
We're going to find them.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Oscar lights a cigarette.

Suddenly, a FLASHING RED LIGHT hidden between a pile of rocks catches his eye.

He drops his cigarette. Stunned.

INT. WATCH ROOM - DAY

Dale sits, UNLOCKS the opening switch on his prosthetic leg.
But he sees Matheson and Larry walking away from Oscar's van.
And on the left hand corner of the screen...is a timer --
...with THIRTY SECONDS LEFT.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Oscar jumps out of the van, falls to his knees.

He pulls a ripped ELECTRICAL WIRE underneath the tires...leading to the flashing red light.

OSCAR
Not today, Satan.

He WHISTLES at Matheson and Larry, waving his arms.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
We have to go! Now!

From half a mile ahead, Larry and Matheson look back.

MATHESON
What's his problem?

Oscar WHISTLES again.

I.E. OSCAR'S VAN - DAY

Desperate, Oscar hops back inside the van. He REVS the engine and HONKS his horn.

EXT. PLANOS CIELOS - DAY

Eli and Jessica run outside, alarmed by the noise.

ELI
What's he doing?

I.E. OSCAR'S VAN - DAY

Oscar HONKS again and again.

The red light FLICKS faster.

OSCAR
Fuck this.

He reverses, and shifts into drive.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Matheson sprints toward the van.

MATHESON
Son of a bitch. He's leaving us.

I.E. OSCAR'S VAN - MOVING - DAY

Oscar SLAMS the accelerator in a breathless panic.

OSCAR
God, please forgive me.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Matheson gets closer.

MATHESON
Hey! You have our stuff!

I.E. OSCAR'S VAN - MOVING - DAY

Oscar grabs Matheson's backpack from the passenger seat and CHUCKS it out the window.

He CROSSES HIMSELF and drives off.

EXT. PLANOS CIELOS - DAY

Eli and Jessica follow Matheson and Larry.

JESSICA
What the hell is he doing?

INT. WATCH STATION - DAY

Dale hovers his finger above the "ENTER" key - doubting whether he should stop the countdown.

...FIVE SECONDS LEFT.

EXT. PLANOS CIELOS - DAY

Matheson dashes past the flashing red light.

MATHESON
Come back here! Hey!

He pulls out a NINE MILLIMETER HANDGUN from his ANKLE STRAP and fires THREE ROUNDS at the van. BANG! BANG! BANG!

And suddenly --

BOOM! A BOMB EXPLODES out from the dirt, sending Matheson FLYING to the ground.

Eli, Jessica and Larry fall on their backs, engulfed by a massive DUST CLOUD.

Eli wipes the debris of sand and pebbles from his face, COUGHING.

He opens his eyes and sees a MYSTERIOUS FEMALE FIGURE standing on the other side of the smoke.

The wind blows through her loose curls. Motionless.

ELI

Mom?

Eli rises, chases after her.

The silhouette FADES along with the smoke.

He dashes out of the dust cloud, pumping his chest - but she's nowhere to be found.

He turns in every direction but all he can see is the vast wasteland of desert and Oscar's van disappearing into the blistering horizon.

EXT. WATCH STATION - DAY

Dale reclines in his chair. He lights a cigar.

He powers down his monitors, and grips a framed photo of him, his MEXICAN WIFE and their CHILD DAUGHTER on his desk.

He cleans the edges of the frame, sets it back on the table.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Jessica helps Larry stand.

JESSICA

Are you okay?

He wipes the dust off his glasses.

LARRY

Did we just get bombed?

Matheson struggles off the ground.

Jessica grabs his shoulders and lifts him up. He groans.

JESSICA

Matheson.

MATHESON
Goddamn, that hurt.

He CRACKS IT.

Eli trembles. Jessica notices.

JESSICA
Eli?

ELI
I saw my mom.

JESSICA
What? Where?

Eli points to his feet.

ELI
She was here, and now she's not.

Jessica gently slaps his cheek.

JESSICA
Eli, I need you to focus. Oscar
took off. You need to call him.

Eli checks his pockets.

ELI
I left my phone in my other bag. I
just have a canteen and a sandwich.

LARRY
I had all my gear in there, too.

MATHESON
And my weapons bag. He couldn't
have tossed the right one?

JESSICA
Eli, I have my phone. Do you know
Oscar's number? You need to call
him.

Eli covers his eyes - clearly disoriented.

ELI
I think so.

He dials his number. It rings...rings...and rings.

ELI (CONT'D)
There's no service.

LARRY

And the prototype's in the van.

Jessica finds Oscar's van's TIRE TRACKS marked on the dirt.

JESSICA

Okay, okay, let's not freak out.
Look, we just have to follow his
tire tracks. He knows where the
main road is --

She points North.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Or was it this way?

She points South.

MATHESON

I'm definitely not going to follow
you.

LARRY

We have four phones, four canteens,
a sandwich and a bag of chips.

MATHESON

"We"? Buddy, these are my chips.

ELI

I have this.

Eli pulls out the flare gun from his pocket.

Matheson kicks the dirt.

MATHESON

Shit!

ELI

Jessica's right. If we follow the
tracks, maybe it'll take us to the
main road, and hopefully someone
will see us or we can get a better
signal. It's the only way.

Larry circles the massive CRATER left behind by the smoke
bomb. He kneels and spots the same ELECTRICAL WIRE found
underneath Oscar's van, torn from the explosion.

LARRY

Someone's out here.

Everyone turns to him.

LARRY (CONT'D)

These cables aren't ancient like the rest of these homes. These are carbon fiber. It was wired to whatever it was that exploded, which means it had to begin somewhere.

MATHESON

What the hell are you saying? That someone did this on purpose?

Larry shrugs.

Eli faces the abandoned Planos Cielos, covering his eyes from the burning sun.

EXT. STREET. PUERTO PENASCO. MEXICO - DAY

Barefoot TEEN BOYS whistle, running with a slew of CHICKENS in the middle of the dirt road.

A COMMERCIAL BOX TRUCK HONKS, driving though a street full of empty restaurants near the edge of the Sonoran desert.

INT. BOX TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

A DOZEN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS sit packed with no room to move, sitting shoulder to shoulder. They take deep breaths for more oxygen.

Julissa closes her eyes, trying to sleep. She holds her niece, EVA ALVAREZ, 10, slim, missing teeth, in her arms.

Her nephew, QUETZAL ALVAREZ, 24, a muscular gangster with AZTEC TATTOOS on his arms, wipes sweat off his forehead.

CLARA MORENO, 54, indigenous, HYPERVENTILATES across the floor. She POUNDS her fist on the aluminum wall.

CLARA

I can't breathe.

BAM! BAM! The Coyote SLAMS the back.

COYOTE

Shut the fuck up back there.

Her husband, MANUEL MORENO, 56, husky and short-tempered, squeezes her wrist red.

MANUEL

You're going to get us thrown out.

CLARA

You're hurting me.

Quetzal WHISTLES at Manuel.

QUETZAL

Let her go.

Julissa tugs his hand.

JULISSA

Quetzal, ignore them.

MANUEL

*Mind your fucking business,
asshole.*

QUETZAL

The fuck did you say to me?

Quetzal rises from the floor. Julissa and the other Immigrants push him back.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The truck parks by the air pump. A middle-aged COYOTE, with a cowboy hat and snake boots, hops from the driver's seat and lifts open the tailgate.

The Immigrants huddle to the back of the truck, blinded by the burst of sunlight.

COYOTE

Get up. Hurry your asses.

The Coyote points to Manuel and CLARA.

Terrified, they crawl away.

INT. TRUCK FLATBED

The Coyote leaps inside, crushing the hands and feet of the Immigrants trying to stop him.

FIRST IMMIGRANT

Stop, they're not doing anything.

SECOND IMMIGRANT

This isn't the drop.

COYOTE
Get outta my way.

The Coyote grabs Clara's arm and pulls her out. Julissa emerges, blocking their path.

JULISSA
Please, don't do this.

COYOTE
You wanna join them?

He pushes Julissa to the edge of the truck, SMACKING her head against the aluminum.

Quetzal jumps at the Coyote and PUNCHES his nose.

QUETZAL
Don't touch her, you piece of shit.

The Coyote clenches his fist and JABS Quetzal in the stomach.

JULISSA
Quetzal.

Eva hides behind Julissa, CRYING.

The Coyote grabs Quetzal by the neck and TOSSES him out of the flatbed.

He pushes Manuel and Clara out, as well.

JULISSA (CONT'D)
No, please, let us stay.

He YANKS Julissa's hair and HURLS her into the parking lot as she struggles to grab Eva's hand.

JULISSA (CONT'D)
Eva, come with me.

COYOTE
Out.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The Coyote springs out and shuts the back of the truck.

Quetzal lunges forward, grabbing the Coyote by his shoulder.

QUETZAL
You're not going to leave us here.

The Coyote whips out his PISTOL from its holster.

Quetzal raises his arms, backs away.

COYOTE

Touch me again, asshole. C'mon, I dare you.

