

BRING ME THE HEAD OF
ALFREDO GARCIA

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SP JUNE 14, 1972
1.

BRING ME
THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA

EXT. A WALLED HACIENDA (DAY)

IS IT SPAIN --- Maybe ITALY -- or possibly MEXICO -- or
BRAZIL -- or ARGENTINA -- or...? It is not Mexico.

In any case we are far enough away to see the expanse of the large complex of buildings and stables, far enough not to see too many details. Specifically we see horses, specifically we do not see automobiles. Specifically it is not yet understood the time or the place. Specifically it is a pastoral scene of great wealth. Running across the courtyard toward a wing of the Hacienda is

MARIA, A YOUNG INDIAN GIRL, in her arms are two fresh-ironed gowns. She enters a side door.

INT. HACIENDA HALLWAY (DAY)

AS MARIA RUNS TOWARD CAMERA DOWN THE LONG SHADOWY HALL.
Her bare feet slapping softly against the tiles.

INT. HACIENDA DRESSING ROOM (DAY)

IT IS A LARGE ROOM, heavy and massive furniture pieces sit like offerings in an antique shop. At the far end of the room standing in front of a full length mirror is:

A GIRL CHILD. She is motionless and nude to the waist, and she seems as much a part of the room as the ornate ceiling.

She is possibly fifteen or sixteen years of age. Her black hair falls loosely down her back stopping at her waist. From an oval face two green eyes stare into the mirror.

For the first time she moves - her hands come up and the palms lightly touch the richness of her breasts - they are new - full - ripe - the nipples firming - sensitive to her touch - she giggles a little - they have changed - she likes herself.

HER HANDS LEAVE HER BREASTS and drop slowly to the growing roundness of her belly - she is perhaps six months pregnant and carrying her child high - again her hands explore her body, gently touching. Full of complex feelings - happy yet.....terrified.

This is THERESA and she is all that she seems, young, lovely, sweet, voluptuous, pregnant and in trouble.

THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN AND MARIA ENTERS. She is the same age as her mistress and utterly devoted.

MARIA

(putting the clothes on the bed)

Seniorita Theresa, tu papa te espera!

Theresa lifts her arms over her head. She sees only a body - a child in her belly and breasts to feed it....and she wants only this....and a man....her man.

THERESA

(flat)

Yo se.

MARIA

(holding out a gown)

Ahorita, mi reina!!

THERESA

No quiero ir!

There is a loud knock on the door.

MARIA

Quien es?

ARMANDO (O.S.)

Su padre te espera inmediatamente!

THE TWO OF THEM LOOK AT EACH OTHER IN SUDDEN AND COMPLETE TERROR. Then Theresa, with Maria's help, wraps a piece of cloth around her belly and slips into a gown - it is long and close at the neck and its fullness conceals her maternal condition - she slips on a pair of slippers with fumbling fingers ... turns, nods, and Maria opens the door.

ARMANDO AND GUSTAVO ENTER. Both are over 40 and overtly grim at the moment, both are dressed in leather, both are armed with Colt 45's in traditional Western fashion. They stand waiting and while they speak with a degree of politeness the anger and disquiet in their faces is evident to both girls.

THERESA DRAPES A MANTILLA across her head and shoulders, crosses to them and exits. Maria following slowly.

INT. HACIENDA HALLWAY (DAY)

THERESA AND HER GUARDS EXIT HER ROOM AND MOVE ALONG THE HALLWAY.

The procession has a feeling of a death march - the only sound - spurred boots, bare feet and her slippers - Theresa's face reflects her growing fear. Suddenly she stops and turns.

THERESA
(faintly)
Por favor, un momento.

She turns, steps past them - they hesitate a moment - looking after her - then follow - she breaks into a run - as do they.

MARIA TRIES TO STOP THEM but is knocked broken and sprawling to the floor.

EXT. HACIENDA COURTYARD (DAY)

THERESA EXITS AND FLIES ACROSS THE COURTYARD, ARMANDO AND GUSTAVO BURSTING OUT OF THE DOOR BEHIND HER, she turns, twists and falls full length into the dirt, finally looks up at:

SPURRED BOOTS and two:

UNFORGIVING FACES. She begins to weep. They lift her roughly to her feet and half carry half drag her towards the giant doors of the Hacienda main entrance.

A SERIES OF ANGLES.

ON HER FEET, HER FACE, her growing terror.

THE SPURRED BOOTS OF HER FOLLOWERS, THE SOUND building
as their heels hit the hard packed clay.

THEIR FACES GROWING GRIMMER AND MORE SAVAGE as they near the
doors, their spurs clanging loud against the tiles.

They kick open the doors and enter. As they do she suddenly
straightens and pride - an unforgiving pride lifts her
shoulders.

INT. HACIENDA: LIVING ROOM (DAY)

THE ROOM IS LARGE, and the ruler sits behind the desk.

EL HACIENDADO - EL JEFE - THE OWNER AND ABSOLUTE RULER OF
A RANCH LARGER THAN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND. He is
dressed in black and has almost snow white hair, an almost
black moustache and a clipped greying beard. His air of
authority is classical and unmistakable.

SCATTERED ABOUT THE ROOM ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE - diminutive
in the huge room.

IN A FAR CORNER THERE ARE WOMEN IN BLACK, closely huddled
together, around:

CARMEN, a statuesque, somewhat ageing beauty, who stares at
El Jefe, her eyes burning with fear and hatred. Among the
others in the room are:

MAJOR DOMOS, SYNCOPHANTS AND A DOZEN OR SO HARD FACED MEN
dressed in variations of the uniform of the day - black,
the style applicable to contemporary dress or 1880, all

are armed - the guards at the door carry lever action 30.30 rifles: in the crook of their arms.

All of them watch impassively as:

THERESA WALKS PROUDLY THROUGH THE GREAT DOUBLE DOORS AND APPROACHING EL JEFE. The guards hold her arms firmly - but she has pride and style to match her father's - and ignores them - they stop in front of him. He looks at the girl for a long moment, gestures.

THE GUARDS RIP HER GOWN down to the waist. She doesn't flinch.

EL JEFE
(finally)
Quien es el padre?

She looks at him and doesn't answer. He nods slightly.

THE GUARDS BEGIN TO TWIST HER ARMS, SLOWLY, TWISTING, burning bending until it appears they will break. Her father looks at her impassively.

EVERYONE LOOKS AT HER, but nobody moves.

EXCEPT CARMEN, SHE STEPS FORWARD AND SCREAMS, while the others shrink back in horror, but as she does, Theresa's arm breaks and her daughter's scream rides over hers. The mother is jerked back by the guards.

THERESA
(sobbing with pain, unable to stand)
Alfredo Garcia.

El Jefe gestures - Theresa's locket and cross is ripped from her throat and placed on the desk. He opens it - looks at it:

A PICTURE OF ALFREDO GARCIA.

EL JEFE GESTURES, and his daughter is led away. The women flutter after her mother like black birds following their leader, as the lady runs to her daughter.

EL JEFE after a long moment his face white, turns to the assembled people.

EL JEFE

Por favor...por un milio des pesos...
triga me la cabeza de Alfredo Garcia.

THE MEN TURN, put their hats on and exit from various doors - almost like strangers, they are strangers. They have been brought in to witness this scene and now that its over they have a job to do. They leave in groups of two, groups of three, some talking softly - making plans.

Two of them are of particular interest.

MAX EVANS, HALF GRINGO HALF MEXICAN INDIAN, a knife wielding child molester of surprising gentleness. And:

FRANK, a double entry book keeper whose two guns are never too prominent...twice as handsome as a goitre. Frank takes the locket from the desk - leaves with Max. He does not question El Jefe, does not look at him, nobody does, El Jefe is left alone.

EXT. HACIENDA (DAY) A SERIES OF ANGLES.

THE MEN LEAVE. BUT NOT BY HORSE. MERCEDES, FERRARIES, CORVETTES and even a Limo or two provide transportation. Because it's today, baby, not 1880, and like it or not, exactly this kind of bullshit still exists. And the hunt begins.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF ANGLES:

SP JUNE 14, 1972

7.

JETS PRIVATE AND PUBLIC...racing across the sky.

TRAINS WHISTLING UNDER AND ACROSS BRIDGES.

BUSES BEING SEARCHED

A MONTAGE OF FACES SEEN in the Hacienda - investigating asking questions.

PEOPLE IN RESTAURANTS bars and hotels, looking up as men in dark suits sit down and begin to talk to them.

TELEPHONES RINGING AND BEING ANSWERED.

BORDER OFFICERS being bought off.

GANGSTERS BEING RECRUITED.

INFORMANTS BEING PAID.

BARTENDERS BEING QUESTIONED, feet moving, wheels moving.

THE SEARCH IS ON - all over the world - where is Alfredo Garcia?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUAREZ HOTEL (DAY)

MAX AND FRANK LEAVE THEIR MERCEDES as it pulls up and stops in front of the best hotel in Juarez, and, being a top tourist attraction on the border, the best is very good indeed. They are welcomed like royalty by the staff and by:

JON QUILL AND SAPPENSLY. Both are big men, one, a little shorter, a lot heavier and without an ounce of fat behind the smiling face, is dressed in an old seersucker suit. This is QUILL.

SAPPENSLY obviously from Yale, Harvard, Princeton or Arizona State Teachers College, is a quiet, well-dressed calculating killer, at least 10 years younger.

THEY GREET FRANK AND MAX OBSEQUIOUSLY.

Max is brusque as he gives them orders and a list of names and addresses and then enters the hotel with Frank.

QUILL AND SAPPENSLY BEGIN EXAMINING THE LIST AS THEY move to their car. As they reach it, two men step out, they are:

QUETO, A YOUNG LYING MEXICAN BACK-STABBER and his friend CHALO, AN ALMOST PURE INDIAN, fat, good-natured, a pistolero with a great talent for killing, loving and drinking. He is very bad news with a gun and a very bad driver when sober. Which is very seldom indeed.

Sappensly and Quill take their seats in the back.

SAPPENSLY
Mirador first, then La Munica, La
Gollindrina, El Toro ---

The car pulls out.

EXT. EL PASO, JUAREZ RED LIGHT DISTRICTS (DAY AND NIGHT)
A SERIES OF ANGLES:

VARIOUS WHORES, BARTENDERS AND WAITRESSES AND ASSORTED TRAMPS are being questioned by the four men. Among those questioned, without success is ELITA (who we will get to know a lot better a little later.)

CUT TO:

EXT. SIEMPRE VIVA BAR (NIGHT)

QUILL AND SAPPENSLEY GET OUT OF THEIR CAR. The Siempre Viva is the end of the list and a long day, but they're on salary and they don't quit - not ever. In their circles this would be frowned upon.

CHALO AND CUETO WAIT IN THE CAR THIS TIME. Chalo watches them enter the bar then takes out a half pint and gently kills it. There is a bus parked a little distance away.

INT. SIEMPRE VIVA BAR (NIGHT)

A THIRD-RATE JUAREZ CLUB (CRIB?) complete with four girls, (waitresses?) bandstand and a piano player.

THIS IS BENNIE, WHO PLAYS AND HANDLES THE CUSTOMERS. BENNIE ISN'T BIG, BUT LOOKS LIKE HE COULD BE ROUGH, BUT HE ISN'T - NOT HALF ROUGH. He's not going soft - he's gone soft. Maybe he's always been soft, but in any case he's learned to be friendly enough to talk his way out of more fights than most men can find.

He's near the wrong side of 40 and is the only gringo bartender on the Mexican side of the border who can't speak decent Spanish.

Happiness comes to him easily. He's gone through 40 years of life with a \$1.35 in one hand and an erection in the other and now when it's time to find out which is which, he doesn't want to look. Hell, he's not sure where to look - as a matter of fact, he owns almost half the joint and if he keeps on going at the rate he's been, he might have a piece of a Ventura Boulevard Motel by the time he's 80.

But now he plays Guantanamera continuously, okay you name it - it's still a joint - a second rate tour bus stop - and the tour bus passengers are just beginning to leave. (BENNIE did the place in Villa decor - so the "quaint" is there - that's it except for BENNIE'S "quaint" and quiet desperation.)

As the tour bus passengers leave - two couples remain. You know them - I know them. Texans. Pure Gringos - Pendajos.

1ST TEXAN
(yelling)
Four more margueritas.

2ND TEXAN
(to Bennie)
Play it again - Bennie.
(as Bennie looks at him)
Guantanamera.

And Bennie smiles and does as he is told.

2ND TEXAN
That's authentic!

QUILL AND SAPPENSLY COME IN AND BUY A DRINK FOR BENNIE AND
Guantanamera and PAULO, the bartender - this bar is a 60/40
deal, between Paulo and Bennie, who always gets the short
end.

BENNIE

No the first drink is on the house -
So Paulo, take care of those gentlemen.

PAULO

So okay - your wishes, Gentlemen.

SAPPENSLY

So does anyone know our great buddy -
our beloved compadre, Alfredo Garcia? -
Por favor?

THE BARTENDER, shakes his head, looks at Bennie.

BENNIE smiles at them. He doesn't know Alfredo Garcia from Dolores del Rio (or does he?) but his nostrils widen as they inhale easy money. He drinks thoughtfully. They know Bennie - they've known a lot of Bennies'. He empties his glass.

BENNIE

(maybe he's heard the name,
anyway he can find out)

Come on over.

(they cross and sit on the stools that
surround the piano bar)

(maybe the Texans leave - maybe not)

BENNIE

(indicating the piano)

What do you want to hear?

He picks up the five spot that slides across the piano,
looks up - makes up his mind and slides it into his tip cup.

PAULO - THE BARTENDER CROSSES TO THEM -

PAULO

Senores, what would you have?

QUILL

Tequilla.

TWO GIRLS sit down next to them.

SAPPENSLY

Beer.

PAULO
Something for the ladies?

SAPPENSLY
Burro piss.

Paulo blinks, laughs and Bennie, sensing a possible loss of action, calls out with a smile.

BENNIE
Come on. What do you guys want to hear?

SAPPENSLY
Who knows...How about you?

BENNIE
How about "I Remember April?"

QUILL
What's that?

BENNIE
Just an old song.

PAULO brings the drinks.

SAPPENSLY
Now, let us buy you one.

BENNIE
Quick! Double Daniels on the rocks.

Paulo splits.

BENNIE, WATCHES SAPPENSLY TAKE out a plain envelope from his coat pocket, he tries to see around the flap as Sappensly's finger pinches out a single hundred dollar note.

It is a stiff, virgin bill of what could be an endless stack. Bennie takes a deep breath but keeps his cool - wondering.

BENNIE
(playing softly)
Take me to your leader.

SAPPENSLY AND QUILL GRIN and the prospect of ann all-night blast widens Bennie's smile as a third GIRL brings him the well-known, imported, Jack Daniels, two-buck-a-shot, (watered down Watermill and Fraser.) Bennie lifts his glass to force a salute.

BENNIE
(saying almost the only thing he
knows in Spanish)
Saludos pesetas y amor.

As they follow his hype, he chug-a-lugs the double - they drink.

BENNIE
(the expert - to Quill)
That beer is great huh! They
brough German Brewmeisters over
here a long time ago.

THE FIRST GIRL, JOAN is working hard on Quill's crotch, she leans in blowing insisently in his ear.

QUILL REACHES OUT with his right hand, about six inches to his left, then clenching the fist, pulls back his arm, almost too fast to see.