Julissa stands in front of Quetzal.

JULISSA

Please, stop.

QUETZAL

Get out of the way, Auntie.

JULISSA

We paid you with everything that we had. I'm begging you, we have nothing left.

COYOTE

I have to thin the herd before I get to the border. Now back the hell away.

QUETZAL

You gonna shoot me, asshole? Shoot me.

The Coyote cocks his pistol.

COYOTE

You don't think I know who you are? Eh, narco?

Quetzal SPITS at his feet.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

Gimme your piece.

QUETZAL

I ain't got nothin' on me.

The Coyote tips his pistol between Julissa's eyes.

COYOTE

Gimme your piece or I will shoot her in front of you.

Though hesitant, Quetzal retrieves a .45 CALIBER from the back of his jeans.

The Coyote snatches it off his hands and heads back to the driver's seat - finger gripped on the trigger.

JULISSA
Please, don't leave us.

He shuts the door and drives off.

Quetzal swings his arms in the air, SCREAMS in frustration, echoing throughout the rural street.

JULISSA (CONT'D)
What is wrong with you? Why would you bring that with us?

QUETZAL
I've got some assholes following me. You think I'm coming out here unprotected?

JULISSA
Some protection it gave us.

Julissa crouches to Eva.

JULISSA (CONT'D)
You okay, love?

She nods, wipes her tears.

QUETZAL
Everything's going to be alright.

Julissa pushes his chest.

JULISSA
All of our money's gone and we're still in Mexico.

QUETZAL
Big deal. We're at the edge. It's just a two day walk if we go straight through.

Julissa raises her hand, silencing him. She holds Eva's hand and approaches Manuel and Clara.

JULISSA
Are you two okay?

Manuel holds Clara hand and turns away, ignoring her.

JULISSA (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

MANUEL
New Mexico.

JULISSA
Come with us.
 (to Quetzal)
You brought the map, right?

Quetzal unzips his backpack and pulls out a MAP of the U.S./MEXICO BORDER.

QUETZAL
Julissa, we don't need them.

MANUEL
Where are you going?

JULISSA
Yuma, Arizona. That's where my son lives. I'm Julissa, this is my niece, Eva, and my nephew, Quetzal. What are your names?

Manuel looks at Clara, hesitant to respond.

MANUEL
Manuel. This is my wife, Clara.

JULISSA
We can get through this. We know the path to cross through.

They adjust their backpacks, ready to follow them.

QUETZAL
We better start walking, right?

They all look out at the Sonoran Desert - the Gates of Hell.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Eli twists the knob of a rusted WATER TAP, sticking out from the ground.

Jessica, Matheson and Larry follow Oscar's tire tracks, deeper into the barren wasteland.

Larry raises his phone, trying to get a signal.

Matheson shoves a handful of chips down his throat.

MATHESON

You're just wasting battery life.
We need to conserve what we've got.

LARRY

Says the guy eating all his food.

MATHESON

Well, I wouldn't be worried about
my food if we weren't stuck here,
isn't that right, Eli?

Eli SMACKS the water tap - nothing.

Larry tosses the empty bag of chips and chugs his canteen.

JESSICA

You see the road anywhere? The
tracks are dissolving.

MATHESON

If we move right or left, we're
going risk walking in circles. We
need to keep heading straight.

JESSICA

But what if we're heading in the
wrong direction?

MATHESON

We're not. Just trust me.

JESSICA

No, thanks. Eli, what do you think?

Eli hands Larry his canteen so he can drink some water.

ELI

Doesn't matter. You're going to
have to go on without me.

MATHESON

What the hell are you talking
about?

ELI

I came here to find my parents and
I'm not leaving until I do.

MATHESON

We're stuck out here because you
hired Don Juan and he left us --

ELI

I didn't ask for you to come. I just needed your weapons.

MATHESON

Some help it is now.

JESSICA

Eli, if we split up --

ELI

You need to find help. Go ahead and I'll catch up.

LARRY

And the bombs? Whoever's planting them, I bet he has more.

ELI

It could've been just one landmine. Some places here were used for military testing.

Next to the water hose, a WIRED MICROPHONE sticks out underneath a pile of pebbles, picking up sound.

EXT. CAVE - DAY

A mile away, Dale sulks beside a cracked opening, listening through a radio earpiece.

MATHESON (O.S.)

You do what you want. I'm finding that road.

Dale holds his sniper rifle over his shoulder, waiting.

His truck door opens. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS scurry behind him. Then, a LITTLE GIRL'S LAUGHTER.

Dale lowers his rifle as his daughter, CELIA, 10, leans into view. She's a tender child with braided hair, wearing a flannel and farming boots.

CELIA

What are you doing?

DALE

Just a routine patrol, darlin'. I'm protecting our home.

CELIA

From the bad men who hurt you?

DALE

That's right, sweetie. Don't you want to protect our home?

CELIA

No. I want us to go home.

DALE

I can't let these strangers walk around in my backyard.

Celia looks at her shoes, bored.

CELIA

They don't look like bad men.

DALE

But they could be, sweetie, and I'm that's what I'm going to find out.

He raises his sniper rifle back at Eli.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

As Eli heads in the opposite direction, Matheson digs inside his pocket and pulls out his COCAINE BULLET.

He snorts a quick whiff. Groans in pleasure.

MATHESON

God, that's the stuff.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Dale switches from Eli to Matheson. His ragged face drops to disgust as Matheson snorts another whiff of coke.

CELIA

Daddy, don't shoot him.

DALE

They're not bad, huh? You should know by now, sweetie, no good soul gets left here.

He cocks his rifle.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Jessica STUBS her foot against an object buried in the dirt.

She kneels, picks up a BLACK PEARL, rusted on its edges.

LARRY

What's that?

She wipes the dirt off its surface and cracks it against a rock but the pearl remains untouched.

JESSICA

It's a black pearl. Look at its texture, it's real. Most of these are found in the Australian coast.

ELI

What's it doing all the way out here?

JESSICA

If you would do your Anthropology homework, you'd know that Spanish traders made a fortune off of them centuries ago.

Larry shades his eyes with his hands.

LARRY

This used to be a coast?

MATHESON

I think we should start excavating for a lost ship. It's not like we're lost or running out of water.

EXT. CAVE - DAY

Dale aims closer at Matheson, ready to shoot, but Jessica moves back and forth, getting in the way of his shot.

CELIA

Daddy, don't.

Dale sets his finger on the trigger, concentrating.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Jessica slips the black pearl into her pocket.

JESSICA

I wonder what other cool things we can find out here.

MATHESON
It's just like Easter.

JESSICA
I'm Presbyterian. You'd know that
if someone like you would stop
talking about yourself for a
single, goddamn second.

ELI
Guys, we need to --

MATHESON
Someone like me?

ELI
I need to know which direction
you're heading so I can find you --

MATHESON
Eli, you can go ahead all you want,
maybe shake hands with the
chupacabra, but you --

He points his trembling finger at Jessica.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
I'm stuck out here with you. At
least McCormick brought his tech
gear, but you? Why the hell are you
here, Jess? For the photo-op of Eli
finding his parents? To prove daddy
how different you are from him?

JESSICA
I came here to help Eli because I
know what it's like to lose a
parent.

Matheson ERUPTS with laughter.

MATHESON
'Lose a parent'? If you feel that
way, why don't you give up the
brand new Mercedes Daddy bought
you? The one you rolled up to our
"coffee date"? How about the full
tuition he paid? For someone
crushed about their non-existent
parent, you sure are reaping the
rewards.

ELI

She's talking about her mom,
asshole.

Matheson turns to Jessica - shocked.

JESSICA

She died of a heart attack a few
days after we met. Dad buried
himself in the office and I didn't
feel like talking to anyone.
Especially you.

Matheson snorts, calms himself down.

MATHESON

You don't get to see through me. So
your mom died - shit happens. Eli's
folks got deported, Larry's parents
don't care about him --

LARRY

We actually Skype every week.

MATHESON

(to Jessica)

And like you, my daddy doesn't give
a shit about me either. I didn't
want to go to law school. I didn't
want to sit in the office, ignoring
my family. Looks like we're both
disappointments, or maybe one more
than the other.

Jessica SLAPS Matheson across the face, leans closer to him.

Eli intervenes, but Larry holds him back.

JESSICA

How long have you been holding that
in?

EXT. CAVE - DAY

Dale gets a clear shot of Matheson's head.

DALE

Cover your ears, darlin'.

But Celia PUSHES him down as he PULLS THE TRIGGER.

CELIA

No, wait!

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

BANG! A GUNSHOT echoes through the valley. Rattled, Eli and his friends jump from the loud pop, hitting the dirt.

Jessica drops next to Matheson, BLEEDING from the bullet wound that pierced her shoulder.

MATHESON

Holy shit.

Matheson checks her wound. She SCREAMS.

Eli and Larry rush them away from the tire tracks - scared out of their minds.

ELI

We have to go. Now!

LARRY

What the hell was that?

Jessica CRIES from the pain as a swarm of blood drips from her shirt.

EXT. CAVE - DAY

Dale struggles to rise from the ground.

DALE

Why did you do that?

CELIA

They're not who you think they are.

Dale cocks his rifle and gets a better shot at Matheson lying on the ground.

DALE

Goddamn it, Celia.

He squints his eye. Aims.

CELIA

If you pull the trigger, I won't talk to you again.

He releases his finger from the trigger - stunned.

Dale buries his prosthetic leg against the dirt, trying to find his balance.

DALE

Baby, I'm going to need you to --

He reaches for her tiny hands but she returns to the truck.

Dale turns back to Matheson but Eli rushes him out of the way, further out of the rifle's range.

Dale drops his rifle and follows Celia.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. SOUTH - DAY

Quetzal gazes at horizon, stretching his ear to hear the gunshot echo more clearly.

QUETZAL

Did you hear that?

Julissa hands Eva the map while Manuel and Clara continue dragging their feet.

JULISSA

Quetzal, we need to move.

QUETZAL

That was a gun shot.

Fatigued, Julissa catches her breath.

JULISSA

We need to keep going before it gets dark.

QUETZAL

It's time. They're here.

Quetzal dashes in the opposite direction.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)

We have to go the other way.

JULISSA

No, Quetzal. Stop.

Manuel grabs Quetzal's collar, stopping him in his tracks.

MANUEL

Your aunt has the map and she says to go this way.

QUETZAL

Get your goddamn hands off me.

Quetzal shoves Manuel to the dirt.

Julissa YANKS his arm, gleaming with sweat.

JULISSA

You need to calm down.

QUETZAL

They're after me, Julissa. The boys from back home, they're here for me.

MANUEL

What the hell's the matter with him?

JULISSA

He made a few enemies back home and he thinks they're following him. But that's all he wants to tell me.

MANUEL

He's shitting himself because I few boys are looking for him?

Quetzal LUNGES at Manuel. Julissa restrains him.

QUETZAL

Say that a little louder.

JULISSA

Quetzal, stop.

MANUEL

In my day, real gangsters were businessmen. Tough sons of bitches that put the fear in you with a look. What you have today are little pussies who think a gun makes them a man.

QUETZAL

And they were fat fucks like you too.

Julissa grabs his face, growing desperate.

JULISSA

Please, stop.

Quetzal takes a deep breath.

She holds Eva's hand.

JULISSA (CONT'D)

We just need to keep moving.

As Julissa continues leading the pack, she stops in her tracks at a moving figure lurking behind a Joshua tree.

A BOBCAT, larger than the average size, with sharper teeth and a terrifying growl circles the group.

Quetzal shivers behind Julissa.

QUETZAL

*I bet you wish I had that gun now,
huh?*

JULISSA

Everyone stay still. Do not speak.

Manuel, Clara, and Eva huddle amongst each other.

The bobcat gazes at the group, ready to pounce, but Julissa and her family remain dead still.

It releases a LOUD ROAR - like a banshee on the prowl. But it drifts away, leaving behind a set of massive footprints in its tracks.

Julissa sighs in relief.

QUETZAL

You still want to go that way?

EXT. SONOYTA HILLS. CAVE. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

The moon shines on the hollow caves embedded in the high hills. Coyotes HOWL. Crickets CHIRP.

Surrounded by immeasurable darkness, Eli lays Jessica on his backpack.

She places her hand on the bullet wound, adding pressure to the wound.

Eli grabs the edge of his shirt, TEARS it, and wraps it around her wound. He ties it into a knot.

ELI

*Keep your hand here. You can't lose
anymore blood.*

Jessica presses the bandage. She MOANS in agonizing pain.

ELI (CONT'D)
We have to get you to a hospital.

JESSICA
I could've sworn I saw one a mile
away.

She snickers but it hurts to laugh.

Larry grabs a pile of rocks and litters them with dirt,
attempting to make a campfire.

Matheson looks out at the desert.

LARRY
Hey, you okay?

MATHESON
There's someone after us who wants
us dead, McCormick. When they try
again, I've got something waiting
for them.

Matheson whips out a handgun from the back of his pocket.

LARRY
Dude, they have bombs.

Matheson turns to him, struggling to make the campfire.

MATHESON
You're doing it all wrong. Move
aside.

Matheson grabs mesquite twigs from the ground and piles them
into a nest. He rubs two rocks together until a FLAME SPARKS.

Eli hands the last of his canteen to Jessica.

ELI
You need it more than I do.

JESSICA
Thanks, Doc.

Jess takes his canteen.

ELI
(scoffs)
If I had my kit, I'd patch you up
now. At least stop some of the
bleeding.

JESSICA

Matheson and Larry can take care of me from here. You need to find your parents.

Eli grabs her hand.

ELI

I'm so sorry.

Jessica rests her finger on his lips.

Matheson, tending the fire, sees Eli and Jessica from the corner of his eye - annoyed and jealous.

EXT. SONOYTA HILLS - NIGHT

Julissa leads her family through the haunting caverns while Manuel and Clarissa struggle to keep up.

JULISSA

You have to keep up.

Something RUSTLES between the bushes. Eva GASPS.

EVA

What was that?

A branch BREAKS in half.

Eva hides behind Quetzal's leg.

QUETZAL

As long as you leave it alone, it won't hurt you.

EVA

Leave what alone?

QUETZAL

You don't know about the monster that lives here?

JULISSA

Quetzal, stop it. Eva, don't listen to him.

EVA

What kind of monster?

QUETZAL

It has red eyes that can see in the dark.

(MORE)

QUETZAL (CONT'D)

A nose that can smell fear from far away. Its teeth are sharper than a knife and its stomach is always hungry, especially for little kids.

Eva SCREAMS. Julissa holds her.

JULISSA

It's okay, sweetie. Your brother's being an idiot.

Quetzal laughs.

Suddenly, a pillar of smoke blocks the moon.

QUETZAL

Aunt Julissa, look.

He points at the smoke.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)

Someone's out here.

Quetzal dashes toward the smoke. Julissa, Eva, Manuel and Clara chase after him.

JULISSA

Quetzal, wait. Get back here.

Quetzal races deeper into the caverns...

Until he stops at Eli's camp site.

Eli lets go of Jessica's hands - Larry steps back - Matheson grips the gun behind his back.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Dale parks his truck at a GRAVE SITE, shrouded in darkness. He limps past WOODEN CROSSES buried on the ground.

He carries a TROWEL and digs a small hole next to the first row of crosses.

He places a MICROPHONE inside and connects the power wires together.

Celia jumps out from the truck. She joins him.

CELIA

You hurt that girl.

DALE
It was an accident.

Celia whispers into his ear.

CELIA
Accidents make bigger mistakes.

Dale thrusts his arms out - frustrated.

DALE
What do you know? You're only ten
years old. You're only out here
cause your mother had to go out
into town today.

Dale keeps digging.

DALE (CONT'D)
What's done is done. I've got
intruders in my backyard and one of
them's snortin' coke. They could be
drug mules and we don't want any of
them around, do we? They ain't
gonna get through me, that's for
damn sure.

CELIA
They're regular people, and I think
you know that.

DALE
And it was regular people who
chopped this off. Like I was an
animal.

He points to his prosthetic leg.

CELIA
Maybe you were.

Dale drops the trowel.

DALE
I ain't taking a chance trusting
them.

CELIA
So you're just going to follow them
until they fall for another trap?

DALE

If you loved me, you'd try to help me in protecting our home, not trying to save them.

CELIA

I do love you, Daddy. But you're wrong.

DALE

I'm taking a leap of faith, do you know what that means?

She shakes her head.

DALE (CONT'D)

A quick decision you made from your morals. Had I taken one twenty years ago, my life would be different.

Celia takes his hand.

CELIA

Come home, Daddy. Please.

DALE

You know I can't do that, darlin'.

He reaches for her hand but she heads back to the truck.

Dale picks up the trowel and stabs it on the ground.

EXT. SONOYTA HILLS. SONORAN DESERT

Eli and Julissa sit cross-legged next to the camp fire, facing each other.

Eva falls asleep behind her and Quetzal gazes into the fire.

Matheson watches them with an intense glare, hand gripping the pistol behind his back.

Manuel and Clara sleep outside of the cave, minding their own business.

Larry turns over Jessica's shirt-bandage as she struggles to stay awake.

ELI

Um - how long have you been here?

He stutters in his Spanish.

Julissa notices his rough accent.

JULISSA

One day.

ELI

(shocked)

You speak English?

JULISSA

A little.

ELI

Do you have food or water?

Julissa shakes her head.

JULISSA

Just enough for us to get through tomorrow. We're trying to conserve. My niece, Eva, hasn't eaten anything all day. Neither have any of us.

She points to Quetzal and Manuel and Clara.

ELI

Do you know how to reach the border?

JULISSA

We have a map.

ELI

We need to be there by tomorrow. We won't make it a second day. Do you have someone waiting to pick you up?

JULISSA

But we're heading to Yuma. That's where my son lives.