THE POINT OF HIS ELBOW CATCHES LUPE UNDER THE jaw bone, driving her off the stool and she bounces flat ass on the floor. She is unconscious.

The sound of violence is well known here. But the room stops breathing, waiting for the next move.

ALL EYES GO TO BENNIE - it's his moment of truth.

BENNIE

(after a long moment)

You guys like baseball?

PAULO AND THE SECOND GIRL, MARIA, quietly attend to Joan, pulling her to her feet, and half carry her out like a gored matador. Sappensly and Quill do not react to any of this.

SAPPENSLY

No, not too much, just the series.

BENNIE

(still shaken)

Yeah, me too, but lately I've become a basketball nut. Those guys are fantastic. Did'ya ever see....Bill Russell - Celtics in '69?

SAPPENSLY

How long have you been working around here?

BENNIE

About six years, I think. Mexico time started in the Black Kat in T.J.....
did you ever hear of it?

QUILL AND SAPPENSLY just look at him.

BENNIE

Man, those were the days! A real class night club. Everybody came there....
One night Paulette Goddard asked me to....

QUILL

(interrupting)

Do you know a lot of studs around here?

BENNIE

I know everybody. But studs ain't exactly my line.

BENNIE laughs. They do not laugh.

BENNIE

(recovering - trying to be cool)

...What are you looking for?

SAPPENSLY

Like I said, a pal of ours. A chum you might say, we'd kinda like to join up with him.

QUILL

He's a great ladies man. His name is Alfredo Garcia.

SAPPENSLY takes out the fat envelope and puts it on the bar.

SAPPENSLY

Maybe you could help us find him? He's about 25. Sometimes he calls himself Al Garcia - speaks English, Spanish and a little French.

BENNIE'S face winces with the strain of ignoring knowledge.

QUILL

(handing it over to BENNIE)

Here's his picture.

Bennie looks. Does he know him? YOU bet your ass he knows him.

BENNIE

(faking it)

I'll be a son-of-a-bitch you got me.

(squinting at the envelope)

Except the name...I've heard the name.

SAPPENSLY

You've heard the name Garcia before?

BENNIE

Who hasn't around here?

SAPPENSLY PICKS UP THE ENVELOPE, looks at QUILL and jerks his head toward the door.

QUILL

We are at the Hotel Perla, if you can come up with anything, we'd be glad to see you. Take this.

HE HANDS HIM A PLASTIC NUMBER like a meat market ticket -

BENNIE is hanging like a cow on a meat hook, as Sappensly opens the envelope, pinches off another bill drops it on the bar in front of BENNIE, who is afraid to look at it.

BENNIE

Don't worry friend, I'll find him, if he's alive, I'll find him.

SAPPENSLY

Alive isn't our problem.

BENNIE

(laughing)

Dead or alive then -

QUILL

(smiling)

Dead - just dead.

BENNIE flinches. They mean it.

BENNIE

What do you want to hear?

QUILL

Guantanamo.

Bennie flinches again.

THEY TURN TO LEAVE AS BENNIE PICKS UP the bill, it's a ten spot.

BENNIE

Hey, I didn't get your name.

SAPPENSLY

(turning)

Dobbs, Fred C. Dobbs.

THEY EXIT AS BENNIE does a straight take and then a double... As soon as Quill and Sappensly have left AN ANGRY KNOT OF WAITRESSES MOVE IN ON BENNIE all talking at once. We understand they aren't too happy about one-punch Joan and her fearless protector.

BENNIE
(standing)
SHUT UP OR IT'S BACK TO THE TACO
FACTORY!!

His tone of voice stops them cold.

BENNIE TURNS TO PAULO.

BENNIE
How long was it when Al was in here?

PAULO
One month, maybe two months.

PAULO asks them in Spanish and they answer a chorus of
Salty "No's".

BENNIE
O.K., now get your asses in gear,
pronto!

They scatter and BENNIE turns thoughtfully to PAULO.

BENNIE
Now pal, think, carefully. Do you
know anybody to ask about this guy?

PAULO
(thinking)
Elita.

This is not good news.

BENNIE
(shortly)
Anybody else?

PAULO
No - he stayed with her.

BENNIE
I didn't know....shit...

EXT. JUAREZ STREET (NIGHT)

BENNIE EXITS WALKS QUICKLY THROUGH THE STREET ACTION. The nightclub barkers, taco stands, chewing gum pushers. SUDDENLY A VOICE BARKS "GRINGO".

BENNIE FREEZES THEN WHIRLS, turns, pulling an imaginary pistol. It's too late, he's been had by the fastest finger in Mexico.

SALVATORE THE 'SNAKE', aged eleven years. Bennie hands over his poke. A couple of pesos. Salvatore lights up like an Al Jolson still.

SALVATORE

Gracias, tio.

BENNIE

(lightly kicking him in the butt)

Por nada.

BENNIE jumps into an awaiting taxi, a purple '60 Chevy with the wide-pointed rear deck. They take off down a rutted side street, heading out of town.

THE DRIVER IS FITO - long time buddy of Bennie's.

FITO

El Paso apartment or...?

BENNIE

Hilda's.

EXT. HILDA'S RESTAURANT-BAR (Swinging high class, sometime Semi-Hooker hangout)

THE GATE MAN looks briefly into the taxi, and recognizing Bennie waves them through.

INT. HILDA'S (NIGHT) THE BAND IS ON AND IT'S GOOD! A GREAT MANY HOSTESSES' FRIENDS ARE AROUND.

BENNIE ENTERS. The atmosphere could be that of an embassy party. Cool tourists, politicians, dentists, well-heeled men and women completely at home and relaxed in the atmosphere of special service. The best food is here and the best service.

THE YOUNG LADIES HERE often graduate to their own dress shop. The very special ones become movie actresses. There is the air of perfume, with a subdued music backing the colourful lighting effects. Not a bad place!

BENNIE ENTERS LOOKING FOR ELITA. He sees her. She is not the boss lady but close to it.

SHE SEES HIM AND REACTS HAPPILY. Elita was capable of giving herself for money, but you know now you can't buy her. Her life with Bennie is the first happiness. She's had in years.

He is all things to her. Not a pimp - a trusted friend and lover and she is not a working girl any more. She prays for him and herself in a clear, hopeful way. Elita is a purist. Maybe she is also a little past 30 - maybe not.

ELITA

Que paso - es muy temprano para ti!

BENNIE

Later than you think, Chula.

BENNIE TAKES HER ARM AND STEERS HER INTO A SMALL PRIVATE SITTING ROOM.

BENNIE

(fiercely)

Now how would you like a black eye?

ELITA

What have you been drinking?

BENNIE

You are a lying cheating bitch - how's your cold?

ELITA

(dumbfounded)

What cold?

BENNIE

The one you had in May, when I couldn't see you for three days.

A waiter suddenly appears.

WAITER.

Buenos noches, Beniamino, you are early.

BENNIE

Double bourbon with champagne back,
Julito and no texano bullshit!

JULITO

(grinning)
Si mi general.

ELITA

(taking Bennie's hand)
Alfredo.

BENNIE

Si! Alfredo.

ELITA

(nodding sadly)
Bueno - I start at the beginning. He
was the first man in my life. There
have been two. Some more, but I was
with only you and him. He was also my
cousin.

But I don't see him for a long time.
Then he came to see me, and stayed three
days. We were saying goodbye - forever -
(then smiling)
It took a little time.

BENNIE

(coldly)
Yeah. Three days and three nights!
Where is he now?

ELITA

Dios mio, why is Alfredo so important?
Today two men, gringos, pregunta me la
mismo.

BENNIE

Who? Two what? What did you tell them?

ELITA

For them I don't know anything. Here
we know nothing.

Bennie breathes a sigh of relief. The drinks are served
as Bennie assembles the pieces.

BENNIE

Were you in love with him?

ELITA

Mas o menos. He was aman -
he was good to me and - the first -
maybe - not since you - not now -

BENNIE

(interrupting)

- and if I get my hands on him, I'll
kill him.

ELITA

It's too late. When he left here
he was very drunk, muy baracho, and
near to Saltillo, his car refused the
road and the rocks killed him.

Bennie reacts as if his horse, Alfredo Garcia, has fallen
at the starting gate.

BENNIE

(a curse)

Jesus Christ!

ELITA

(crossing herself)

Amen, -- I hope he was taken home for
burial.

BENNIE finishes his drink, kisses her tenderly.

BENNIE

Buenos noches, amor, see you later.

INT. HOTEL PERLA. RECEPTION DESK (NIGHT)

BENNIE FLASHES THE PLASTIC NUMBER. The desk man points
to the elevator and as Bennie enters, he is joined by a
thin Italian Gangster.

INT. HOTEL PERLA. CORRIDO (NIGHT)

AS BENNIE EXITS THE ELEVATOR, THE GUNSEL FOLLOWS, then overtakes him as they arrive at the door of a suite - shakes him down - Bennie's clean. The gunsels give a patterned knock - the door opens.

INT. HOTEL SUITE (NIGHT)

THE ROOM IS BUSTLING WITH ACTIVITY, AS BENNIE enters and stands waiting as four pairs of eyes look him over.

BENNIE looks around - scared but doing his best not to show it.

There are two large desks in the room with two telephones on each desk. Seated behind them are:

MAX AND FRANK, they are the headhunters' Top-Dogs. There is no confusion here, just deadly concentration.

QUILL AND SAPPENSLEY are standing together checking some lists.

The room becomes silent for a long moment - then Max speaks.

MAX
Give us your card.

Bennie hands it to him.

BENNIE
Eleven.
(smiling)
Lucky.

QUILL STEPS UP WITH A FLASH POLAROID TAKES A SHOT OF BENNIE.

MAX
(pointing to a chair)
Sit down!

BENNIE DOES INSTANTLY. The room waits until Bennie is thoroughly uncomfortable.

BENNIE

(finally to Quill)
Bet you are surprised to see me, so soon.

QUILL

Don't waste our time, what have you got?

BENNIE

(trying to smile, only
one side of the mouth works)
You guys don't fool around, huh? You really mean business.

MAX

(gently cutting in, spelling
it out like a banker to a
prospective investor)
It's very simple. If you can give us the information we want, as to where we can find Alfredo Garcia, we will give you one thousand dollars. If your information is wrong, you too will be ---wrong. Dead wrong.

BENNIE

(gives almost his best shot)
Well you see....he's kind of a friend
of a friend...and I'd like to know why
you want him.....
(smiling, a long pause)
No, that's not true...but I....well....
have to tell somebody something.

MAX

You are interested in money, aren't you?
Money you can spend.

BENNIE

Well, indirectly, sir....there are other
things though....I mean....well....like
I want to stay alive.

FRANK
(dismissing him)
A loser.

BENNIE
(sharp)
Nobody loses all the time.

BENNIE HEARS HIMSELF LIKE A SPECTATOR at somebody else's trial.

MAX LAUGHS THE OTHERS DON'T. Bennie decides to go all the way.

BENNIE
Besides it isn't enough money for what I have in mind. How much is it worth if I get him for you.

MAX
(smoothly)
We can go five thousand.

BENNIE
(answering quickly before he can change his mind)
Ten thousand. I go all the way or I pass.

FRANK
I gather by that you mean dead.

BENNIE
Yes sir, I am afraid I do.

MAX
(quietly)
Well, my friend, one must do what one must do. All we require from you is physical proof that Garcia is dead.

BENNIE
What kind of physical proof?

FRANK
We are well aware of the problem and we are prepared to settle for his head. But, the head must match the picture.

BENNIE realizes that he has bluffed the hand through, it's ten thousand dollars for a dead man's head.

BENNIE
For ten thousand dollars it's a deal.

Bennie smiles at his new partners. They don't smile back.

BENNIE
I'll need some operating cash.
How about five hundred dollars in
advance?

MAX
You don't have to kill him with
kindness. Give him two hundred.

SAPPENSLY HANDS BENNIE THE FAMILIAR CRISP HUNDRED DOLLAR
BILLS.

Bennie accepts gingerly and nods to all and begins to
back out.

BENNIE
Well, so long, see you later.

MAX
You've got two days, and then
we'll come and find you.

BENNIE EXITS thoughtfully.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR (NIGHT)

BENNIE WALKS IN A VERY BUSINESS-LIKE DIRECTION as though
he were really going somewhere and rather than wait for
the elevator:

BENNIE TAKES THE STAIRWELL, and descends two at a time,
as though someone or something was following him.

EXT. JUAREZ STREET (NIGHT)

BENNIE COMES OUT OF THE HOTEL ENTRANCE STARTS TO GO RIGHT STOPS, TURNS GOES LEFT, STOPS TURNS GOES RIGHT AGAIN, and then walks off across the street.

EXT. MAIN STREET JUAREZ (NIGHT)

BENNIE WALKS PAST A SHOPPING MALL, STOPS, COLLAPSES, SLOWLY PULLS HIMSELF TOGETHER and then turns and walks into the mall. He has seen all this junk before a thousand times, but this time he is really looking at it.

A MONTAGE OF CHEAP MONKEYS ON STRINGS, pinatas, zapatas - in other words everything garish about border town souvenirs.

Bennie stops at a shop that features:

KNIVES OF EVERY SIZE, SHAPE AND DESCRIPTION.

HIS EYES SCAN THE SHOWCASE, FINALLY SETTling ON A:

THREE FOOT-LONG CURVED MACHETE WITH A JAGGED BONE RIPPER NEXT TO THE HANDLE. It is razor sharp. A challenge to man's basic instinct. Bennie keeps glancing at it and looking away until a:

PRETTY SALESGIRL STARTLES him and he turns in confusion buys it and leaves.

INT. BENNIE'S APARTMENT (NIGHT)

BENNIE ENTERS QUICKLY SLAMMING THE DOOR BEHIND HIM. He stands for a moment then walks over to his bed, pulling off his jacket, kicking off his shoes, he does a rolling fall on the bed.

It's been a big night and Bennie's face has fallen into the reality of a world he has always wanted and never known. He thinks about it as he slowly falls asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

BENNIE GROANS and kicks his legs violently, forces his eyes open in a wide stare - looks up as:

ELITA, THROWS HER ARMS AROUND HIM - kisses him hungrily on the mouth.

Bennie comes to life.

BENNIE
(breaking away)
O.K. baby, everything is O.K.

ELITA PULLS HIS HEAD to her breast as Bennie holds on to her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BENNIE'S APARTMENT (EARLY MORNING)

BENNIE AND ELITA ARE SLEEPING SPOON STYLE. She is the rear spoon.

HIS EYES OPEN AND SUDDENLY HE IS WIDE AWAKE. With careful movements he untangles himself from her arms, gets up and goes towards the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM BENNIE'S APARTMENT (EARLY MORNING)

BENNIE RUNS WATER INTO THE SINK, SPLASHES HIS FACE, SPITS SPLASHES AGAIN, then looks in the mirror with hard, square eyes. Holds for a moment and then grabs a towel and goes back into the bedroom.

INT. BENNIE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM (EARLY MORNING)

BENNIE COMES IN DRYING HIS FACE THEN SPINS THE TOWEL IN A CIRCLE AND SNAPS IT AT ELITA'S BARE BEHIND. The towel pops and she jumps.

BENNIE
(yelling)
Up and at 'em.

Elita jerks up as Bennie dives on the bed on top of her.

BENNIE
Come on, you want to sleep your life away?

ELITA
(in Spanish)
Holy Mother of God.