ELI

Let us come with you.

Quetzal hears this and tugs Julissa's shirt.

QUETZAL

What is he saying? He wants to come with us?

JULISSA

They're lost.

QUETZAL

That's not our problem. They'll probably lead us to Border Patrol once they're done with us.

JULISSA

You're ridiculous.

ELI

What did he say?

JULISSA

My nephew thinks it's a bad idea.

Suddenly, Jessica SCREAMS.

Larry jumps, unsure what to do.

Eli rushes over to her.

ELI

She's losing too much blood.

Eli pulls the shirt out from her wound. More blood gushes out.

LARRY

What does that mean?

ELI

If we don't stop the bleeding, her heart's not going to have enough to blood to pump and she'll die under cardiac arrest.

Eli rips another piece of his shirt and tries to wrap it around her wound, until...

Quetzal steps in and pulls a needle and a thread along with a tube of ANTIBIOTIC CREAM from his backpack.

Eli offers to take the needle.

ELI (CONT'D)

It's okay. I'm a pre-med student.

Quetzal brushes his hand away - unimpressed.

Matheson rises from the ground, walks over to them.

MATHESON

Stay away from her.

Eli rises from the ground, pushes Matheson away.

ELI

Calm down.

MATHESON

He's going to hurt her.

ELI

He's trying to save her.

Quetzal squeezes the cream throughout Jessica's wound.

QUETZAL

This is going to hurt.

He pricks her wound with a needle and SEWS it shut.

Jessica BITES her backpack strap, CRYING from the torturous pain.

Eli whispers into her ear.

ELI

It's going to be okay. You can do this.

Matheson back away, spits into the fire.

Julissa joins Quetzal.

JULISSA

Quetzal, do you know what you're doing?

QUETZAL

The bullet went through. I'm going to stop the bleeding.

Quetzal continues sewing Jessica's wound, but through his eyes, he no longer sees Jessica...

...he sees the mirage of ELENA, 23, Mexican, with a similar gun shot wound.

ELENA

Thank you for saving me.

Quetzal blinks several times.

ELENA (CONT'D)

They're going to come after you, Quetzal. Run. Run!

BACK TO SCENE.

Quetzal YELPS - crawling away from what he sees as Jessica again.

Julissa grabs his hand.

JULISSA
Quetzal, what's wrong?

Quetzal shakes his head, wipes the sweat off his face.

Jessica closes her eyes, stops biting her backpack and falls asleep - the wound half shut - her heart still beating.

QUETZAL
I'm sorry.

Eli leans closer to him.

ELI
How did you know how to do that?

Quetzal looks away, too ashamed to face him.

MOMENTS LATER.

Quetzal gazes at the fire burning out.

Julissa sits behind him, hand on his shoulder.

Everyone but them and Eli sleep on the ground - stomachs growling - lips dried.

JULISSA
I didn't know you could do that.

QUETZAL
I did it once before - with Elena.

JULISSA
What does she have to do with it?

QUETZAL
We were at a party. Elena's boyfriend got a little drunk. When she refused to have sex with him, he beat her. I came in, and I stabbed him with my pocketknife. I tried getting her out of there but she was so scared. He grabbed his gun, aimed for me, but I moved - and the bullet shot her.

JULISSA
Elena's boyfriend - isn't that -- ?

Quetzal points to his tattoo of an AZTEC SKULL on his arm.

QUETZAL
Leon Peralta. My crew's leader.

Julissa gulps, wraps him in her arms.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)
*I carried her back to her place,
 and she taught me how to stitch her
 up. But it was too late. She died
 under my watch. And I became a dead
 man.*

JULISSA
Why didn't you tell me this?

QUETZAL
*Do you know what would've happened
 if we stayed? Leon's boss would
 come to our home, kill you and Eva
 in front of me, and he'd carve an R
 on my cheek. After mom died, I
 wanted to make sure you and Eva
 were safe from any harm. Looks like
 it was all for nothing.*

He rises from the ground and kicks dirt into the fire.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Eli strays from the rest of the camp. He holds onto his stomach, drops to his knees and VOMITS.

He shakes, losing control of his body.

Julissa sneaks behind him.

JULISSA
Are you okay?

ELI
I'll be fine.

JULISSA
*I apologize if my nephew scared
 you. We've been walking for so
 long.*

Eli rises, wipes dribbles of vomit with his sleeve.

ELI

He saved Jessica. She'll live
another day. But just one more day.
Please, we need your map. You have
to take us with you.

Jessica looks away, hesitant to respond.

JULISSA

Why are you here?

ELI

I'm looking for my parents. Or so I
thought I was.

Julissa nods, looking into his eyes.

JULISSA

We'll leave together in the
morning.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - DAY

Julissa leads her family, Manuel and Clara, along with Eli,
Matheson, Larry, and Jessica trailing behind.

Larry carries Jessica over his shoulder. She's badly fatigued
and her gunshot wound grows an infection.

Julissa holds the map, following a dirt path covered with
cacti and rocks.

But all of them limp more than walk. Their faces burnt by the
boiling sun, their flesh tainted with SKIN BUMPS and SUN
RASHES - slowly disfiguring them.

Matheson FALLS to the ground, starved and exhausted. He
VOMITS out what little's left of his insides.

Eli tries to help him stand. Matheson shoves his hand away.

MATHESON

Get away from me.

Eli backs away. Keeps walking.

Quetzal PEELS a skin bump from his forehead. It BLEEDS. He
keeps his finger on the scab.

QUETZAL

Why did you have to bring them?

JULISSA
They're looking for a way out, too.

MANUEL
We need to be separated.

QUETZAL
For once, I agree with him.

JULISSA
*I'm not going to leave them here.
 Clara, what do you think?*

Clara opens her mouth. Manuel raises his hand, silencing her.

MANUEL
She knows this is a bad idea, too.

JULISSA
*If you don't mind, I'd like to hear
 it from her.*

MANUEL
*And if you don't mind, I'd like you
 to mind your business.*

Insulted, Julissa stops.

Quetzal nudges her shoulder.

QUETZAL
*Auntie Julissa, forget about him.
 Do we keep walking this way or not?*

Julissa reads the map - but she's confused. She traces her finger alongside the dirt path.

Matheson pulls out his cocaine bullet and tries to snort another whiff but there's nothing left.

MATHESON
 (under his lip)
 Goddamn it.

Eli looks over, annoyed.

ELI
 Is this really a good time?

MATHESON
 This doesn't concern you.

He taps the bottom of the bullet - nothing. In a fit of rage, he tosses the bullet to the ground.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Shit.

He twitches - scratching his bumped skin with his fingernails.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Why the hell are we stopping?

Julissa turns to Eli, at a loss for words.

JULISSA

I thought it was this road. I followed the map but I think we were supposed to take a turn three kilometers back.

Matheson bursts in laughter. Eli ignores him.

ELI

Can we go around from this point?
Do we really have to turn back?

Julissa double checks the map.

JULISSA

If we go around, we're going to hit mountains, we have to --

Matheson slides his torn boots across the dirt, forming a CROSS.

MATHESON

Don't mind me, I'm just marking my grave.

ELI

You're not helping.

MATHESON

Look where we are. You think we're going to make it out alive here? I told you it was a bad idea to trust them.

He points to Julissa and Quetzal.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Who knows, they're probably leading us to a trap where the rest of his cartel buddies are going to find us.

QUETZAL
(to Julissa)
What did he say?

Julissa shakes her hand.

ELI
(Matheson)
You need to cut it out. Now.

Matheson leans in.

MATHESON
Or what?

Eva breaks their confrontation by pointing her finger out into the horizon.

EVA
What's that?

Julissa looks behind her at what appears to look like THIN MONUMENTS blurred by the heat wave.

QUETZAL
Is it a fountain?

MATHESON
I need to see what that is.

Eli gazes at the mysterious figures with skeptical eyes.

ELI
I don't know. Let's just keep moving.

MATHESON
Like hell, there could be water.

Matheson dashes after it with what little energy he has.

Quetzal grabs Eva's hand and follows him.

Eli steps forward, getting a closer look - the figures come into full view...

Not monuments - a grave site.

ELI
Wait, stop!

JULISSA
What is it?

ELI
I think I might know.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - DAY

Matheson races toward the figures. He raises his head, examines what's in front of him.

He freezes.

MATHESON
Holy shit.

FOUR DECOMPOSED BODIES hang above wooden poles in the middle of a graveyard - a dozen CROSSES stick out from the ground.

The decomposed bodies - two of them SKELETONS, the other two still rotting, with their eyeballs still intact, and their bones popping out from their aged flesh.

One thing all four bodies have in common is a large bullet hole in the middle of their cranium.

Matheson covers his nose from the rancid stench.

Quetzal arrives - horrified. He covers Eva's eyes.

Eli and Jessica follow behind, hand on their noses, eyes fixated on the corpses.

Manuel, Clara, Larry and Jessica stay behind, discouraged to walk any closer from the foul smell.