BENNIE
(shaking her)
Come on let's take off. Let's go
for a picnic - three - four days.

ELITA
Manana.

BENNIE
Manana, my ass - Now!....Hey, I saw those
guys, the ones who were looking for....
Alfredo.

ELITA
Did you tell them he was dead?

BENNIE
No.

ELITA
Porque no?

BENNIE
I told them I would find out -
Make sure. I want to see his grave.

ELITA CURLS UP TRYING to get back under cover of the
blanket, as Bennie pulls her around until they are
face to face.

BENNIE

(innocently)

Tell me, did he give good head?

Elita uncomprehending, then growls like a tiger, cursing in Spanish, as Bennie jumps off the bed pulling the blanket off, leaving a naked, pissed off lady wide awake.

BENNIE

Come on, pack a lunch -- pack my love. We are going to find the Golden Fleece. It will take 3-4 days.

Elita jumps out of bed, her mood changing instantly, she is ready for anything.

BENNIE

(expansively)

A week or two is too short to be alone with you.

She laughs, kisses him and runs into the bathroom.

EXT. MEXICAN HIGHWAY. (DAY)

HELICOPTER SHOT:

A SERIES OF ANGLES:

THE CAMERA RISES AND WE SEE A VAST EXPANSE OF MEXICO, WITH ALL THE BEAUTY THAT MAN HASN'T TOUCHED BUT HAS SUNG ABOUT.

A CONVERTIBLE, TOP DOWN, ROARS AROUND A CURVE AND COMES THROUGH AN ARROYO. It's a 1953 Buick hydromatic with supercharger holes on the hood and blue smoke coming out of the tail pipe. The death rattle of the valve lifters supports the finger work of:

ELITA'S DRIVING GUITAR, as she reaches the climax of the song and Bennie throws back his head and cries:

BENNIE

Hiyaiyaiyaiyai....

At the end they both break up laughing. Elita passes him a half empty bottle of tequilla. Bennie takes a slug, hands the bottle back and Elita throws an arm around his neck.

ELITA
Dame un besito, cayote.

BENNIE TURNS TO FACE the yellow-eyed lynx, who pulls him into her mouth. They are locked in as an:

ONCOMING GREYHOUND BUS BLASTS THEM INTO REALITY. Bennie swerves an inch, just missing hamburger time. The wind from the bus is like a concussion and Bennie fights to stay on the road.

BENNIE
(yelling)
.....Jesus!

ELITA
No matter, as long as I am with you
I don't give a shit.

BENNIE
Where did you learn that kind
of language?

ELITA
From you.

BENNIE
Not from me, never. That's bullshit....!

He reaches into the glove compartment, pulls out a .45, then looking down the road he bangs away at some:

VULTURES WHO ARE eating the usual roadside carrion. They don't move. Bennie fires again, they are not frightened at all.

Elita applauds, as she fallsover laughing.

ELITA
Bravo, bravo, bravo

BENNIE

(the loser)

I wasn't trying to hit them anyway.

I used to shoot a lot in the army.

ELITA REACHES BACK FOR HER guitar and begins playing, improvising a song about a great bandit who couldn't shoot his foot if it was tied on his gun.

She is putting him on, but he doesn't give a damn. He joins her in his own parody....They laugh together intimately, as great friends do. Really seeing each other innocently. It's as close as they have ever been. Then she begins singing the sad love songs of Mexico. An impossible love (maybe Rosita who had so much luck that only one of the three shots fired at her hit- 'Que suerte tiene Rosita!')

EXT. SALTILLO HIGHWAY (DAY)

THE TRIP CONTINUES. A SERIES OF TRAVELLING SHOTS WITH ELITA SINGING AND BENNIE DRIVING AND DRINKING.

EXT. CUSTOMS CHECKPOINT SHACK (DAY)

BENNIE APPROACHES SLOWS DOWN.

THE CUSTOMS OFFICER CHECKS HIS MEXICAN PLATES, THEN SMILES AT ELITA and waves them on. He walks a few steps to the shack to pick up a clipboard.

INSERT:

CLIPBOARD WITH LONG LIST OF CARS AND LICENSE NUMBERS. A pencil writes the most recent passer. B537 T748. A pause, then the pencil turns eraser side down pushes the paper up to reveal the same number underneath. Then the pencil moves away to the dial of a telephone, it begins dialing.

INSERT:

TO ANOTHER DIAL WITH A FINGER DIALING THE NUMBERS.

INSERT:

TO ANOTHER FINGER DOING THE SAME.

EXT. SALTILLO HIGHWAY (DAY)

THE BUICK IS MOVING ALONG THE HIGHWAY.

EXT. ANOTHER HIGHWAY. INT. LIMOUSINE (DAY)

CAMERA PANS DOWN TO A TELEPHONE CRADLED ON THE CONSOLE.
IT GOES BEEP, BEEP, BEEP. A hand picks it up as we
CUT BACK TO:

INT. CUSTOMS CHECKPOINT SHACK (DAY)

FROM THIS ANGLE WE DON'T SEE FACES, just hands. We recognize
the customs officer with the clipboard.

THEN HIS HAND REACHES UNDER AND BRINGS OUT THE PAPER
with Bennie's license number on it, and hands it over.

EXT. SALTILLO HIGHWAY (DAY)

BENNIE TURNS OFF TO A ROADSIDE GAS STATION AND STOPS.
ELITA gets out.

BENNIE

Get some cold beer. We'll stop up
the way and eat whatever you've got
in the basket.

(to the attendant)

Diez super por favor.

ELITA

Will you marry me?

BENNIE

(after a long moment - possibly
the longest moment in his life)

Yes.

ELITA

(she takes his hand softly)
Un promiso?

BENNIE

(the longest moment in his life)
(finally, and he means it, sure
he does)
I promise.

Then Bennie's irony catches up with him and he suddenly laughs, realizing that he is up there on the celluloid and it's a picnic.'

All it takes is a somewhat used bartender with a big smile, a pretty girl and a little bit of guts and he's on his way.

(Don't laugh, this might just be enough in itself for anybody - what the hell did you do today?)

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF JUAREZ (DAY)

A GREEN STATION WAGON PASSES A SMOKING BUS, almost wipes out an oncoming tractor and burro before regaining the right lane and pushing hard down the open highway.

A SIGN IN THE F.G.: TORREON - 837 Km.

INT. GREEN STATION WAGON (DAY)

CHALO IS DRIVING, DRINKING, LAUGHING AND not giving a shit that Cueto is angrily shaken by all three. Cueto pulls himself together, starts to speak, but:

CHALO

(a grinning cobra)
No me chingas chingando,....

Chalo laughs again, takes another drink, offers the bottle to Cueto; who declines, sinks lower in the seat and closes his eyes.

EXT. JUAREZ/TORREON HIGHWAY (DAY)

HIGH ANGLE - BENNIE'S CONVERTIBLE SLIPS DOWN THE HIGHWAY far below; he's not pushing it too hard. The SOUND of their SINGING VOICES drift up - enchanting the bare plateaus above Chihuahua with a few of those great Ranchero songs of Mexico.

INT. BENNIE'S BUICK (DAY)

ELITA IS PLAYING THE GUITAR, singing "La Treinta-Trenta De Pancho Villa"; laughing when Bennie joins in on the verse or two that he knows.

Two happy people, sharing each other and a beautiful day. Maybe Elita doesn't even notice Bennie's eyes occasionally flicking up to the rear view mirror.

EXT. JUAREZ/TORREON HIGHWAY - (DAY)

THE GREEN STATION WAGON SPEED BY - Chews up the road south.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUAREZ/TORREON HIGHWAY - ROADSIDE REST (DAY)

BENNIE AND ELITA SIT CLOSE TOGETHER on a stone bench; drinking cold beer, tequilla from a bottle and eating tortillas, cold beans, chile bravos; talking enthusiastically with their mouths full:

BENNIE

...and after that...Cozumel! You
ever been there? Or Isle de Mujeres?

ELITA

No...

BENNIE

Me either. Hell, I've never been
any place I want to go back to. I
hear it's real pretty though.

ELITA

I was at a place once I would like to see
again. You take me there...?

BENNIE

(expansively...spitting out
a bean or two:)

Absolutamente! Name it!

ELITA

Vista Hermosa... 'cerca' de Cuernavaca.
It is a Hacienda muy grande....fantastico...
beautiful...

(on his look)

I was there...when I was a working girl.

BENNIE

Oh...who with?

ELITA

I forget - can we go there?

A CAR SPEEDS BY ON THE HIGHWAY.

BENNIE WASHES DOWN THE SUDDENLY DRY BEANS with a swig of
beer, then:

BENNIE

Why? Why not find some place new.

ELITA

Can we?

BENNIE

With Alfredo's help - we can do
anything -

ELITA

We're not doing maybe too bad - if
I have three more TV commercials and
I do - you can buy your place.

BENNIE

Bullshit! It's just a pit stop for a tour bus. Not "my place" this time we move up!

ELITA

(angry)
Listen to me hijo we are together - we are moving up - slow, but we are moving.

BENNIE

O.K. you have the judgement, but I have the instinct - and now we follow my instinct.

ELITA

And we marry someday in the church?

BENNIE

Yeah - in the church we marry someday.

ELITA

Bullshit, Bennie!

BENNIE

No, I mean it this time.

ELITA

When?

BENNIE

(after a long moment)
Sunday.

ELITA

Gracias mi vida - can we name our first baby Alfredo.

BENNIE

No -

ELITA

I am sorry - I am stupid - our first baby will be named Benjamin.

BENNIE

We'll call the second Al - if I collect him.

As she grabs him and kisses him happily in thanks, another

CAR SPEEDS BY ON THE HIGHWAY. It is the green station wagon.

INT. STATION WAGON (DAY)

CHALO SHOOTS A QUICK LOOK OUT THE REAR WINDOW, slaps Cueto awake.

CUETO
(startled, angry)
Asco! Que pinci!

CHALO
Tu madre! Atross!

CHALO jerks his thumb to the rear, begins slowing the car. Cueto follows the thumb, his anger becoming replaced with a thin smile.

CUETO'S P.O.V. - SHOOTING OUT THE REAR WINDOW: BENNIE and ELITA, locked in a kiss beside the road - becoming smaller and smaller.

CUETO AND CHALO TRADE SMILES. CHALO offers the bottle again; this time, Cueto takes it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROADSIDE REST - (DAY)

BENNIE GRINS AT ELITA - they are talking. She is concerned. He hedges a little - just a little.

BENNIE
Because I figure Al's good for ten thousand.

ELITA
Why?

BENNIE
He made a mistake. Now some
people want him dead - want his
head for proof.

ELITA
(standing)
I can't be part of that.

BENNIE
(flat)
You are!
(then)
If you can't do it for me, do it for
A. Wouldn't he want you to be happy?

ELITA
Si.
(then)
Pobre Alfredo....He knew women -
loved them.

BENNIE
He told me he was in trouble over
a young girl -
(then almost crying)
The idiot!
Salud Alfredo.

BENNIE DRINKS from the bottle, hands it to her.

ELITA
Salud Alfredo...He would want me to be
happy.

She drinks, gives the bottle back to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUAREZ/TORREON HIGHWAY (DAY)

THE BUICK CONTINUES SOUTH. The highway is lined with
poplar trees. ELITA is singing again - her voice traveling
back to us, fading as the car disappears around a distant
bend.

A MOMENT LATER, THE GREEN STATION WAGON pulls out from
behind a stand of willows, follows leisurely.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD AND INT. BENNIE'S BUICK (DAY) A SERIES OF ANGLES

THEY ARE DRIVING IN SILENCE NOW. ELITA'S HEAD is on BENNIE'S shoulder as she dreamily enjoys the passing landscape. BENNIE stretches, checks his watch.

BENNIE

Should make Torreon around ocho...
crack another cerveca, huh...

SHE REACHES INTO THE BACK SEAT, gets a bottle of beer from the Ice bucket, opens it and hands it to him. He grunts his thanks, drinks, offers her a sip. She just shakes her head, strangely silent. Then:

ELITA

It is warm, Bennie. Let's not sleep
in the city tonight...por favor?

BENNIE

Why not?

ELITA

I packed some food and blankets,
I will make your dinner...and we can
sleep under the stars.

BENNIE shrugs, says nothing, takes another gulp of beer, checks the rear view mirror.

ELITA

Por favor, mi vida? - I will make
you fresh tortillas.

BENNIE

(softly)
We camp tonight.

She is happy again; squeezes his arm.

ELITA

Find us some beauty to lie down in.

(softly serious)
Te quiero, Bennie...te quiero.

BENNIE

Me too, baby.

SP JUNE 14, 1972
39.

BENNIE flings the beer bottle away, slips his arm around her shoulder and pulls her in close. She rests her head on his shoulder again, smiles as they drive a ways in silence.

EXT. JUAREZ/TORREON HIGHWAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

THE BUICK SLOWS OFF OF THE HIGHWAY, moves up a narrow dirt road into the trees.

SERIES OF ANGLES: THE BUICK:

THREADING ITS WAY THROUGH THE COTTONWOODS, willows; scaring up a rabbit here, startling birds into flight there.

FINALLY STOPPING IN A GRASSY CLEARING with a spring in the middle.

ELITA STANDS IN THE SEAT, happily embracing the treetops, the sky; beautiful...breathing it all in.

BENNY LOOKS UP, ENJOYS THE SIGHT ABOVE HIM. Then he wraps his arms around her waist and they tumble out of the convertible, laughing and rolling in the lush grass.

HIS HAND DISAPPEARS UNDER HER DRESS and their laughter gradually begins turning to more serious things.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRASSY CLEARING (EVENING)

BENNY IS SHAPING THE FIRE WHICH has now burnt down to a find bed of glowing coals. Out of Elita's baggage has come a coffee pot, tortillas, enough food for dinner.

ELITA TAKES A FLAT PIECE OF TIN OUT OF THE BUICK'S OPEN trunk (which also contains a shovel, burlap sack and the machette) and places it over the fire. Bennie looks at her, smiling with great inner satisfaction as she kneels, Indian style in front of the fire and begins preparing their supper.

BENNIE

Que rico, Mammacita.

ELITA

Better than a hotel...no mi Vida?

Bennie nods, grins, playfully pinches her. She slaps at his hand in mock protest, giggles like a happy housewife. (If there is such an animal)

BENNIE MOVES AWAY, SITS WITH HIS BACK AGAINST A TREE; watching her, feeling very proud, very lucky.

SHE LOOKS OVER AT HIM, smiles.

BENNIE WINKS, takes a drink of tequilla, freezes:

TWO BAD CATS ARE STANDING A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY: Watching, grinning, both very drunk; one armed northern style... automatics sticking out of their back pockets. The older, heavier of the two, JOHN, a Texas gringo, grins wider at Bennie's reaction.

JOHN

Buenos tardes...

BENNIE AND ELITA TRADE QUICK LOOKS AS THE TWO intruders stroll casually into their lives.

BENNIE & ELITA

(in guarded unison)

Buenos tardes...

JOHN SQUATS BY THE FIRE, never taking his grinning face off of Bennie. The younger one, PACO, from California, circles the Buick appreciatively.

NOTE: DIALOGUE IN PARENTHESES SHOULD BE IN SPANISH

JOHN

It was a very hot day...no Es Cierito my friends?

ELITA

Si...muchu calor.

BENNIE

Oh yea, very calor...very calor...