Julissa takes Eva's hand. Turns her away.

JULISSA
We have to go.

QUETZAL
This isn't for burials. This is a warning sign.

Eli taps Matheson's shoulder.

ELI
C'mon, man, we don't have to see this.

MATHESON
What's the point anymore?

ELI

I know what you're feeling, but we just gotta keep moving. We'll find help, I know we will.

MATHESON

Just like you knew we'd return home safe and sound?

ELI

I'm just trying to help.

MATHESON

We're going to die out here. All of us. Just so you can find your parents?

ELI

I'm not giving up on them.

Matheson pushes Eli.

MATHESON

Look around you! There's no one out here, except some psycho killer who probably killed these assholes too.

He points to the skeletons on the poles.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

We've been stuck here for two goddamn days and you're still fixated on some bullshit theory that somehow your parents are still alive.

Matheson's nerves shake, his rage increasing.

Larry intervenes, leans in closer to Matheson.

LARRY

C'mon, man, we're all tired, can you just --

MATHESON

Outta my way, McCormick.

He pushes him aside. Returns to Eli.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

The flare gun. Give it to me.

ELI
Border Patrol's not going to see
it. We need to save it for when
we're closer.

MATHESON
We don't even know where we are!
Thanks to them!

He points to Julissa and Quetzal.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Another one of your bright ideas.

ELI
I'm not going to ask you again to
calm down.

Matheson digs into his back pocket and aims his handgun in
front of Eli.

MATHESON
Give me the flare gun, Eli.

Eli backs away, hands in the air.

Quetzal shields Julissa and Eva.

Manuel and Clara slowly step away.

ELI
You wanted to come here.

MATHESON
A decision I immediately regret.
I'm not going to die out here. Not
for you, Jess, or McCormick, and
especially not for these wetbacks.
Now you're going to light the flare
gun, and we're going to get
rescued.

He cocks the gun.

ELI
Don't do this.

MATHESON
I'm done listening to you.

Matheson puts his finger on the trigger.

Suddenly, Quetzal creeps behind him and PUSHES him to the
ground, kicking the gun away.

JULISSA

Quetzal!

Matheson GROANS in pain. Eli towers over him.

ELI

Just stop this. It's easier for you, Matheson. You could care less if your parents are dead, you'd just care about the will they'd leave behind.

MATHESON

You watch your goddamn mouth.

ELI

I didn't need your help from bullies in high school and college, and I don't need your help now. No one needs you because they can't stand you. You're not a hunter. You're a coward.

Matheson ROARS - LUNGES at Eli - SMACKING HIM left and right. Consumed with rage.

Eli JABS his ribs, hitting his frail body blow after blow. his stomach and JABS him in the nose.

Julissa pulls Matheson away but Quetzal holds her back.

JULISSA

Quetzal, stop them.

QUETZAL

Let them get it out.

Eli and Matheson wrestle on the ground, PUNCHING each other in an all out brawl.

Eli ELBOWS Matheson's eye - Matheson KNEES Eli's chest, in between a series of jabs to each other's stomachs.

Eli rolls on top of Matheson, both hands on his throat - CHOKING HIM.

Matheson struggles to breathe. He wraps his hands on Eli's arms, trying to push him away.

But it's no use.

Eli releases his rage onto his fists. He lets go of Matheson's throat but STRIKES his face - BEATING him to a pulp. Furious. Hateful.

LARRY

Eli, stop.

Eli SCREECHES...his eyes full of unrelentless wrath.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You're going to kill him.

Matheson hangs onto his last moments of breath, squirming on the dirt.

Eli raises his bruised fist, covered in Matheson's blood, ready for one last fatal blow, until...

The sound of a TRUCK tumbling through the terrain echoes throughout the graveyard.

Eli stops - raises his head into the horizon and sees a pickup heading towards them.

He rises from Matheson's chest, leaving his friend with a broken nose and jaw on the ground.

ELI

(to Larry)

You see that too, right?

Larry smiles at the truck coming closer.

LARRY

Yeah, I do.

Eli spits out blood at Matheson.

He turns to Julissa, who's too terrified to look at him.

The pickup grinds to a halt...

And out comes Dale, planting his prosthetic leg on the ground, with a shovel in hand.

But Celia's not on the passenger seat.

DALE

Are you people lost?

Eli erupts into laughter.

Dale eyes Matheson lying unconscious on the ground, Larry carrying a wounded Jessica, and Julissa and her family walking further away.

QUETZAL

He's an American.

JULISSA

Don't move. It's going to be okay.

Julissa grips Eva's hand as she hides behind her aunt's leg.

Eli controls his laughter, wipes blood off his nose.

ELI

We've been out here for two days.

Dale closes the driver's seat door.

DALE

I'm Dale Forge, a rancher 'round these parts.

He limps to Jessica, examines her wounds.

DALE (CONT'D)

What the hell happened?

LARRY

She was shot. There's someone out here who's been following us.

Eli turns to Dale's pickup, sees a rifle's stock peeking out the back.

DALE

I've got a trailer fifteen miles out. There's not much room in my truck but I'm sure we can fit everyone inside. We gotta get your friend out here to a hospital.

LARRY

I don't suppose there's one next to your ranch, is there?

AT THE PICKUP

Suspicious of Dale, Eli approaches the back of the pickup. He sees a rifle, half a dozen backpacks, and TWO BODY BAGS lying flat on the floor.

He clenches his fist together - petrified.

AT THE GRAVEYARD

Dale turns around, eyeing Julissa and her family.

DALE

And what do we've got here?

They back away, like zebras cornered by a lion.

LARRY

They helped us. They're not looking for any trouble.

Dale glares at Quetzal's gang tattoos.

DALE

Oh, I seriously doubt that.

Eva whimpers behind Julissa's leg.

Dale lowers his head, curious of the little girl.

DALE (CONT'D)

Hey, little darlin', it's okay.

Eva pokes her head out - eyes on the verge of tears.

DALE (CONT'D)

I ain't going to hurt you.

AT THE PICKUP

Eli zips open the first body bag - sees a woman's hair. He closes his eyes, praying to God it's not his mom.

He opens it all the way. Opens his eyes.

The dead body of a female migrant lays in front of him - with a bullet hole pierced through her cranium.

AT THE GRAVEYARD

Dale limps closer to Eva.

DALE

How old are you, sweetie?

Eva raises her hand, lifts eight fingers.

DALE (CONT'D)

You're the same age as my daughter. Just before she died.

LARRY

I'm sorry to hear that.

Dale turns back to Larry.

DALE

This ain't no ordinary desert. It
makes even the purest of
men...tainted.

Dale STABS the shovel onto the ground, digging a hole next to
the last grave.

DALE (CONT'D)

And it was tainted men that took
the life of my wife and daughter.

A RIFLE GUN COCKS.

Dale gazes past Larry and sees TWO MEXICAN CARTEL GANGSTERS
standing above his wife, ANASTASIA, 38, Mexican, rifle
pointed at her head and a knife at Celia's throat.

All of them MIRAGES.

Anastasia extends her hand to Dale.

ANASTASIA

Dale, don't let them hurt us.

DALE

(to Larry)

This here's cartel land. I had a
neighbor that ran into some trouble
with them a few years back.

Dale's voice cracks, his hands shake.

CELIA

Daddy, I told you we should've gone
home.

DALE

The cartel came to my neighbor's
home in the middle of the night,
and threatened him and his family
if they didn't let them mule drugs
across their land. But he refused.
And that's when they killed his
wife and daughter right in front of
him.

The FIRST CARTEL GANGSTER SHOTS Anastasia - blowing a hole
through her head. She falls dead on the ground.

DALE (CONT'D)

And they left him a memento of who they were so he wouldn't ever forget - the Regalados.

Quetzal freezes. He eyes the "R" carved onto Dale's cheek.

He grabs Julissa's hand.

Tears stream down Celia's face.

CELIA

You have another chance. Save them, Daddy.

The SECOND CARTEL GANGSTER SLITS Celia's throat - blood gushing out from her neck.

Dale turns away, horrified by the mirage.

Quetzal whispers into Julissa's ear.

QUETZAL

He's one of them.

JULISSA

Quetzal, don't.

QUETZAL

They found us.

Dale snaps out of it and continues digging.

DALE

Even though it was years ago, I can still picture the pain he went through, like a memory starting to fade.

Another rifle gun COCKS - but this time, it's Dale...and Eli's got his hands on the trigger.

ELI

Don't move.

He aims straight at Dale.

LARRY

Eli, what the hell are you doing?

ELI

He shot Jessica. He planted the bomb.

DALE

I don't know what you're saying, kid, but it's best you drop that rifle.

ELI

You're the one that's been following us. Why?

DALE

I'm trying to help this time!

ELI

Who the fuck are you?

Matheson rises from the ground, his face drenched in blood - tilts his handgun at Eli's head.

MATHESON

Drop it.

Eli closes his eyes - *oh shit*.

ELI

Matheson, look, I know --

MATHESON

Drop the goddamn gun.