PACO REACHES INTO THE BUICK, holds up Elita's guitar, inspects it, looks over at the girl, grinning.

PACO

(I will sing you a beautiful song...

I sing very good...)

(winks at John)

(Love songs are my specialty)

JOHN LAUGHS, AS PACO moves up to Elita, strums a few chords. Then he sits and begins to sing and play to the frightened girl. He does sing well.

WIDER ANGLE - AS PACO SINGS. It is a pastoral scene, but the vibrations shattering the evening air are anything but peaceful.

JOHN DIPS INTO THE BEAN POT with a cruddy calloused hand, jams a handful of beans in his mouth nods with approval as the song continues, grins over at:

BENNIE, SITTING MOTIONLESS AGAINST THE TREE. Only his eyes flick from man to man. Then he returns the smile...weakly.

PACO, SINGING BEAUTIFULLY, the tender words belieing the thoughts in his eyes as he sings down to:

ELITA: STILL KNEELING IN FRONT OF THE FIRE, a forgotten tortilla in her hand. She sneaks a look in Bennie's direction, looks back up at John, then closes her eyes.

PACO FINISHES THE SONG, lays the guitar on the ground...John extends his hand down to Elita.

BENNIE JUMPS TO HIS FEET, Starts toward his woman.

JOHN'S GUN IS SUDDENLY IN HIS HAND, aimed directly at Bennie's belt buckle. He laughs softly as Bennie tenses, stops. Finally, Elita puts her hand in John's.

ELITA

(to Bennie...softly resigned:)

No, Bennie....not even under the stars... they know.

BENNIE

(his attention divided:
gun and girl...helpless)

Well...they're definitely on my
shit list.

PACO

Que dise?

ELITA

No dise nada...vamonos...

JOHN GIVES THE GUN TO PACO, EASES HER TO HER FEET and they move off to the dark beneath the nearby trees. Paco casually holds the gun on Bennie.

BENNIE

I'll kill that gringo bastard.

ELITA

(stopping)

No you won't - no reason hijo -
I've been here before -

(trying to smile)

We go and get it over with and get
out then take a bath - no trouble,
Bennie. Please, por favor.

Then she and John move away.

BENNIE WATCHES THEM GO, LOOKS back to Paco, to the gun, then finally shrugs it off and mutters under his breath:

BENNIE
Aw, what the hell...she can handle it a lot better'n I can...

PACO
Que?

BENNIE
(quietly)
Fuck you...

PACO
Que dese, Gringo? Eh?
(then nodding at the Buick:)
Estas tu carro, Gringo?

The SOUNDS OF LOVE MAKING DRIFTS out from the trees...
Bennie tries not to hear it.

BENNIE
Yeah...it's my carro...

PACO
(A fine car. I have always wanted such a car. But it needs much gasoline...)

BENNIE
(rising crossing to the car)
Take a look - hell, take the car, but give me a drink fast.

PACO with the .38 understands this. He rises - gives Bennie the bottle - looks into the car. Sits in the driver's seat

BENNIE crosses, sits beside him drinking.

PACO
Mucho gasoline, no?

BENNIE
Si.

He opens the glove compartment as he hands bottle to Paco.

PACO laughs and drinks. The .38 now in his hand.

There is the sound of a slap, a cry of "no", then louder slaps. Then in Spanish "open", then a slap, then a painfully murmured "no". Then silence.

PACO laughs and drinks.

BENNIE looks at PACO, who pantomimes sucking his thumb. This joke doubles him over and as he comes up, Bennie eases open the glove compartment, jerks out the .45 and then knocks Paco wall-eyed and jumps out of the car.

BENNIE RUNS TOWARD ELITA AND JOHN as she cries out again.

BENNIE CRASHES THROUGH SOME BRUSH, stumbles, almost trips over:

ELITA AND JOHN. JOHN STILL HAS A FISTFULL OF HER HAIR AS he rolls off the girl, brings out his knife, then slams back into the dirt as:

BENNIE SHOTS HIM TWICE: ONCE IN THE CHEST, once in the balls. Elita screams.

BENNIE TWISTS, DROPS TO THE GROUND TURNS AND FIRES AS:

PACO BLUNDERS UPON HIM. KNIFE IN HAND. The younger man jerks back against a tree, looks down at the hole in his gut, then slumps dying.

BENNIE SILENTLY LIFTS HIS WOMAN TO HER FEET. Then slips his arm around the softly crying girl's shoulders and they disappear through the trees without looking back.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD (NIGHT)

BENNIE checks the rear view mirror, making sure that no one is following.

ELITA is sitting as close as she can, without interfering with Bennie. If she was in love with him before, now she worships him. Bennie doesn't feel too bad either. He's beginning to change.

BENNIE

(sighing)

How do you like it -- Charley star, huh?

ELITA

(quickly)

No. You did what you had to do.
I will tell the Police everything.

BENNIE

No chance. Not here. Not anywhere.
I know one thing, the only way to stay
out of jail is not to go in the first
place.

ELITA

(understanding)

As you say.

BENNIE

O.K. you got to take me to find Alfredo --
he's our ticket out.

ELITA

(still not believing)

How in the hell can you get money
from Alfredo? -- He's dead.... I
don't trust those people and what they say.

BENNIE

I bring them proof then they pay -
(then)
I saw the money.

ELITA

(hating it)

You want me to desecrate a grave...?

BENNIE

Don't give me that crap, there is nothing sacred about a hole in the ground, or the men that's in it...or you...or me.

As Elita looks at him.

BENNIE (cont'd)

Listen the church is always cutting off fingers, feet or any other goddamned thing from the Saints aren't they?...

(continuing)

Well, Alfredo is our Saint. The Saint of our money.

And I've got to borrow a piece of him to prove he is dead.

ELITA

His head -- It is a crime.

BENNIE

(finably)

He is dead God damn it!

Elita crosses herself and murmurs a Jesus Christus.

ELITA

(meaning it)

He was a nice boy, ver kind to me... Who would do this to him?

BENNIE

For money.

ELITA

(after a long moment)

I will take you to him - then I will go. Because I think it will be finished with us - I don't want the money now.

BENNIE

That's up to you, Chula -

ELITA

(distant)

They will know in Parras.

BENNIE
Jesus, what's wrong with you? --

ELITA
You just killed for me. I want
it to end there - No more killing.
Let's leave Alfredo behind and live -
we have enough - Jesus, Bennie, just
being together is enough.

BENNIE
(slowly)
No it's not, Baby - It takes bread -
Pan --- dinero - and you know it as well
as I do - so that's what money's
going to get - then we'll talk about how much
together means -!

ELITA
I think - we are dead before we are
married.

BENNIE
Bullshit!

BENNIE LOOKS AT HER, SEES THE PRIDE IN HER EYES: Feels it
welling up in himself as he shifts, puts his free arm
around her and pulls her in close. She rests her head on
his chest.

ELITA
I will take a bath in Torreon.

BENNIE
We both will.

Bennie looks down at her, kisses her on the top of the head
and suddenly feels good all over.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIO NAZAS HOTEL - TORREON (NIGHT)

BENNIE PULLS IN OFF OF AVENIDA MORELOS, finds a parking
place in front of the looming hotel. The town, the streets,
are deserted at this late hour.

EXT. RIO NAZAS HOTEL (NIGHT)

BENNIE GETS OUT, goes around the car, gallantly holds the door open for her. HOLD as they go up the steps together and through the swinging glass doors.

THE GREEN STATION WAGON PULLS IN TO THE CURB ACROSS the street.

INT. RIO NAZAS LOBBY (NIGHT)

BENNIE AND ELITA CROSS THE DESERTED LOBBY.

TWO GIRLS LOOK UP FROM THEIR NIGHT BILLING CHORES behind a counter.

AND THE NIGHT CLERK standing in front of his pidgeon holes, looks at the approaching shabby couple with obvious distaste.

BENNIE PUTS THE BAGS DOWN, steps up to the registration counter:

BENNIE
Buenos noches. I'd like a room...
...with a double bed.

The night clerk looks past him, to:

ELITA STANDING A LITTLE BEHIND BENNIE; her eyes on the floor.

THE NIGHT CLERK SHAKES HIS HEAD.

NIGHT CLERK

(broken English)

I am sorry, Sir...but this hotel
does not allow...

BENNIE puts one hand down and leaps across the counter
then thrusts his tequilla-and-beer-smelling-and-about-to
become-very-violent face an inch from the Clerk's nose.

BENNIE

Mister and Misus Benjamin....
from El Paso...and we are very, very
tired!

(as the man backs off,
swallows:)

Now...you round up a key...while I
sign the register. Comprende?

ELITA LOOKS AT HER MAN, AS HE JUMPS BACK ON HER SIDE.
She hands Bennie the pen, then turns to the clerk and, in
English better than his, rises a thousand points in class.

ELITA

The best room in the house.

The clerk nods, says nothing, starts checking his pidgeon
holes.

BENNIE SIGNS THE REGISTER, MR. COOL WITH HIS WIFE:

THE TWO VIRGINS WATCH THEM, disgusted.

THE CLERK puts the key on the counter in defeat. Waits as:

BENNIE AND ELITA JUST STAND THERE, oblivious to the looks they are receiving; smiling into each other's faces... into the faces they love.

BENNIE

Take the bags.

CLERK

I am sorry, Sir. But the bell boy is gone for the night.

BENNIE

(trying out his new style)
Then you take them.

CLERK

That is impossible. I must stay here behind the desk -

BENNIE

(playfully)
You stay behind that desk any longer and I'm going to stay behind it with you.

The clerk looks at him - thinks - buys it - this Gringo looks like he will kill anything that stands in his way.

CLERK

(crossing)
As you wish, Senor.

INT. RIO NAZAS HOTEL ROOM (NIGHT)

BENNIE ARRANGES THEIR CIGARETTES and a bottle of tequilla on the night stand beside the bed, turns as:

ELITA COMES OUT OF THE BATHROOM. She's lovely, wet, naked and infinitely desireable. She stand there, in front of her man, basking in the approval she sees in his eyes.

ELITA

I am clean now, mi Vida...

BENNIE
(reaching out to touch her:
softly)
Reina...you were always clean.

AND THEY SINK ONTO THE BED, begin making gentle love;
as if it never happned before...two children finding
themselves...softly whispering "Mi vida...my life...
my life" again and again.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TORREON/SALTILLO HIGHWAY (DAY)

SERIES OF SHOTS:

HIGH ANGLE - THE DESOLATION REIGNS SUPREME: Harsh,
brutal, unforgiving land. The other side of Mexico's
geographical coin. Far below, the highway; a thin
shimmering ribbon to seemingly nowhere. The dot
creeping along it is:

BENNIE'S BUICK. The top is down again and the heat and
glare attacks them from all sides.

ELITA POURS SOME COLD BEER into the stolen Rio Nazes
towel wrapped around Bennie's neck.

VULTURES: LEAPING OFF A MASHED RABBIT ON the highway,
screeching their protest from the shoulder as the Buick
minces their meal further on its way by. Then they hop
back into the bubbling road, fight each other for each
morsel.

THE BUICK IS STOPPED: BENNIE "waters" into an anthill
Elita "waters" near a flower.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN; the sun laughing at them from above.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PAILA (DAY)

THE BUICK PULLS IN OFF OF THE HIGHWAY and up to one of the Pemex pumps in front of the baked adobe building. Bennie hits the horn. On the third blast:

AN OLD MAN EXITS, slowly comes over to them. His face looks like it had also been chisled out of adobe. As does a sleeping dog and two CHILDREN peer out the door at Bennie.

BENNIE
Fill 'er up...tanko complete.

The old man nods, steps to the rear of the car. Bennie looks around, somehow awed by so much nothing all in one place.

BENNIE
Makes Juarez look like paradise.
What's the name of this place, anyway?

Elita checks the map, finally pinpoints some very fine print.

ELITA
Paila....LaCienco de Carmen 47 kilometers further.

And they go.

Bennie pumps the gas pedal, turns on the ignition - the starter motor grinds away.

BENNIE
(furiously)
Come on you son-of-a-bitch.

At his order the engine starts and they chug around and pull back onto the highway.

EXT. SALTILLO HIGHWAY (DAY)

THE BUICK MOVES ALONG at a safer speed.

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE (DAY)

THE DOOR OPENS AND BENNIE AND ELITA WALK IN. They go to a booth and sit.

INT. BOOTH ROADSIDE CAFE (DAY)

Bennie reading the menu as the waitress approaches..

BENNIE

I'll have a couple of eggs, sunny side up. Rare. Crudo, you know - con slolsa.

(looking at Elita who drops her eyes)

What will you have?

ELITA

(quietly)

Just coffee.

BENNIE

Coffee, pronto?

(turning to Elita)

Where in the hell are we now!

ELITA

Not far from Parras. We can ask here. He had a job there in the bank. He worked in the bodego, there.

(as Bennie looks at her)

The winery.

BENNIE

(grinning a little)

Why do I always get a jealous feelin' when you talk about him?

ELITA

Maybe because of what you must do. Not because of us. There is no need to be jealous, mi Vida. Alfredo and I were a boy and a girl together. We... are something else.

(touching him)

...are something else.

He pulls off the road.

BENNIE
I don't see the difference.

ELITA
(easily)
Nor I - but last night changed my
life and yours, cayote.

Bennie really doesn't know what to say; he feels the
same way. She touches his lips.

BENNIE
Where now?

ELITA
Here are Alfredo's people -- they are
farmers - like mine.

Bennie looks around at the land; at the rocks growing out
of rocks; at the brown, shriveled cactus, struggling
for another days' survival.

BENNIE
What the hell grows here?!

ELITA
(pointing)
Wine...brandy...grapes.

Bennie looks off, at:

A BILLBOARD ACROSS THE HIGHWAY: Advertising a Winery with
an arrow pointing up the smaller paved road, which
intersects the highway here, toward the distant mountains.
ELITA'S VOICE continues OVER this SHOT:

ELITA'S VOICE
At that place, they will know of
Alfredo.

EXT. PARRAS BODEGA (DAY)

HERNANDEZ, is the manager of the winery He is slowly
shaking his head.

HERNANDEZ
(I am sorry, Miss...but I don't
remember anyone like him...and I
was born here. Muchachos?)

A DOZEN WORKERS standing in front of the Bodega. They shake their heads also.

ELITA TURNS TO:

BENNIE, WHO LEANS AGAINST THE BUICK some distance away from the group, taking in the startling beauty of this small mountain valley: The dripping willows, stately poplars and the lush green vineyards surrounding the sparkling white, obviously successful Winery. Bennie has been noticing beauty lately. For the first time.

ELITA COMES BACK UP TO HIM, her face long in defeat. In the b.g., the workers begin to disperse, after lingering long enough to sample her walk. Bennie grins:

BENNIE

Eat your hearts out.

(then:)

Any luck?

ELITA

No...no suerte. They don't know of him either.

BENNIE

Damn!

ELITA

(getting into the car:0

La vida, Bennie. We came a long way por nada.

Bennie climbs in behind the wheel, doesn't start the engine. Elita gets in.

BENNIE

We came a long way to get a head... and we're gonna get it.

He looks at her, at the beauty. Then, softer:

BENNIE

I could've died in Juarez...or T.J...
...and never known what it's all about.
Now I got a ticket....an' we're not going to miss the train. Not this time. I just know it's the last one...

He lapses into silence, trying to make his wheels turn, trying to make it right for them. Finally: Elita turns to him.

ELITA
(softly)
Moreno...

BENNIE
Huh?

ELITA
(already climbing back
out of the car)
If it must be so - his name was Alfredo
Garcia Herrera Moreno!

BENNIE WATCHES AS ELITA RUNS BACK OVER TO THE WHITE ARCHWAY
where the manager is inspecting a newly arrived horse-drawn
cart full of grapes. Watches as she interrupts, watches as:

ELITA turns, calls back:

• ELITA
Ven, Bennie! Ven? He knows of Alfredo!!

BENNIE SCRAMBLES OUT OF THE BUICK, half runs over to them
and the group of workers which is curiously regrouping.

BENNIE JOINS ELITA.

HERNANDEZ
(looks Bennie over, then,
to Elita)
(Are you friends of Alfredo Moreno's?)

ELITA

(Oh yes. Very good friends. We have come a long way to see him.)

HERNANDEZ

(Then I am sorry to be the one who must tell you...but your friend is dead. An automobile accident.)

For a moment, Elita's expression doesn't change. Then it does as she sees the genuine sadness in the faces surrounding them.

BENNIE

What'd he say?

ELITA

(eyes brimming)
Alfredo...is dead, an accident...

BENNIE

(holds her tightly,
"plays it.")
Dead? Alfredo...oh my God!

HERNANDEZ

(An unfortunate tragedy. He was so young.)

BENNIE

Ask him where Alfredo is buried.
We'll get flowers...

Elita starts to speak, but Hernandez cuts her short and speaks to Bennie. His English is good, but smacks of a German accent:

HERNANDEZ

His family works for another winery...
(points off)
...La Cienaga De Carmen...21 kilometers in that direction. The road is not so good any more. Since their wine turned bitter....
(looks at his Bodega, then, with poorly veiled pride:)
...and ours remained sweet.

BENNIE

Is Alfredo buried there?

HERNANDEZ

Of course. Where else would he be buried? A man should be buried where he is born.

ELITA

Gracias, Senor Hernandez. Muchas gracias.

HERNANDEZ

Por nada, Senorita.

BENNIE

(a lightly sarcastic edge:)
Yeah. Gracias. We'll give his family your deepest respects.

AS BENNIE AND ELITA START BACK TOWARD THE BUICK.

EXT. HIGH DESERT TERRAIN (DAY)

ANGLED UP AT THE SKY. THE DISTANT SOUND OF AN APPROACHING CAR. TILT SLOWLY DOWN to the startling contrast of this strange land. The coin has flipped again. A rooster tail of dust approaches, winding through the twisted black fingers of Ocatillo which seem to beg for mercy. OVER THIS:

ELITA'S VOICE

Sometimes I wonder if God is really here.

BENNIE'S VOICE

M'be he's savin' this place for later.

PAN WITH the plume of dust to reveal it is heading for a large, compact group of crumbling adobe structures out in the middle of the baked expanse. OVER THIS:

ELITA'S VOICE

Sometimes, when Alfredo laughed...
it was so sad...so despairing...now...
maybe I understand why.

HOLD as the Buick slows, enters the distant compound.

EXT. LA CIENAGA DE CARMEN (DAY)

PAN THE BUICK PAST THE WALLED, almost deserted Bodego...

PAST THE SCATTERED ADOBE HUTS, STONES AND ONE BAR WHICH
NOW only hints of a once thriving community. The few
VILLAGERS to be seen stop what ever they are doing and
watch the Buick slowly move through the square. Except
for an ancient pick-up truck, a crushed Valiant and a
few five gallon cans for hauling water, it could be a
hundred years ago. Or a thousand. Only the inevitable
church reflects any recent care. - OVER THIS:

BENNIE'S VOICE

I think their wines turned bitter.

THE BUICK TURNS THE CORNER at the end of the church,
bounces down a narrow rutted road past what used to be
the stable area. Finally stops beside:

THE GRAVE YARD. IT IS BLEAK. VERY, VERY BLEAK. A
lot of people who were never missed by civilization
have died here. And they are you and me - tomorrow.
(Or maybe late this afternoon - or even sooner.)

BENNIE LOOKS INCREDULOUSLY AROUND, looks at Elita. She
takes the now very wilted flowers off of the front seat,
gets out of the Buick, wordlessly follows Bennie into the
grave yard.

BENNIE AND ELITA: THREADING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE GRAVES,
the crosses, the head stones, finally stopping as they
come up to:

A WRINKLED WOMAN IN HER SIXTIES, carefully arranging fresh cut flowers from God knows where on a new grave. The headstone is also new: "ALFREDO MORENO". With the old woman are:

ESTABAN - - A BENT, HARD FACED PEON IN HIS FIFTIES, a machete stuck in his belt, one of Alfredo's uncles. He watches the woman, silently reverent. Beside him:

AN IMPATIENT, VOLUPTUOUS SIXTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL AND ANGEL A YOUNG BOY of about fourteen; his face already noticeably hard.

BENNIE AND ELITA LOOK AT THE GRAVE, at each other, at those who now look at them with guarded curiosity. Finally:

ELITA

Buenos dias...

Everybody "Buenos dias's" her back. The Uncle and the Boy politely remove their hats. Silence as they curiously wait for her to speak, but:

ELITA KNEELS IN THE DIRT OPPOSITE ALFREDO'S GRANDMOTHER, crosses herself - then gently places her flowers on the grave. A moment more, then she looks across the mound to the old lady.

ELITA

(I am Elita Gonzales Herrera...I knew Alfredo.)

THE FACES AROUND THE GRAVE DARKEN. The old woman stands. The Uncle and the boy put their hats back on.

GRANDMOTHER

(He spoke of you. Unfortunately. He had no money when he died. He was poor... like us. What do you...)

(Looks past her to Bennie, then back)

(...and the gringo want here?)

ELITA

(Only to honor the memory of a good friend...that is all.)

GRANDMOTHER

(Alfredo was young and foolish...always wanting to leave the land. Now he has. He did not learn how to live his life... or choose his friends.)

Elita looks down at the grave. Then, softly:

ELITA

(I loved him. He loved me.)

GRANDMOTHER

(Please. There is nothing here for you. We have nothing...and want nothing from you. Please...leave us our peace. It is all we have. Do not cheapen our memories of him.)

BENNIE SEES THAT LOOK COME OVER ELITA'S face, and feels the weight of the other darkly suspicious eyes.

BENNIE

What'd she say...?

ELITA

They want us to go.

BENNIE

Tell 'em we've come a long way to ...pay our last respects. It's getting late. We'll go in the morning.

Elita translates this to the old woman; is answered with a cold silence.

BENNIE

Ask her if there's a place around here where we can stay tonight.

Elita speaks again. Again, the answer is the same.

BENNIE

Tell 'er we'll pay. Pesos

Elita adds this in Spanish and it seems to do the trick. The old woman doesn't speak, but she does point off to the massive stone arches in the distance.

ELITA

Gracias.

BENNIE

Yeah...muy, muy gracias....

BUT THEIR THANKS FALL ON GRANDMA'S TURNED BACK. Bennie takes Elita's hand, waits as she casts a last look down at the grave, then leads her out of the grave yard.

GRANDMOTHER MORENO LOOKS AFTER THEM, then kneels beside the grave, picks up Elita's flowers and tosses them aside.

GRANDMOTHER MORENO

(under her breath:)

Put a del diablo...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CANTINA (DAY)

A GNARLED, ONE ARMED MAN PUTS FIRST A BOTTLE OF TEQUILLA then a bottle of the "house" brandy on the counter.

BENNIE. He digs out a few bills, gives them to the out-stretched hand. Elita stand close to him, as uncomfortable as he is, because:

THE OTHER PATRONS SQUATTING HERE AND THERE, all with machettes in their belts, are watching them in absolute unwavering silence. Burnt leather faces, cold eyes - watching strangers - and waiting.

THE BARTENDER COUNTS THE MONEY TWICE, puts it in his pocket, then calls out:

BARTENDER
(a rasping command:)
Angel! Ven!

ANGEL COMES out of some corner.

ANGEL
Si, mi general.

BARTENDER
(Take them to the room.)

ANGEL
Si, mi General...
(to Bennie and Elita:)
Siga me...

BENNIE PICKS UP THE BOTTLES and he and Elita follow the boy to their room. Which is about four steps from where they were standing. The boy bows low, gestures them toward the door...that is, toward a filthy, rotting blanket hanging over an opening on the wall.

INT. "ROOM" (DAY)

BENNIE PUTS THE TWO BOTTLES ON THE RICKETY TABLE in the middle of the dirt floored room. The wooden bench beside the table is the only otherpiece of furniture. But don't think the room doesn't have other charms to compensate for this lack.

BENNIE AND ELITA STAND THERE, unconsciously joining hands as they take those charms in:

COCKROACHES: Disappearing everywhere. Some big enough to stand flat footed and fuck a turkey.

TWO MATING RATS: Who don't even bother to look up.

IN ONE CORNER, a stained hunk of canvas thrown over a pile of corn husks...the bed.

THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER, smile thinly or else they'd cry. Bennie cracks open the tequilla, holds the bottle out to her.

BENNIE

Here. Listen you ought to be drunk in Fresno, California - this is a palace.

(then)

It softens things a little.

Elita drinks deeply from the bottle - twice - then hands it back to Bennie and sits on the bench. She looks at her hands for a long moment, then softly:

ELITA

Alfredo's people don't like me....
...or what I am -- was --

BENNIE

(as he tilts the bottle)

So what.

ELITA

They are good people. Simple
Bennie...we are going to do a bad
thing.

BENNIE

They'll never miss him. I promise.
We'll leave the grave just like we
find it...

(sits down beside her:)

Hey...he's our Patron Saint...remember?

ELITA

(very unconvinced)

Si....

Bennie brushes a hair away from her saddened face, looks into her big, questioning eyes.

BENNIE

Hey baby...Alfredo's been tryin' to...

(looks around the darkness)

...beat this rap all of his life. You
an' me are just like him. He loved you
too. Do you really think he'd give a
shit if his head could buy you what he was
always lookin' for? A way out?

ELITA

(after a long moment)

No. I think he'd want it that way.

BENNIE

(tenderly squeezing her hand)

Well...we will, mi amor...with his help.

ELITA

Your other promiso, Bennie? We'll bring it...his...him back here? When you get the money? Like you said?

BENNIE

On the way to Vista Hermosa...to make a baby...as Mister an' Missus...

She looks at him, smiles through the veil of tears, squeezes his hand back. She knows he means it...this time. And...he does.

ELITA

I love you more than life, Bennie. But I am afraid. This place. Those sad people with their hearts so full of grief and anger...

She cuts herself short as a corn husk flutters down from above. Bennie's head snaps up to see:

ANGEL'S LEERING FACE. It quickly disappears from one of the cracks in the dried corn stalk ceiling/roof.

BENNIE CURSES UNDER HIS BREATH. Elita drinks again, looks at that husk bed in the corner.

ELITA

I am tired...muy consado...

(then laughing shyly)

Let's go to bed -

Bennie warmly puts his hand on top of hers, nods, then goes over to the "bed". As he's spreading his coat out on it:

BENNIE

This is definitely a beautiful
place to make babies.

He helps her onto the lump, bends down and kisses her
forehead, then:

BENNIE

I'll wake you when I'm finished.

ELITA

No! I go with you!

BENNIE

Why?

But she doesn't answer - she just nods, closes her eyes and
tries to get comfortable with as much of her on his coat
as possible. Then she opens her eyes again, pathetically
reaches out for him and they embrace; huddled pitifully
together in the darkness for the longest moment, then:

SHE SMILES UP AT HIM, thankfully, even happily, then closes
her eyes.

BENNIE LOOKS DOWN AT HER, then goes back to the table, arranges
the bench so he can sit facing the blanketed door. He puts
the .45 on the table, uncorks the tequilla and drinks. And
waits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE "ROOM" (NIGHT)

CLOSE ON ELITA - SLEEPING: The picture of soft purity;
innocently at peace. Then Bennie's face enters FRAME and
he gently:

KISSES HER AWAKE. Her eyes open, the smile remains as she looks up into his face. It could be their wedding night in Vista Hermosa. Or Cozumel. Or paradise. She tenderly kisses him back, then suddenly remembers:

THIS ROOM: Coldly illuminated by a candle Bennie managed to scratch up. The tequilla is gone. So is half of the brandy.

THE REALITY RIPS THE SMILE OFF OF HER FACE. Bennie gently lifts her to her feet. His eyes are red. But he's not as drunk as he wants to be. No way.

ELITA

(in a tiny little voice:)

Now...?

BENNIE

(slurring it a little; softly)

Now -

ELITA

Promise me again -

(as Bennie looks at her)

You return with Alfredo.

BENNIE

(after a long moment)

I promise.

HE SLIPS INTO HIS COAT as they cross to the table. Bennie hands her the bottle. She drinks, hands it back. He takes a final blast, holds it out to her:

BENNIE

Finish it...

She does. Bennie parts the blanket, nods. Then they quietly steal out to do their head thing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAVE YARD (NIGHT)

THERE IS A BIT OF A MOON, BUT IT IS ENOUGH FOR BENNIE TO WORK BY. He shovels the last remaining dirt off of the casket, throws the shovel out of the hole, then opens it. He strikes a match, looks up to:

ELITA STANDING BESIDE THE FRESH MOUND NEXT TO THE GRAVE. She looks down into the box at the bottom of the hole.

HER P.O.V.: THE FACE LOOKING BACK AT HER is curiously well preserved, almost life like, almost handsome in death. The resemblance to the photograph is unmistakable and:

ELITA'S NOD CONFIRMS IT: It is Alfredo Garcia. (Herrera Moreno). She shudders, turns away.

BENNIE CLIMBS UP OUT OF THE GRAVE, slips an arm around her shoulders and wordlessly guides her back through the tomb stones to:

THE BUICK (TOP NOW UP) PARKED AT THE GRAVE YARD'S EDGE. Bennie opens the door for her; she gets in, sits there hugging herself against the cold wind. Is it blowing inside or out side of her skin?

BENNIE OPENS THE TRUNK, takes out the burlap sack and the machete, then walks back out into the grave yard.

BENNIE: WALKING THROUGH THE HEADSTONES, sack over his shoulder, saw in his hand. Deeper and deeper into the grave yard. Finally stopping at:

ALFREDO'S EXCAVATED GRAVE. He tosses the sack into the yawning hole. He looks at the machete - hating what he is about to do with it. He shakes out a cigarette, nervously fumbles for his matches, finds them. Then, silhouetted by the shakily struck match:

A SHOVEL SWINGS IN FROM GRAVE SIDE, hitting him solidly, brutally across the head and the SCREEN FLASHES WHITE, RED, BLACK then;

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAVE YARD (NIGHT)

ANGLED DOWN - THE GRAVE IS BEING FILLED AND BENNIE, face bleeding, is in it. More dirt flies in, Bennie's face disappears beneath it. Finally, the last shovel full is thrown into the grave. Then the shovel is driven into the dirt.

INT. GRAVE (NIGHT) (BENEATH THE DIRT)

ONLY THE SOUNDS OF LABORED BREATHING accompany the BLACKNESS of the SCREEN. Then, a hand claws its way through the dirt; up past CAMERA. A bit of light appears, perhaps a chip of the cold moon.