ELI

He shot Jessica, he's got two dead bodies in the back of his truck!

DALE

Those were drug mules posing as illegals. I found their bodies next to backpacks full of cocaine. They had weapons and I defended myself. Feel free to look inside their bags if you don't believe me.

ELI

Matheson, we can still fix this.

MATHESON

We're past that, Eli.

Eli lowers Dale's rifle and drops it on the floor.

DALE

Thank you.

Dale reaches for his rifle.

DALE (CONT'D)

Now, if I can just show you --

MATHESON

Not a chance.

Matheson now points his handgun at Dale.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

You're going to get back to your truck and take me to your place where I'm going to call for help.

(to Eli)

You're still looking for your parents, so you can stay here, and take them with you.

He looks to Larry and Jessica.

LARRY

Are you serious? Dude, Jessica's dying.

MATHESON

Didn't you hear? Eli thinks we're close to the border anyways. He thinks you're all going to get out of here in no time. He's got a flare gun. If you want to save her life, take it up with him.

(to Eli)

I tried it your way. I tried following the tire tracks, I tried following the Mexicans. And yet, here we are.

Dale raises his hand, limps to the driver's seat.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Give me your phone.

Dale digs inside his pocket and tosses him his cellphone. Matheson turns it on - NO SERVICE but with a full battery.

He throws it to Eli.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Plenty of battery left to help you. I'm not a monster. You did this.

ELI

You can't leave us behind.e

MATHESON

Why not? They've already left you.

He points far out into the horizon...

...where Julissa, Quetzal, Eva, Manuel and Clara run away, fading into the blurred landscape.

A MILE AWAY.

Quetzal aims for Eva's hand.

QUETZAL

Eva, hurry.

JULISSA

Quetzal, why are you doing this?

QUETZAL

You saw that crazy fucker, he's one of the Regalados. He's here to kill me.

JULISSA

I told Eli that I'd help him.

QUETZAL

He's gonna kill us, run, Auntie.

AT THE GRAVEYARD.

Eli chases after them, waving his arms.

ELI

Hey! What are you doing?

Eli paces back and forth, pulling his hair out.

ELI (CONT'D)

(to himself)

What are you doing?

Dale revs the engine. Matheson climbs into the passenger seat, handgun still aimed at Dale. He closes the door. The pickup drives off, leaving behind a dust cloud.

Eli falls to the ground, almost fainting.

Larry watches the pickup venture deeper into the desert...

Until a FLASHING RED LIGHT underneath the last grave catches his attention.

He rests Jessica on top of his backpack. He races to the last grave and inspects the flashing red light.

He digs his finger into the dirt and plucks out one of Dale's MICROPHONES.

He raises it in front of his eyes.

LARRY

I think I know how to save us.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. HILLS - DAY

Julissa, Quetzal and Eva hide behind a set of hills underneath small patches of shade.

Manuel and Clarissa follow along - panting.

Quetzal looks back out into the open.

QUETZAL

You think we lost them?

Julissa examines Eva's skin bumps, growing faster with the running sweat.

JULISSA

We shouldn't have left them.

QUETZAL

I'm not taking any chances. I need water.

JULISSA

What you need is to calm down.

QUETZAL

I can't take it anymore, Auntie.

JULISSA

What do you expect us to do? Had we stayed with Eli --

QUETZAL

They're as good as dead. And so is the gringo with the crazy guy.

Clarissa drops her backpack on the ground.

Quetzal notices.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)

What do you have in the bag?

Clarissa hides behind her legs.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)

You know something - I haven't seen you two drink or eat anything since we've been here.

Manuel stands in front of her.

MANUEL

Did you observe that all by yourself?

QUETZAL

*Matter of fact, you don't even have these growing on you, either.
(points to his skin bumps)
It's almost as if you're staying hydrated.*

JULISSA

Quetzal --

CLARISSA

We don't have any water, we --

MANUEL

Shut your mouth.

QUETZAL

*(to Manuel)
You let her talk.*

Manuel pushes Quetzal to the ground. He falls back, knees rusted against the dirt.

CLARISSA

Are you okay?

Manuel faces his wife, nerves popping out from his forehead.

MANUEL

What did I tell you, hmm?

Manuel SLAPS Clarissa across her face.

Julissa grabs his arm but he shoves her away.

Manuel clenches her collar, strikes a fist -

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Didn't you hear me? I said to stop fucking talking!

Quetzal shakes his head and sees another MIRAGE...

...instead of Manuel attacking Clarissa, he sees LEON PERALTA, 29, tattooed gangster, squeezing Elena's throat.

QUETZAL
Son of a bitch.

He sprints - TACKLES Leon to the ground.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)
I will cut you open like I did the last time.

Quetzal PUNCHES Leon left and right - BREAKING his nose to pieces - blood gushing.

But Julissa simply stands here - no longer pulling Quetzal away from Manuel. She's letting him have it.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)
Touch her again, Leon, I dare you, you piece of shit.

Julissa finally intervenes and SLAPS him back to reality, leaving a red handprint on his disfigured face.

JULISSA
You saw Elena again, didn't you?

Quetzal closes his eyes - reopens them once more, and sees Manuel and Clarissa again.

Manuel lays on the ground, wiping blood off his nose. Clarissa tends to him. Holds his hand.

QUETZAL
What the fuck is going on with me?

He paces back and forth, returns to the shade, until...

The bobcat reappears, GROWLING at them - the same one that followed them before.

Julissa pulls Quetzal and Eva behind her. Clara blocks Manuel's unconscious body.

The bobcat SCREECHES - getting closer. It reveals its wide, sharp teeth...hungry for human flesh.

Eva breaks into TEARS.

Julissa covers her mouth.

JULISSA
Be still, Eva.

Frightened from the disturbing cries of humans, the bobcat leaps back into the hills...waiting.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Eli lays Jessica on the ground, head against her backpack.
She reaches for Eli's hand.

JESSICA
I'm slowing you down.

Eli shakes his head.

ELI
We're going to get through this
together.

He squeezes her hand.

Larry adds more twigs onto the campfire.

He then returns toying with the microphone's wiring,
adjusting its cables.

Eli joins him. He licks his chapped lips, like miniature
canyons, and his skin is filled with gruesome purple skin
bumps, wedged between swollen bruises.

Suddenly, they hear RADIO STATIC coming from the microphone.

Larry jolts. Listens closer.

LARRY
You hear that?

He FLICKS TWO WIRES against each other.

LARRY (CONT'D)
When I tap these two together, it
accesses a different radio channel,
probably the closest one.

ELI
What is that thing?

LARRY

This tech - Dale uses it like a microphone but it's kind of like a walkie-talkie. This kind of device, it's insane.

ELI

Why?

LARRY

It's military grade. Not only can he hear through it on his end, but we can use it to reach someone else. Maybe if there's a house nearby or -

ELI

Border Patrol?

Larry nods.

LARRY

Maybe they can hear us through their radio channel.

Eli cracks a hint of a smile.

LARRY (CONT'D)

That's if we make it.

Eli grabs his canteen, rises from the ground and drifts into the darkness of the desert.

HALF A MILE AWAY.

Eli gazes at the bright moon, surrounded by a sea of stars.

He unzips his pants and URINATES into the canteen.

With only a few drops inside, he zips up his pants and holds his breath...

...he raises his canteen...DRINKS his own urine, chugging it down to the very last drop.

BACK AT THE CAMPFIRE.

Larry continues tapping the wires together, searching for a signal.

Eli returns, sits beside the fire. He BURPS.

ELI

You get to say it now. "I told you so".

LARRY

About what?

ELI

About coming here in the first place. My parents are dead, man.

LARRY

You don't know that. Also, I did freakin' did tell you.

Eli chuckles, but it hurts to laugh.

ELI

I'm dealing with something here. Planos Cielos, I've been there before. The grave sight - I've seen that before, as well. It was all familiar.

LARRY

How? We're deep off the grid, man.

Eli lowers his head - it's all coming clear.

ELI

Put the pieces together, man. Ever since I was ten, I blamed myself that my parents left.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Eli, looking nerdy with his book bag and khakis, walks home from school.

He sees FOUR HOODS TAGGING X MARKS on a wall.

Young Eli approaches them - one of the hoods offers him a spray can. Eli takes it.

He SPRAYS a CROSS next to an X - the hoods stand back, impressed.

A POLICE CAR closes in - the hoods scatter, dropping the spray cans on the ground.

Terrified, Young Eli follows them, running like his life depends on it.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Eli gazes deep into the fire.

ELI

So why do I see them in my dreams
in places I thought I've never
been?

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. PLANOS CIELOS - DAY - FLASHBACK

Mom and Dad race past street vendors selling FRUIT CUPS and
WATER inside tiny shacks.

They hold 4 YEAR-OLD ELI'S hand.

ELI (V.O.)

Maybe it was meant to be. Like
Julissa said, maybe it's destiny

The sun blinds them.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Eli takes a deep breath.

Larry stops tapping the wires.

LARRY

Holy shit. Now it makes sense why
you were denied financial aid.