EXT. GRAVE (NIGHT)

HANDS MOVE UP THROUGH THE SURFACE, tearing at the dirt. And the muffled sound from beneath suddenly becomes Bennie's panicked scream as he emerges from the grave; blood and dirt covering his head and wide-eyed terror, filled face. Gasping for air, he pulls himself out, slumps beside the grave and desperately tries to get it back together. It isn't all that easy, but when he is finally able to look around:

THE GRAVE YARD IS EMPTY. (On top anyway.) A rooster CROWS somewhere in the distance.

BENNIE COUGHS THE DIRT OUT OF HIS MOUTH, tries to wipe the blood and larger chunks of soil out of his eyes. Then he rolls himself over, looks back down:

INTO THE DEPRESSION FROM WHICH HE'S EMERGED: Part of a woman's bloody hand is visible.

BENNIE FRANTICALLY BEGINS SCOOPING, tearing the dirt away, exposing her arm. He grabs it, pulls. The broken head which follows the shoulder up out of the dirt is Elita's

BENNIE
(a horrid gasp:)
.....OH JESUS.....

He closes his eyes against the sight, grits his teeth, turns his head.

THEN HE LIFTS HER OUT OF THE DIRT, holds her to him; his loss incomprehensible. After a long moment, he puts her gently beside the grave, then grabs the shovel and starts digging. The dirt is loose and easier to dig now...anything is easier than looking at the broken body of his woman.

HE HITS THE CASKET, Throws the shovel out, rips open the lid:

THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA is gone.

BENNIE CLIMBS OUT, SITS ON THE MOUND with his back to the grave, his back to Elita. The rooster crows again. A dog barks somewhere. Then, Bennie slowly moves over to his girl, lifts her, takes her back down into the hole in the ground.

HE LOOKS AT HER FACE, KISSES IT FOR THE LAST TIME, then arranged her body on top of Alfredo's: Her head on his chest so she won't have to "see" the incompleteness of her first lover.

TEARS RIM HIS EYES as he climbs back out and begins filling their grave.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAVE YARD (NIGHT)

THE GRAVE HAS BEEN FILLED AND BENNIE STANDS BESIDE IT, breathing hard. The blow on the head and the exertion of what followed has left him barely able to stand. He drops to his knees beside the neat new mound, then reaches over and:

PICKS UP ELITA'S EARLIER DISCARDED FLOWERS, and places them at the base of the headstone.

THEN HE STANDS AND WALKS OUT OF THE GRAVE YARD LIKE a man risen from hell. To put it lightly - somebody is going to pay.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

EXT LA CIENAGA DE CARMEN (NIGHT)

BENNIE EASES THE BUICK INTO THE PLAZA, stops at the "fountain" and stumbles out. Dried blood and dirt completely cake the left side of his face, his left shoulder and arm.

THE CHEST HIGH CONCRETE TUB ("fountain") is about twenty feet across and the water is covered with a green scum. Bennie parts the muck, wipes away as much of the dirt and blood as he can.

HE LOOKS AROUND, sees:

THE BATTERED VALIANT PARKED NEXT TO A CRUMBLING adobe house. It has obviously been rolled a number of times. It is/was obviously Alfredo's.

BENNIE STARTS FOR IT, FREEZES IN MID-STAGGER as he hears soft laughter very close to him.

IT IS ANGEL. He's grinning at Bennie from the old bandstand next to the fountain.

BENNIE LOOKS AT THE BOY, walks up to him.

BENNIE

Hey kid...anyone besides me been askin' for Alfredo Garcia? About him. Moreno, I mean.

The boy just continues grinning. Bennie searches his buzzing head for the words in Spanish.

BENNIE

Have any otra hombres been preguntan about...por Alfredo Moreno?

The boy shrugs, grins, holds out his hand. Bennie jams a peso into it, the impatience (among other things) eating him alive. Finally:

ANGEL

No.

BENNIE

Bastard!

He grabs the boy, yanks him up close. Angel is used to that kind of thing and just laughs in his face.

BENNIE

Has there been any...nuevo hombres aqui today? Hoy? Otra nuevo hombres aqui hoy? Diga me!!

But it takes another bill. Then:

ANGEL

(in rapid fire Spanish)
(Yes. There were two men in a green station wagon here this afternoon. But they spoke with no one and...)

BENNIE

Huh? Slower damn it! Uh...despacio!

ANGEL

(holds up two fingers:)
Dos hombres nuevo...
(makes a square with his hands)
...en carro verde...
(puts finger to his lips)
...no preguntar nada...

BENNIE

(gets the gist, thinks, then:)
Gringos?

ANGEL

Mas a menos

BENNIE

Where are...uh...donde esta?

The hand comes out again, closes around another peso.

ANGEL

Se fue...para veinte minutos.

BENNIE RELEASES THEM, STUMBLES BACK INTO THE BUICK. He starts the engine, then looks back at the grinning boy.

BENNIE

Give up, Kid. You're never gonna make it.

ANGEL

(in perfect English)

Yes I am - just watch.

Bennie reacts then drives away.

WHEN BENNIE IS GONE, the boy runs over to the fountain, removes a loose stone at its base and drops the newly acquired pesos into:

A HOLE: ALMOST FILLED WITH COINS, a few paper bills, broken watches and assorted pieces of jewelry. The entire stash is probably only worth a couple hundred bucks. But it is all his. And, he just might make it.

ANGEL REPLACES THE STONE, then runs across the plaza to:

THE CRUMBLING HUT WITH THE VALIANT parked outside. As he knocks on the door, the rooster crows again; for the third time.

EXT. ROAD TO PARRAS (DAWN)

THE TWO BOUNCING DOTS IN THE DISTANCE BECOME THE BUICK'S HEADLIGHTS. Bennie is pushing it hard down the narrow, twisting dirt road; having a hard time staying on it.

INT. BUICK (DAWN)

BENNIE GRIPS THE WHEEL, FIGHTING TO KEEP THE ROAD IN FOCUS, trying to clear his head, determined not to crash: Unless it is into a green station wagon at a hundred miles an hour. That would suit him fine right now.

EXT. DIRT ROAD TO PARRA (DAWN)

THE GREEN STATION WAGON IS PARKED AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. CUETO AND A VERY DRUNK CHALO are trying to change a flat tire. The car's radio is one, LOUD, filling the black desolation with RANCHERO MUSIC.

INT. BUICK (NIGHT)

BENNIE FIGHTS THE WHEEL, GIVES THE CAR EVEN MORE THROTTLE. Rocks and gravel fly up against the bottom of the car, filling it with a clanging din that matches the one in Bennie's head. He curses through clenched teeth as:

EXT. DIRT ROAD TO PARRAS (NIGHT)

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - BENNIE'S P.O.V. - THE ROAD MAKES A sharp bend, dips, then makes another bend up an abrupt rise: This is almost a blur, one side of the road seeming to swap sides with the other. Then, as the car tops the rise: Nothing. Blackness. No sounds of rocks or churning gravel. And then the Buick lands again...its lights again picking up the road...and the green station wagon a hundred yards ahead.

INT. BUICK (NIGHT)

THE .45 LEAPS INTO BENNIE'S HAND. He looks like he's suddenly smiling. But he isn't. Not really.

EXT DIRT ROAD TO PARRAS (NIGHT)

CUETO TURNS, IS BLINDED BY THE LIGHTS OF THE ONCOMING CAR. He takes a tentative step out into the middle of the road, waits as the unknown vehicle approaches.

INT. BUICK (NIGHT)

BENNIE WAITS UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT, crams the car in low, yanks on the emergency brake and, as the sound of flying gravel seems to be coming from everywhere, he slides across the front seat and opens the opposite door.

EXT. DIRT ROAD TO PARRAS (NIGHT)

THE BUICK SLIDES DOWN THE ROAD TOWARD CUETO. As it turns broadside, Cueto recognizes it and manages to pull his gun out before the Buick slams into him, crunches over him and slides to a stop just a few feet from:

CHALO: STILL POISED AT THE FLAT TIRE; stunned, mouth agape. He cautiously climbs to his feet, looks at Cueto's mangled body...at the Buick with no driver. He fumbles for his automatic. The last thing he ever sees is a flash of fire from thirty feet outside the surrounding dark curtain.

CHALO FALLS FACE FORWARD IN THE DIRT. Twitches. Dies. The MUSIC blaring from the radio is the only SOUND for miles.

BENNIE STEPS IN OUT OF THE DARK, looks down at the bodies... and kills them both again. Reason?:

BENNIE

Let's say just because it feels so
Goddamn good!

He sticks the .45 in his belt, goes to the station wagon, rummages around, comes up with the burlap sack. It is no longer empty. He opens it, looks in:

IT IS ALFREDO'S HEAD.

BENNIE CLOSES THE SACK, CLICKS OFF THE RADIO, and starts for the Buick. It is very, very quiet now. He hesitates, then goes back to the station wagon, turns the radio back on again. Louder. Much louder.

HE CLIMBS INTO THE BUICK, puts the sack on the seat beside him and drives off into the approaching dawn - leaving the green station wagon, the two dead men and the MUSIC behind him.

BENNIE
Let's get it on, Al.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD TO PARRAS (EARLY MORNING)

THE SUN HAS JUST COME UP AND THE DESOLATION BRACES itself for another blistering day. A plume of dust follows the '53 Buick.

INT. BUICK (EARLY MORNING)

BENNIE DRIVES A LITTLE MORE LEISURELY NOW. His eyes are red, unblinking, his head crusted with drying blood. He aches all over, physically, and mentally. He fumbles with the radio - can only find a sad love song; sung by a woman that sounds just too much like Elita. He clicks the radio off, looks down at the burlap sack beside him, then curses abruptly and hits the brakes.

EXT. ROAD TO JUAREZ (EARLY MORNING)

THE BUICK IS SWERVING, SLIDING TOWARD:

A COW: that has wandered into the road.

INT. BUICK (EARLY MORNING)

SHOOTING PAST BENNIE -PAST THE WINDSHIELD: THE CAR slides to a halt just two feet from the cow, which only now looks up. The THUMPING SOUND is:

THE BURLAP SACK: Rolling off the front seat and landing on the floor.

BENNIE HONKS THE HORN, curses at the cow.

EXT. ROAD TO JUAREZ (EARLY MORNING)

THE GRUNT CREATURE LOOKS AT THE GRILL, bawls its protest then takes its own sweet time ambling out of the way. When it is clear, the Buick moves on - picking up speed again.

INT. BUICK (EARLY MORNING)

BENNIE SETTLES BACK IN THE SEAT AGAIN, then remembers:

THE HEAD, IN THE SACK, ON THE FLOOR.

HE PICKS IT UP, puts it on the seat against the opposite door.

BENNIE
Sorry, Al...

He drives in silence a ways, then looks back over at the sack; now stickily blotched with the head's latest oozings and flies.

BENNIE
What the hell's so special about you anyway? Huh?
(it doesn't answer:)
What the hell'd anyone want with you?
(an after thought:)
Maybe you got something valuable inside it? C'mon Al... cop it out...you hide diamonds in your ears or something?

(Al is not inclined to answer)

BENNIE LOOKS BACK TO THE ROAD - drives in silence a while more - thinking, remembering - hurting. OVER THIS: The SOUND OF ELITA'S LAUGHTER: Like the tinkling of an exquisite little silver bell. When Bennie looks back at the head again, it is with a knot in his gut, a lump in his throat and eyes that are not completely dry:

BENNIE
(softly, choked up:)
Alfredo Garcia...you son-of-a-bitch.
Five people have bought the farm because
of you...an' shit if it wasn't me who
killed four of 'em.

The sack doesn't seem to care.

BENNIE
It wasn't worth it, baby...none of
it's worth...her. An' she's keepin'
the best part of you company...you
lucky Bastard...

BENNIE LOOKS AWAY, GRITS HIS TEETH at the nightmare playing inside his head - it's a rerun. The only thing he can really take it out on, for now, is his car. He goes into a corner a little faster than he really had to and:

THE HEAD IN THE BACK rolls slowly across the front seat - bumps to a stop against his thigh.

BENNIE LOOKS DOWN AT, curses under his breath. Then:

BENNIE
Don't sweat it, Al...I can handle
this heap a damn sight better'n you
did that Valiant.

He rolls the head back to the other side; it leaves tracks. Bennie wipes his hand on his pants, starts to say something else, then just shakes his head and ignores the other.

EXT. ROAD (EARLY MORNING)

THE UNCLE SEEN YESTERDAY AT THE GRAVE YARD, ESTABAN, is searching the green station wagon. He finds nothing - tries to start it - the battery is dead. As he climbs out:

ESTABAN

Nada. Vaminos.

He picks up the rifle leaning against the station wagon, hurries back to:

THE BATTERED VALIANT: It is full of people but due to the spider-webbed windshield, we can only make out Grandmother Moreno. Uncle Estaban jumps in and:

THE VALIANT TAKES OFF, as fast as it will go. Before it is around the first bend, the Vultures are already landing on Chalo's and Cueto's unfeeling backs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARRAS (MORNING)

SERIES OF ANGLES - THE BUICK SLOWLY MOVING THROUGH TOWN:

PAST THE PLAZA - still quiet at this early hour.

DOWN A NARROW STREET - giving the right of way to an old man leading a huge pile of cut wood which has a very small burro beneath it.

PAST THE POLICE STATION - with its '51 Chevy panel truck/paddy wagon parked in front. And some uniformed men with toothpicks sticking out between their teeth. They stop their conversation, watch the Buick pull by...resume talking.

PAST THE TEXTILE FACTORY - People already queued at the entrance, waiting for the day's work to begin.

FINALLY PULLING TO A STOP IN FRONT OF A LEAN-TO TYPE eating place: Two white tin Pepsi tables, four folding steel chairs and about a hundred beer signs.

INT. BUICK - (MORNING)

BENNIE TAKES THE KEY OUT OF THE IGNITION, reaches for the door, then looks back at the sack.

BENNIE

Hang tough, Sport...I'm starvin'.
Be right back.

He climbs out.

EXT. LEAN-TO EATING SPOT (MORNING)

BENNIE WALKS OVER, drops into one of the steel chairs.
A HUGE WOMAN in a faded grease-spotted dress waddles up to him, smiles.

WOMAN

Buenos días, señor. A sus ordenes.

BENNIE

(to himself)

I don't know what's so buenos about it...

(then:)

Gimme some huevos revueltos an' a
muy frio cerveca por favor. An'
make it rapido, huh?

WOMAN

Si señor. Ahorita.

She trudges back to her skillet. Bennie looks around, his eyebrows raise as he sees:

A TEN YEAR OLD BOY STANDING BETWEEN HIM AND THE BUICK.
He smiles at Bennie, holds up a ragged piece of Chamois
and nods to the car.

BOY
(I clean your windshield, senor?
I do it very good for you...and it
is very dirty.)

BENNIE GETS THE MESSAGE: THAT bit is as international
as Chicklettes. It is also as harmless. Bennie nods.
The boy happily goes to work on the windshield.

SHOOTING OUT THE WINDSHIELD AT THE BOY - whistling,
singing happily wiping away. Then, the strokes get
slower and slower, the whistling and singing stops,
his eyes go wide as he sees:

THE SACK: NOW ALMOST BLACK WITH FLIES - new arrivals
all the time.

THE BOY LOOKS AT IT CURIOUSLY, shrugs, walks back over
to Bennie.

BENNIE
Senor...tienes muchas moscos en
su carro.

BENNIE
Huh?