ELI

I wasn't born in the states, and
the more I think about what my
parents had to do bring me here,
what I had to do to survive in a
place I didn't belong - I don't
want that happening to someone
else. Julissa and her son - history
can't repeat itself.

LARRY

It doesn't have to. We're going to
get out of here.

He raises his hand and fist bumps Larry.

A RADIO FREQUENCY interrupts them.

Larry raises the microphone, speaks into it.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Hello? Can anyone hear us? Does
anyone copy?

STATIC. Suddenly, he hears -

RADIO FREQUENCY
Copy. Who's speaking?

Eli crawls over to Larry.

LARRY
Hello? I'm Larry McCormick, my
friends and I are stranded about -
I don't know. Our friend is
severely wounded, we need medical
help asap, she's been shot. We're
south of a bunch of hills.

The frequency turns fully into static.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Can you copy?

Nothing.

Larry slams the microphone to the ground.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Goddamn it.

ELI
Do you think they heard us?

Larry runs his fingers through his hair.

LARRY
I don't know.

Eli falls back in desperation.

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Dale screeches to a halt.

He comes out of his pickup. Matheson follows him to the door,
his handgun still pointed at his head.

MATHESON
I'm just going to use the phone,
get some food, water, and then I'll
be on my way, so don't try
anything.

Dale unlocks the door. They enter.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dale hangs his keys.

DALE

You can help yourself. I'm just
going to the bathroom.

Matheson dashes to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He opens the fridge and grabs a WATER BOTTLE. He chugs it
down without a moment's breath.

After he finishes the first bottle in one gulp, he moves onto
the second one.

INT. DALE'S BEDROOM

Dale skips the bathroom and covers the monitors with his
bedsheets.

He opens a drawer and pulls out a western 11 mm caliber GUN.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Matheson drinks his third water bottle, splashing some on his
toasted face. But something on the wall catches his
attention....

A MURAL of NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS taped to the wall.

He reads the collection of news clips dating back twenty
years ago - PICTURES OF DRUG CARTELS, with headlines reading:

"REGALADOS BORDER CARTEL MAKES MILLIONS OFF COCAINE".

"AMERICAN GUNMAN, CARTEL EMPLOYEE, WANTED".

"GRISLY MURDERS AT THE BORDER, WIFE AND CHILD DIE".

"PEG LEG GUNMAN DECLARES WAR ON CARTEL"

...and each article contains a picture of a YOUNGER DALE.

MATHESON

Holy shit.

(to Dale)

Remember that story you told us,
about the wife and daughter? They
weren't really your neighbors, were
they?

Matheson backs away from the wall, horrified.

INT. BEDROOM

Dale inserts a BULLET into the 11 mm's chamber.

DALE

They died because of me.

He lifts the framed photograph of Anastasia and Celia.

DALE (CONT'D)

And ever since then, I vowed to
kill every single last narco
passing through these hills.

Dale drops the photograph on the floor. Raises his gun.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Dale storms in - PULLS THE TRIGGER - BANG!

He freezes. Looks down at his stomach and sees a BULLET HOLE
carved onto his flesh - bleeding.

He eyes Matheson holding his handgun straight at him - smoke
emitting from the barrel.

Dale DROPS to the floor.

Matheson races out the front door.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Matheson dashes into the desert, shrouded under a blanket of
darkness.

He pants, unable to see anything in any direction.

SWOOSH!

He ducks his head - *what was that?*

He makes a sharp left, SMACKS his face against a dirt hill.

SWOOSH! He hears it again.

SWOOSH! This time, it's closer to his ear - SNIPER BULLETS.

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Dale, bleeding to death, mounts his sniper on the kitchen window.

He turns the knob in his NIGHT VISION GOGGLES - focuses on Matheson.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Matheson SPRINTS in a circle, thinking he's running in a straight line.

He runs faster, losing breath.

SWOOSH! BANG! The last bullet PIERCES Matheson's leg.

He SCREAMS - falls on his back.

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Dale STOMPS outside his trailer, limps toward Matheson - slowly dying with every step.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT - NIGHT

Matheson, bleeding from his leg, CRAWLS away to a pair of bushes without making any noise.

Dale limps after him, sniper in hand - getting closer.

Matheson covers his mouth, restraining himself from screaming from the pain.

Dale focuses his night vision goggles - follows the blood trail.

CELIA

Daddy.

Dale stops.

The haunting mirage of Celia appears through his goggles.

He removes them.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Is this the last thing you want to
do?

Dale lowers his sniper.

DALE
I'm protecting you.

CELIA
But we're not here.

DALE
I still see you! You're here to me.

CELIA
Because you're still keeping us
close.

DALE
What do you expect me to do?

Celia offers her hand.

CELIA
It's time to let go.

Dale looks behind the bush where Matheson's hiding. He can hear his whimpering.

But he drops his rifle anyway.

He reaches for Celia's hand, until...

He falls DEAD to his knees under a puddle of his own blood.

Matheson pokes his head out from the bushes to check if the coast is clear.

No Dale in sight - he sprints away as fast as he can.

EXT. SONORAN DESERT. HILLS - DAY

Eva sleeps like a baby inches away from Julissa's arm.

Quetzal sleeps beside her, closer to their feet.

But Manuel and Clara pace through the camp, STEALING the last of their supplies.

Manuel snatches Quetzal's first aid kit.

Clara stops him - she shakes her head.

Manuel jerks it away and slips the kit in his backpack.

Clara, behind Manuel's back, takes out her CANTEEN half full of water and slides it in Quetzal's bag.

As Eva rests her arm closer to a pile of rocks...

...a RATTLESNAKE slithers out from under.

Manuel hears this and grabs Clara's hand as they RUN OFF away from their campsite.

The rattlesnake slithers closer...closer...

...aiming for Eva's wrist.

It BITES her - sinking its venomous fangs deep into her tiny veins.

Eva SCREAMS upon waking up - the rattlesnake slithers away.

Julissa and Quetzal jolt from the ground as Eva holds her hand, CRYING.

Julissa GASPS at the teeth marks stabbed onto her wrist.

JULISSA

Oh no, Eva. Oh my god. Please, God.

Quetzal grabs the snake's tail end and CHUCKS it away.

QUETZAL

Eva, are you okay?

Eva continues crying as Julissa inspects the bite.

JULISSA

It's okay, sweetie, everything's going to be fine. Look at me, it's going to go away soon. Quetzal, the first aid kit, hurry.

Quetzal dashes to his backpack but stops once he sees that it's been ransacked.

He rummages through his belongings - everything's gone.

QUETZAL

(to himself)

It's not here.

The bite mark grows PURPLE.

Eva WAILS.

JULISSA
Quetzal!

QUETZAL
It's not here!

He checks Julissa's backpack - empty.

...and so are the rest of Manuel and Clara's belongings.

Quetzal peeks his head out from their camp and gazes with furious eyes at Manuel and Clarissa running away.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)
They took our stuff!

Julissa panics, holds Eva tight under her arms.

JULISSA
Quetzal, forget them, we have to go.

Quetzal jumps in the air.

QUETZAL
Goddamn you! Goddamn you!

HALF A MILE AWAY

Manuel and Clara dash past a field of dying meadows, out of breath and carrying more supplies than they can handle.

But suddenly...

ROAR! The bobcat leaps from the meadows and POUNCES on Manuel, tearing his flesh apart with its searing teeth.

Blood. Guts. Agonizing scream. A bobcat's wild howl.

Clara remains still, terrified to her core...but she's not saddened as the bobcat rips Manuel's bone marrow to shreds.

She drops to the ground and out come THREE KILOS OF HEROIN poking out of her backpacks.

BACK AT THE CAMP

Quetzal covers his mouth - horrified.

QUETZAL

Holy shit.

JULISSA

*We need to run and find help.
C'mon.*

Quetzal follows behind as he and his aunt and sister race closer to the border.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER - DAY

Eli, looking worse than ever before, drags his feet as he carries Jessica over his shoulder.

Larry follows behind.

Their skin bumps simmer within their dark skin. The melting heat hazes their sight, scars their flesh.

Eli's swollen bruises disfigure his face - with one eye bigger than the other, almost reflecting a different color.

Jessica, near unconscious, hangs in as much as she can onto Eli's shoulders. FLIES hover above her infected gun shot wound - the torn shirt drenched in blood.

Larry continues tapping the wires on the microphone, searching for a radio signal but he struggles to keep walking.

He closes his eyes, no longer able to stand.

He FAINTS.

Eli returns - helps him rise from the ground.

ELI

C'mon, man, get up.

Larry murmurs under his breath.

LARRY

I can't go any further.

ELI

We have to try.

Jessica opens one eye...feels her heart beating faster.

JESSICA

Eli, look.

She points her finger at a WATER OUTPOST a quarter of a mile away, blurred by the horizon.

Eli wipes the dust off his eyes.

ELI
Is that?

LARRY
Water.