BOY
Moscos.

When he sees Bennie still doesn't understand, he makes
an airplane gesture with his hands and adds a buzzing
sound, then points to the car.

BOY
Moscos. Moscos...Muchas moscos.

BENNIE
(dully)
Flies...

BOY
Si...moscos.

The woman now joins them.

WOMAN
Que paso, Chavo?

BOY
Muchas moscos en el automovil.

WOMAN
Moscos?

BOY
Si...moscos.

BENNIE
Yeah...yeah...moscos. Look...uh...
do you have any dry ice and a plastic
bag? ...Don't want my turkey goin'
bad.

They look at him, at each other, don't understand.
Bennie really doesn't need this right now.

BENNIE
Ice...uh...yellow.

BOY
Yellow?

WOMAN
Yellow? Oh...hielo!

BENNIE
Yeah...yellow. Hay yellow and a
plastic bag?

WOMAN
Si senor. Tengo hielo. No
eien tiendo plastic bag.

BENNIE
Forget it.

WOMAN
(to the boy)
El senor quieres hielo.

BOY
Si mama...ahorita.

The boy starts to scurry off, but:

BENNIE

Hey! No! Uh...por favor...

The boy stops, looks at Bennie confused. So does the woman. Bennie musters a smile, stands.

BENNIE

(pointing to himself:)

Yo...go get the yellow. Donde
esta?

The woman, still confused, points to the back of the lean-to.

WOMAN

Aya...atross mi restaurante, senor.
Pero...?

BENNIE SMILES THINLY, HOLDS UP HIS HAND, goes to the Buick and gets the sack. A million disappointed flies hiss their protest as he walks back up to them. He touches the boy's chamois, points to the car:

BENNIE

Muchacho...cleanin' that windshield
is mas importante than yellow...
hechale.

(to the woman)

An' so are mi huevos an' cerveca.
I'll...go get the yellow...okay?

BOY

Okay...mi jefe.

WOMAN

(suddenly remembering:)

AYE! Sus huevos!

She quickly turns, waddles back to her smoking skillet. Bennie pats the boy on the head. The boy smiles up to him, goes back to do his windshield thing.

BENNIE DISAPPEARS AROUND THE CORNER OF THE LEAN-TO and:

PUTS THE SACK DOWN BESIDE A GALVANIZED TUB, removes the cloth cover: Two fifty pound blocks of ice and a machete. Bennie begins chipping away, swearing at the sack under his breath.

THE WOMAN PUTS BENNIE'S EGGS ON A PLATE. She adds a couple of hot peppers on the side, admires her work. She can cook eggs!

THE BOY WIPES THE WINDSHIELD CLEAN, whistling and singing again.

AND THE BATTERED VALIANT, RADIATOR STEAMING, slows as it passes Bennie's Buick.

INT. VALIANT.

GRANDMOTHER MORENO POINTS. Uncle Estaban nods. The Valiant keeps moving - on by and out of town.

THE WOMAN PUTS THE PLATE AND THE BEER on the table, stands there waiting for the gringo to return.

THE BOY FINISHES THE WINDSHIELD, stands beside his mother and waits too.

BENNIE LUGS THE SACK FULL OF HEAD AND ICE around the corner, back over to the car.

BENNIE
Gracias. Muy gracias.

THE WOMAN AND BOY WATCH HIM CURIOUSLY.

WOMAN
Por nada, señor.

BENNIE PUTS THE SACK on the floorboards - rolls up the windows. Then he goes back to the table, sits down, looks back up at the hovering mother and son.

BENNIE

Well...?

Of course, they don't understand. But they smile.

THE SIGHT OF A GRINGO WITH A SACK HAS DRAWN A COUPLE MORE CURIOUS BY-STANDERS over to the Lean-to: Peons, a couple of kids. A dog, sniffing at the car. Bennie tries to eat. It isn't easy. Finally:

BENNIE

Come on muchacho...get with the otra windows.

(points at Buick, makes
a circling motion)

All of 'em. All around. Today.

BOY

(gets it, beams)

Si mi jefe. Ahorita!

He runs off. Bennie drinks the beer in one tilt, looks up at the mama.

BENNIE

Otra cerveca por favor.

She nods, hurries off. Bennie tries a few bites of eggs, his eyes flicking over to see:

MORE PEOPLE JOIN THE CURIOUS BY-STANDERS - the earlier arrivals filling them in on the details: Two eggs... ordered second beer...flies...sack...ice...etc.

THE WOMAN HURRIES BACK UP WITH THE BEER, puts it on the table, doesn't leave.

BENNIE

Can I buy a bottle of tequilla?

WOMAN

Tequilla? No senor...no hay tequilla.
Solamente cognac y vino. Paro muy Bien.
Queres?

BENNIE

No tequilla?

(then)

O.K. Un bottilla of cognac,
por favor.

WOMAN

Si senor.

She leaves, comes back with the brandy. Bennie pushes the plate away, reaches for his wallet. The woman is a little disappointed he didn't eat it all.

BENNIE

Gracias. Quanto?

WOMAN

Trenta cinco quince, senor.

BENNIE

(as he pays her)

American rates, huh? Gracias.

BENNIE CLIMBS TO HIS FEET, crosses to the Buick. The boy holds the door open for him with one hand, gestures him inside with the other; up. Bennie drops him a couple of pesos into it, anxious to get away from here. But:

BOY

Jefe?

BENNIE

Yeah?

The boy looks around, grins a little sheepishly. The mama edges in beside him.

AND THE BY-STANDERS EDGE CLOSER TOO. OVER THIS:

BOY'S VOICE

Que es en el saco?

BENNIE UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY, pretends he doesn't:

BENNIE

Uh...I don't intendiendo mucho Spanish. Sorry. Well...gotta be goin'. Adios.

As he climbs in the Buick, one farmer steps out in front of the rest, proudly ready to impress them all.

FARMER

Excuse...I spik a leetle englacia...

BENNIE

What's happening with the buggers?
Pan mei que?

The others crowd forward, impressed curious.

FARMER

Si. The boy...she want to come
se dese...? ...Know what chu have
en thee sack.

BENNIE

Oh. It's a turkey. I'm takin' it
to my mother. She's wild about turkey.
I better get on the road though...she's
very sick.

FARMER

How tragedy...

BENNIE

Yep. Well...adios - and thank you
buddy boy.

EVERYBODY "ADIOS'S" HIM BACK and, as he drives out of town, they press in around the English speaking farmer and the talk turns to guacolotes, sick mothers and what idiots gringos are in general.

EXT. PARRAS BODEGA (MORNING)

FULL SHOT - THE BUICK MOVES OUT OF TOWN, under the cotton woods, poplars and weeping willows - past the bodega with its lush surroundings and boganvilla covered walls. OVER THIS, the SOUND OF ELITA's merry LAUGHTER and:

BENNIE'S VOICE
Holy shee-it! It looks like an'
oasis for Christ's sake!

ELITA'S VOICE
Money can even make beauty, no
es cuerto.

BENNIE'S VOICE
Cuerto...as long as the beauty makes
money.

THEIR LAUGHTER follows the Buick away from the bodega,
past the vineyards and back out into the desert.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PAILA/PARRA INTERSECTION (DAY)

THE BUICK SLOWS, TURNS THE CORNER, picks up speed down
the highway back toward Torreon; getting smaller and
smaller in the merciless shimmering expanse. OVER THIS:

ELITA'S VOICE
Alfredo and I were a boy and a girl
together. We...are a man and a woman.

BENNIE'S VOICE
Is there a difference?

ELITA'S VOICE
Yes - last night I know. Now, mi Amor...
I don't love you because I am afraid of
living with myself. I love you...because
you are you.

BENNIE
(the anger and sadness coming
up again)
Shit -

INT. BENNIE'S BUICK (DAY)

AS BENNIE DRIVES, ELITA'S VOICE CONTINUES OVER: Almost as merciless as the heat itself.

ELITA'S VOICE

That is a big difference.

Bennie shakes his head to clear the stinging memory - it doesn't help much. Nothing does.

THE SACK ON THE FLOOR. The ice has melted and a couple thousand buzzing hitch hikers feast there.

BENNIE ROLLS DOWN THE WINDOW, turns the wind wing so the air hits him in the face.

BENNIE

Al, Baby...you give bad breath...

He clicks on the radio, fumbles with the dial, finally finds some distant U.S. station. The static doesn't quite drown out the droning flies; the ANNOUNCER'S VOICE doesn't quite erase the sweet young voice in Bennie's head. But it helps, a little.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

...and the Protesters charged that the Establishment is secretly constructing concentration camps in many remote areas to eliminate dissident factions of our society. The Vice President's only comment to these charges was...
"Ridiculous".

(beat)

Elsewhere in the news...

Bennie takes the cork out of the brandy bottle with his teeth, drinks deeply, then pours some on the sack.

BENNIE

Have a drink, Al -

ANNOUNCERS VOICE

(continuing)

The "Fags Are People Too" movement gained added strength early yesterday morning as a group of over four hundred stiffly sober men marched...peacefully up 8th street...to the City Hall. They

ANNOUNCERS VOICE (Cont'd)

were joined by certain backers
of the women's lib now movement.
Three policemen were indicted in
Chicago....

Bennie digs a fly out of his ear, takes another blast
of brandy.

ANNOUNCERS VOICE

(continuing)

A spokesman for the Mayor said: "If
you don't like them, then stay out of
them." The leader of the WAPT movement,
Stumbles Flannigan, replied that the money
now spent on the rehabilitation of drug
addicts should rightfully be spent on
them. "After all," he added, "society
allows alcohol". The rally broke up
shortly before 10 a.m. without violence.
by four p.m., Stumbles was back in the
tank. The charge: Vagrancy and
extreme drunkenness.

(beat)

Turning to the world of sports...

EXT. SALTILLO/TORREON HIGHWAY (DAY)

THE BUICK IS AN APPROACHING SPECK IN THE DISTANCE. PAN
OVER to Estaban, looking up the highway from behind a
clump of tumbleweeds. He sees it, signals to:

ALFREDO'S GRANDMOTHER, who stands a little further back
on a seldom used dirt road. With her are most of the rest
of the Moreno family: Another Uncle who happens to be
the one armed bartender, three kids, including the
Angel. Grandmother Moreno relays the signal to:

A COUSIN, JULIO, IN HIS THIRTIES BEHIND THE WHEEL OF THE
VALIANT, which is concealed behind a jagged rock outcropping
a little farther back on the narrow dirt road, engine
running.

ALL OF THE MEN ARE ARMED WITH RIFLES: Grandmother Moreno has more dedication and purpose.

BENNIE'S BUICK DRAWS CLOSER.

ESTABAN RAISES HIS HAND.

INT. BUICK (DAY)

ACID ROCK HAS REPLACED THE NEWS ON THE RADIO. Bennie raises the bottle, drinks, blinks, then his eyes pop open wide. He jams the brake pedal to the floor as:

EXT. PARRAS/TORREON HIGHWAY (DAY)

THE VALIANT STEAMS OUT ONTO THE HIGHWAY, blocking the road.

AND THE BUICK SLIDES TOWARD IT, SMOKE POURING OUT from all four locked wheels, tires screeching as it broadsides, hangs on two wheels like it is about to flip, then spins completely around and skis backwards to a stop at the side of the road, pointing the other way.

INT. BUICK (DAY)

BENNIE CLOSES HIS EYES, EXPELS HIS HELD BREATH, damns the world, the sack and himself to hell. Then he turns in the seat, looks back out the window to:

EXT. PARRAS/TORREON HIGHWAY (DAY)

JUAN, THE COUSIN, A BURLY MOTHER, STEPS OUT OF THE VALIANT, aims his rifle at the Buick over the hood.

GRANDMOTHER MORENO LEADS THE REST OF THE FAMILY out of the brush and onto the highway. Al weapons and her icy glare pointed at Bennie's car.

THE COUSIN JOINS THEM AND they stop in a solid line of Moreno's fifteen feet away; wait there in silence.

BENNIE CLIMBS OUT OF THE BUICK, still visibly shaken. He closes the door, takes a couple of steps toward them, stops.

THE MORENO'S STAND THERE, FANNED OUT ACROSS THE ROAD, bristling with desire and the weapons to fulfill it. Only Angel grins. Silence. Broken only by some ridiculous muted commercial from the Buick radio.

BENNIE LOOKS AT THEM, AT ANGEL, knows the answers but doesn't have the questions. Finally, he breaks the silence:

BENNIE

Buenos dias...

Silence and hostile black eyes are his only answer.

BENNIE

Look...uh...I think I know why you're here.

(remembers, then:)

Oh...uh...I intiendo porque you are aqui.

ESTABAN LEANS OVER, softly translates a reasonable version of this to the grandmother. (Moreno's always speak softly). The old woman says nothing, doesn't take her eyes off of Bennie. More silence. Bennie fidgets, then:

BENNIE

I know you are religious people... and you're probably not too happy that the grave was...well, that I took Alfredo's...uh...well I can sure understand how you must feel.

Estaban translates again: More silence. Then:

BENNIE

Look...uh...what's done is done,
right? Finito? I went to a lot
of trouble to get that...to do what
I did. Had to kill people...
(softly)

An' worse. Much worse.
(then mustering up his balls)
I'm not about to give it back.
Sorry. But that's just the way it
goes.

The Uncle translates again, then turns back to Bennie
and speaks to him in broken English; softly of course:

ESTABAN

You have what is ours. We must have
it back.

BENNIE

Sorry...but like I said...

ESTABAN

Why you want cabeza? Did you know
ALFREDO? He do something bad to you?

BENNIE

Nope. Never even laid eyes on him.
But he stays with me - I'll bring him
back though.

ESTABAN TRANSLATES THIS. GRANDMOTHER MORENO SAYS SOMETHING
back to him out of the corner of her wrinkled mouth.
Then:

ESTABAN

Her say...how can her live...how
can any of us continue our lives
when our beloved Alfredo lies without
head in his grave...?

BENNIE LOOKS AT THE GROUND, nudges a stone around with
the toe of his shoe, looks half way back up at:

THE BIG EYED LITTLE BOY, PATHETICALLY HOLDING ONTO
ESTABAN'S leg and staring at him with frightened wonder.
Next to him, smiling slightly is ANGEL.

GRANDMOTHER MORENO GLARES AT THE SILENT GRINGO in front of them, then speaks to Estaban in Spanish again. Then:

ESTABAN

How can even a gringo remove the head of a good man and leave the body of a whore in his grave?

(Bennie remains silent)

She say...how can her pray for the soul of her beloved grandson when all her can see in her memory is body with no head? How? How can you do this thing to such poor people who never do anything to you or you never laid eyes on? How, Senor gringo? How?

BENNIE FEELS ROUGHLY AS ROTTEN AS HE'S EVER FELT; but that won't buy train tickets, so:

BENNIE

(finally)

Look, I said I was sorry, didn't I?! I mean...you think it's been easy for me?! And I didn't cut off his head anyway, you know...But I have it an' with all due respect to Gran'ma there... I'm gonna keep it. Comprendo?

ESTABAN RAISES HIS RIFLE, TRANSLATES as he takes careful aim on the bridge of Bennie's nose. The other rifles come up too as he finishes. Grandmother Moreno looks from Bennie to the rifles, says something softly in Spanish. The rifles lower, slightly. Then:

ESTABAN

This woman is of great mercy or you be die now. Porque you reasons must be great to do this horrible thing. Give us the head and you live.