Larry lunges from the ground, dashing to the water outpost as fast as he can, mustering every ounce of energy he has left.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER. WATER OUTPOST - DAY

Larry reaches the water outpost - TWO POLES forming an EMERGENCY CROSS and surrounded by FOUR BUCKETS OF WATER.

Larry crashes to the ground, opens the lid, raises a bucket and GULPS the water down to his throat, feeling rejuvenated throughout his entire body...

...but it somehow doesn't taste like water.

Eli and Jessica follow behind. Eli lowers Jessica from her shoulder as she catches her footing.

ELI
Larry, take it easy.

Larry closes his mouth and drops the bucket, spilling all of the "water" across the dirt.

Larry WHEEZES, his eyes dilute and he grips his throat, unable to breathe.

ELI (CONT'D)
Hey, you okay?

He opens his mouth wide, GASPING for oxygen.

LARRY
My throat.

ELI
Hey, what's the matter? What's wrong?

JESSICA
Larry, what is it?

Larry falls on his back. Chokes himself. Elin leans closer.

ELI

Talk to me, what's happening?

Jessica smells the bucket - covers her nose.

JESSICA

It's acid.

ELI

Holy shit. Larry, c'mon, breathe.

Larry hangs onto Eli's arm - his throat MELTING FROM THE INSIDE.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER - DAY

HALF A MILE AWAY.

Julissa, carrying Eva in her arms, speeds alongside Quetzal to safety.

Eva's bite mark has BUBBLED as if a plum were sticking out from her wrist.

Quetzal notices the water post...

...with Eli, Jessica and Larry next to it.

QUETZAL

It's them. Let me take her.

Quetzal grabs Eva from Julissa's arms and SPRINTS to the water post.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER. WATER OUTPOST - DAY

Jessica takes hold of Larry as he continues grasping his throat, trying to smoothen the pain.

JESSICA

The flare gun. You have to shoot it.

Eli nods.

He digs into his backpack, pulls out the flare gun.

He unhooks the latch, raises it at the sky and -

BANG! He FIRES.

A BEAMING RED LIGHT shoots straight at the sun.

Eli glances back and sees Quetzal and Julissa running toward them with Eva in tow.

ELI
They found us.

Eli dashes after them - meeting them halfway.

They run to one another with everything they've got, exhausted to the brink of death.

They keep running...running...and they come together.

Julissa runs into Eli's arms, hugging him tight.

Quetzal shoves Eva in his face, hinting at her deadly bite.

ELI (CONT'D)
Jesus, what happened?

JULISSA
Snake.

ELI
I can help.

Eli takes Eva and runs back to the water post. Julissa and Quetzal follow him.

ELI (CONT'D)
Larry's hurt. Do you have water?

Quetzal checks his bag.

JULISSA
Our things were stolen.

Quetzal grabs Clara's canteen - he shakes it. It's half-full.

QUETZAL
Water!

He hands Eli the canteen.

ELI
Hold onto it.

Eli sets Eva on the floor. He pulls out a POCKETKNIFE from his backpack.

ELI (CONT'D)
Julissa, give some Larry some water. I'll take care of Eva.

Julissa pours water down Larry's throat. He continues to wheeze, but he releases his grip off his throat.

JULISSA
Is it working?

ELI
Just keep giving him water.

Eli measures the radius of Eva's bite mark. He CUTS the bottom corner, making her bleed.

QUETZAL
What are you doing?

Quetzal tries to go after the pocketknife.

ELI
Trust me.

The venom in Eva's blood squirts out of her wrist.

ELI (CONT'D)
She'll be alright for now. But you have to take her to a hospital. Both of you.

He turns to Jessica, who's hanging in there.

Suddenly, they hear a horn HONKING from a mile away.

A BORDER PATROL VEHICLE drives drive towards them.

ELI (CONT'D)
We're saved. Oh my god, Larry, hang in there, they're coming for us.

Eli turns back to Julissa.

ELI (CONT'D)
You need to go.

JULISSA
What?

ELI
One family has to reunite.

JULISSA
No, I can't leave Eva.

ELI
She won't survive another hour. You have to go your son.

QUETZAL
He's right.

Julissa faces her nephew.

QUETZAL (CONT'D)
*We're out here 'cause of me. I
 can't allow you to be taken back.*

Julissa bursts into tears.

JULISSA
Quetzal, I can't.

QUETZAL
*One of us needs to be with Eva.
 Better me than you. You need to go
 back to Henry.*

Julissa wipes the tears off her eyes and hugs Quetzal.

JULISSA
I love you, nephew. Be careful.

She kisses him in his cheek.

QUETZAL
Say hi to my cousin.

Julissa kisses Eva's forehead and then hugs Eli.

She catches her breath, waves goodbye, and TAKES OFF.

As Border Patrol drives closer into view, Eli gazes at Julissa disappearing into the midst of the Sonoran desert.

EXT. U.S./MEXICO BORDER - DAY

A YUMA UNITED FELLOWSHIP truck tumbles through a half-paved road.

In the driver's seat, a MEXICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN spots a mysterious animal on the side of the road.

She SLAMS the brakes. Hops out of the truck - carrying a dozen gallons of real FRESH WATER.

The Mexican-American Woman approaches the figure...

...but it's not an animal...

...it's Matheson's dead body with a trail of blood coming from his leg behind him.

His face - completely burnt to a crisp. A torn part of his shirt wraps around the bullet wound and his eyes lifeless - baking under the hot sun for buzzards.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

TWO NURSES set Eva on an operating table.

A DOCTOR joins them, checks her pulse. A nurse hands him a needle - ready to SIPHON the venom out from her body.

It's static - she's not breathing.

Suddenly, they hear a BEEP.

They turn to the monitor where her heart rate grows steady.

INT. BORDER PATROL JAIL CELL - DAY

Quetzal, handcuffed, sits on the bench, eyes closed and praying. He raises his head, absorbing the moisture of the cell's air conditioning.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - DAY

An ANESTHESIOLOGIST puts Larry to sleep.

His heart rate's stable.

A SURGEON enters, a NURSE hands him a scalpel.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jessica waits at a bench for her ride. Her arm is fully bandaged and her face is covered in smaller band-aids and creams to heal her damaged skin.

A TESLA arrives, parks in front.

Louis Dreyfuss hops out with messy hair and unraveled tie.

Jessica rises from the bench, shocked.

JESSICA

I didn't think you'd come.

Louis wraps his arms around her as if it's been years.

LOUIS

I thought I really did lose you.

JESSICA
I'm here, Dad. For good.

She returns the hug.

INT. BORDER PATROL STATION - DAY

Eli, with the same band-aids and cream on his tainted skin, sits in front of an agent's desk.

A BORDER PATROL AGENT walks inside.

AGENT
Mr. Martin.

He sinks in his chair, slaps a FILE in front of Eli.

AGENT (CONT'D)
Can you tell me what you were doing out there?

ELI
I was on a vacation gone wrong.
Thank you for finding us.

AGENT
You go to college?

ELI
Graduating in two days.

AGENT
I wanted to ask you about that -
your name. It doesn't appear on any
system.

Eli lowers his head. Cracks a smile.

AGENT (CONT'D)
Something funny?

ELI
No. In fact, everything's clearer.

EXT. YUMA, ARIZONA. PARK - DAY

Julissa waits by a pay phone - skin bumps present and all.

She wipes the dirt off her shirt, trying to avoid any distraction from the few PARENTS taking their KIDS to the playground.

A MINIVAN pulls up in the parking lot. The park's empty with only a few people walking their dogs.

And out comes JULISSA'S OLDER SISTER, her HUSBAND, and HENRY ALVAREZ, 10, an overexcited, chubby little boy.

Julissa CRIES with no intention to hold back her tears.

Henry sees her from afar. He jumps in the air and runs after her - tears streaming down his face.

Julissa embraces him, carrying him high in the air - kissing his cheeks.

JULISSA

I will never leave you again.

She closes her eyes and cries tears of joy in each other's arms - reunited.

EXT. NEW MEXICO. ICE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Eli, in a prison jumpsuit, shackled in chains with nearly-healed skin and a growing beard, comes out from the bus and waits in line to enter the facility.

An ICE SECURITY GUARD taking the names of each detainee.

He comes up next.

ICE SECURITY GUARD

Name?

ELI

Elias Martin.

ICE SECURITY GUARD

You're good to go. Wait - any relation to Francisco and Diana Martin?

Eli stops.

ELI

What did you say?

ICE SECURITY GUARD

They were transferred over here from Border Patrol in Texas last week. You know them?

Eli takes a peek at the clipboard, confused.

INT. ICE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

As he waits to remove his handcuffs, Eli searches through the barbed wire fencing housing the rest of the detainees.

And on the corner of the room, Francisco and Diana, aged, tired and with similar tainted skin, rise from the ground.

They're overjoyed beyond belief. Diana extends her hand out to Eli - they're just a few feet away.

Eli releases a stream of tears - sniffing.

The ICE Security guard grabs Eli's handcuffs, inserts the key and unlocks them.

FADE OUT.