BENNIE

(weighs it, then:)

Tell her thanks my, but...

Al and I have got a trip to make.

Bennie cuts himself short as Grandmother Moreno says something else to Estaban.

ESTABAN

Her say...are you do this
for monies?

BENNIE

No. Yes. Si - No.

As Bennie continues, he digs what's left of the hundred dollars out of his pocket, holds it out to them:

BENNIE

(continuing:)

Look...this is all I have...take it.
Por favor. I only need Alfredo's head
for a few days...then I'll bring it
back. Always meant to anyway. Deal?
I mean...Goddamn you! I'm going to
finish this with Al.

ESTABAN TRANSLATES. The family remains motionless,
silent, coldly glaring at the man in the highway holding
the money out to them.

BENNIE LOOKS AT THEM, AT THE MONEY, THEN DROPS IT ON the
highway. As he turns to move toward the Buick:

BENNIE

(sweating out his bluff:)

Well...nice talkin' to you. But
I'd best be gettin' on the road...
gotta long ways to go. Adios.

BUT HE LOSES: THE COUSIN REACHES HIM IN four swift
strides, sends him to the blistering pavement with a
rifle butt to the kidneys.

BENNIE ROLLS OVER, his lips drawn tightly over his teeth in pain. He tries to shake it off; looks up at:

THE CIRCLE OF FACES AND RIFLE MUZZLES ABOVE HIM.

ESTABAN

(extremely soft:)

Alfredo's head for your life, senor...
you cannot have both and we can.

BENNIE CLIMBS TO HIS KNEES, breathes deeply a few times, then struggles to his feet. He looks at them, nods in defeat and they follow him very closely over to the Buick. He reaches inside, pulls out the sack, hands it to the cousin along with about a trillion flies. From the RADIO:

ANNOUNCERS VOICE

Friends? Do you suffer from irregularity?
Does that stuffed up feeling leave you...

GRANDMOTHER MORENO SHOOS ANGEL AWAY from the money on the ground, orders all the kids back to wait by the Valiant. Then she picks up the money. The men join her, displaying the sack. She looks past them, to:

BENNIE AT THE BUICK

THE OLD WOMAN SPEAKS TO ESTABAN IN SPANISH AGAIN, but there is something different about her tone now; quite different. When she finishes, the men take a couple steps toward the Buick, stop, rifles cradled loosely in their arms.

ESTABAN

...how much is Alfredo's head worth
to you?

BENNIE

(dulled with defeat)

Nothing. Not to me anyway. But
there's people who want it...
and will pay.

Estaban translates this back over his shoulder. The old woman steps up beside him, measures Bennie a moment, then speaks to Estaban in that tone again. Then:

ESTABAN

She say...how much monies these
mans pay y tambien her say...
where can her find such mans?

BENNIE

What?!!

He looks at the Morenos incredulously, shakes his head and begins laughing...at them... at himself.

ESTABAN

No comprende? She say...
how much monies...

BENNIE

(suddenly very pissed!)
I know what she say! Shit! Tell
'er to take the head and bury it or
maybe she can sell it to a dog food
factory for a few pesos more than
her grief is worth! You rotten...

ESTABAN SHIFTS HIS RIFLE SLIGHTLY, FIRES.

BENNIE IS THROWN BACK AGAINST THE BUICK: Shot through the fleshy part of his left shoulder.

BENNIE

(continuing...it is a gasp:)
...Jesus.

THEY START TO MOVE IN ON HIM, but Grandmother Moreno raises a quick hand of warning: All turn, look off at:

A DOUBLE DECKER BUS FULL OF TOURISTS ROARS DOWN ON THEM: Hitting the air horn and brakes at the same time, then grinding to a halt.

ANGEL HOPS INTO THE VALIANT and moves it out of the way.
(All the young kids are now in or around the car)

THE MORENOS MOVE ASIDE AS:

THE BUS BEGINS INCHING PAST the two cars which still practically block the highway.

INT. BUS (DAY)

THE OCCUPANTS OF THE BUS (middle aged school teachers from Des Moines, a dozen hippies with short haircuts - they've been kicked out of Mexico, assorted Kiwanis Club members, D.A.R. Founders and three large Mexican families)

ALL MOVE OVER TO that side and peer curiously out the windows.

EXT. SALTILLO/TORREON HIGHWAY (DAY)

MOVING SHOT - TOURISTS POV - THE MORENO FAMILY STAND beside the road, hats off, rifles at their sides, smiling and waving the bus on by.

THE COUSIN HELPS THE BUS DRIVER by giving the bus the old "slam-slam", slam-slam" routine on the side with the palm of his hand.

BENNIE SLUMPS AGAINST THE BUICK, clutching at his bleeding shoulder. He turns sideways, slips the .45 out from under his shirt, covers it with his coat and waits for the bus to leave.

AS IT FINALLY IS PULLING AWAY, GRANDMOTHER MORENO gets Estaban back on Bennie's case.

ESTABAN

...how do we find man who will pay
for cabeza de Alfredo Moreno?
She say...tell us ahorita or we are
to kill you.

BENNIE JUST GRINS, he figures he's bought it and will be damned if he'll do that death bit all by himself. He starts easing his hand out from beneath his coat.

THE RIFLES COME UP. AN ABRUPT BLAST OF A HORN AND SCREECHING TIRES whips their startled attention to:

AN ONCOMING NEW CONVERTIBLE WITH THE TOP DOWN SWERVES INTO VIEW AT HIGH SPEED: Just clearing the front of the bus. Wheels locked, it takes to the shoulder in an eruption of rocks, gravel and dirt, slides past the Valiant, barely missing it and:

ALMOST SKIDS PAST THE GROUP before it finally grinds to a halt in a cloud of its own dust. From which emerge:

SAPPENSLY AND JON QUILL.

BENNIE SEES THEM, looks at Estaban and Grandmother Moreno with a thin smile.

BENNIE
You don't have to find
them...they found you.

THE OLD WOMAN TAKES THE SACK FROM THE COUSIN, asks Estaban how to say something "en Englacia".

THEN AS ONE, THE MORENO FAMILY walk toward the approaching men. They stop a few feet apart; Quill gets out - stands behind Sappensly, partially covered as Grandmother Moreno takes an additional step out in front of her brood, displays the sack.

GRANDMOTHER MORENO

We have head pay us monies please.

AS THEY WAIT WITH EXPECTANT GRINS and dreams of sudden riches:

QUILL, now appearing, .45 in hand, clears Sappensly and fires a shot which:

DAMN NEAR RIPS OFF ESTABAN'S HEAD.

NOW SAPPENSLY OPENS FIRE:

GRANDMOTHER MORENO IS DEAD before she hits the ground.

THE CHILDREN SCATTER INTO THE BRUSH, screaming.

BENNIE HITS THE DECK, rolls in front of the Buick, crouches by the grill.

ALFREDO'S COUSIN FIRES AS HE DIES:

KILLING QUILL where he stands.

THE ONE ARMED UNCLE, WOUNDED AND DYING, tries to crawl under the Valiant.

SAPPENSLY STEPS UP, SHOOTS HIM THREE TIMES in the back of the head. The echos die away. Silence. Sappensly looks around, jams a new clip into his automatic mutters:

SAPPENSLY

Goddamned fools...dumb,dumb bastards...

(then remembers, calls out:)

Bennie?

(silence)

Bennie? You okay?

BENNIE RISES CAUTIOUSLY, GUN IN HAND; not moving away from the cover of the Buick as he looks around at the dead bodies. Then to Sappensly:

BENNIE
I've been better most of my life.

SAPPENSLY
Who the hell were they?

BENNIE
Just family...lookin' for a little something tangible to ease their grief.

SAPPENSLY GRUNTS, moves over to the sack, picks it up.

BENNIE
It's him.

The Harvard man opens it, looks in, quickly looks away. Then he turns to Bennie and nods; his pistol half pointing at the ground in one hand, the sack in the other.

SAPPENSLY
You do have a good nose for shit, don't you.

BENNIE
(tensing)
Yeah. Smell it a hundred miles away...
(then)
...and closer. Do I get paid?

Sappensly looks at him a long moment, then down to the sack.

SAPPENSLY
(softly)
Yeah...Bennie...you get paid...

SUDDENLY BOTH MEN ARE MOVING:

BENNIE DROPS BEHIND THE HOOD.

SAPPENSLY DIVES TO THE PAVEMENT, rolls, fires past the front of the grill where Bennie should be.

BENNIE isn't there.

SAPPENSLY TWISTS, glances desperately around, looks up:

TO BENNIE, STANDING ON THE HOOD. Bennie fires once, straight down.

AND MISSES. BUT THE 240 GRAIN BULLET ploughs into the pavement four inches from Sappensly's startled face and the asphalt and the shattering ricochete removes a considerable portion of it.

BENNIE LOWERS HIS AUTOMATIC, crouches on the hood and calmly watches Sappensly die.

HE HOPS DOWN, REPLACES SAPPENSLY'S WALLET WITH HIS OWN, then moves over and picks up the sack.

BENNIE

C'mon Al...we gotta long way to go.

HE STARTS TO GO, hesitates at Grandmother Moreno's twisted body, then bends down and removes the money from her hand. It's not easy. The old woman doesn't want to let go.

BENNIE

(softly:)

Fuck you, Gran'ma.

He looks over at the Buick, flips it a little salute, then climbs into Sappensly's convertible, puts the sack on the floor, starts the engine.

BENNIE

(to the sack)

Try an' keep yourself together, Al...
here we go...

HOLD THE BUICK, THE VALIANT AND THE DEAD BODIES IN THE
F.G. AS:

BENNIE CHURNS OFF OF THE SHOULDER AND GUNS UP THE HIGHWAY
toward Juarez. When the convertible is small in the
distance, the Moreno children emerge from the brush, run
to their parents.

EXCEPT FOR ANGEL who sits and watches.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO.

EXT JUAREZ (NIGHT)

BENNIE CLIMBS OUT OF THE CONVERTIBLE, takes the sack and
starts off down the crowded street; stumbling, jostling
tourists. He looks like hell; unshaven, filthy with grime,
dried sweat and his own caked blood. And of course,
there's that sack. He finally makes it to the corner,
slumps against:

FITO'S TAXI: IT HAS SEEN BETTER DAYS '59 Chevy with ruby
studded mud flaps.

FITO SEES HIM, DOES A TAKE, then leaves the group of
cats he was bullshitting with and comes over, puts his
hand on Bennie's shoulder.

FITO

Benito?! Que pase?

BENNIE

Yeah...take me home,

FITO

Oh si! Ahorita Benito. El Paso
we are coming!

Fito opens the Taxi door, and as he's helping Bennie inside:

BENNIE

Find a place to get a doctor, some
dry ice and a plastic bag on the
way...okay compadre?

The tall thin cab driver nods, closes the door, hurries
around the climbs behind the wheel.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BORDER (NIGHT)

THE CAB PASSES THROUGH THE MEXICAN SIDE.

CROSSES OVER THE HIGH ARCHING BRIDGE, slows as it
approaches:

EXT. U. S. CUSTOMS STATION (NIGHT)

THE TAXI STOPS, waits as a CUSTOMS OFFICIAL thoroughly
checks out the car in front. The occupants have long
hair. But much to the disappointment of the Official,
they are clean.

INTO FITO'S CAB/EXT. U. S. CUSTOMS STATION (NIGHT)

BENNIE DRAPES HIS COAT OVER HIS SHOULDER; so it covers
the wound and the sack on the seat beside him. Fito
edges the cab forward...stops. The Customs Officer
pokes his head in the window.

CUSTOMS OFFICER

What nationality are...oh...hi, Bennie.
Jesus you look bad...and you don't
smell too good either.

BENNIE looks quickly at Alfredo. Al is okay. Maybe it's
Bennie.

BENNIE

Thanks Ned. It's nothin' a good
month's sleep won't cure.

CUSTOMS OFFICER

Or a bath.

BENNIE

(laughs like it doesn't hurt:)
That's what she said.

The Customs Officer laughs, steps back, then waves
the taxi on into the United States.

DISSOLVE TO:

BENNIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING (NIGHT)

FITO PULLS HIS CAB TO A HALT IN front of a building
shabby enough to be on the other side of the river.
Bennie pays him, climbs out, now also carrying a large
paper sack full of dry ice.

FITO

Gracias, Benito. Can I
help you...?

BENNIE

No...got it whipped now. Thanks
anyway, Fito.

FITO

Okay, Chavo...como quieres.
(then, an afterthought)
Hey? Donde esta Elita?

(grins at him:)

You give her a vacation maybe?

BENNIE

Yeah...a long one - Chow, Fito.

FITO

Chow.

The cab pulls away. Bennie climbs the steps like they were Mt. Everest, enters the dingytime yellowed hallway.

INT. BENNIE'S APARTMENT (NIGHT)

BENNIE ENTERS THE BLEAKNESS, SWITCHES ON THE ONLY LIGHT - cockroaches scramble for cover. He stumbles across the threadbare rug, enters the bathroom.

HE PUTS THE SACK OF DRY ICE ON THE TOILET, then lays the sack under the shower and turns it on. Bennie watches the water run on it a moment, his head swimming. He leans against the sink to support himself.

THEN REACHES UP AND OPENS THE MEDICINE CABINET, WHICH is occupied by one splayed toothbrush, a mangled tube of toothpaste, an electric razor, a gummy plastic hair brush and two bottles: one old spice...the other tequila. He takes the tequila, drinks, looks at himself in the cracked mirror, drinks again.

HE TURNS THE SHOWER OFF - FILLS A PLASTIC BAG WITH DRY ICE. He puts it on the toilet, takes the tequila bottle and:

COMES BACK OUT OF THE JOHN AND FLOPS DOWN ON THE BED. He lies there a moment with his eyes open. ELITA'S LAUGHTER...distant...far, far away from now...makes him close his eyes, squeeze them tightly shut, trying to ditch the re-run. It's no use.

HE GETS UP, WALKS OVER TO THE DRESSER and pulls out a handful of loose .45 shells. He reloads the clip, jams it into his automatic and lays the pistol on top of the dresser. Then:

HE DIGS THROUGH THE SHOES ON THE FLOOR OF THE CLOSET, comes up with a ratty Aereo Navies flight bag, grabs the bottle and goes back into the cruddy little bathroom.

BENNIE TAKES ANOTHER DRINK, LOOKS AT THE BOTTLE. It is almost empty. (Which means one quarter full at a time like this) He kills it in one tilt, then picks up the head and dumps it in the flight bag. Elita "laughs" again. He flinches, shakes his head and turns on the shower again. And begins peeling off his funky, funky clothes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOBBY - JUAREZ HOTEL (NIGHT)

BENNIE ENTERS, FLIGHT BAG IN HAND. He has shaved and changed clothes and his "bartender type" dress makes him look like the old Bennie again. But he's not. And he's not playing Humphrey Bogart now either. He is Humphrey Bogart. It's the fourth quarter and he's god damned well aware of it.

HE ENTERS THE ELEVATOR. The doors close on him.

INT. HOTEL SUITE (NIGHT)

THE GUNSEL OPENS THE DOOR AND ADMITS BENNIE. He quickly frisks him. Bennie winces a little as the hands roughly pass over his shoulder. The gunsels look in the bag - turns white, then:

MAX AND FRANK. BOTH SMILE. MAX STANDS.

MAX
Hello Bennie. Figured you'd be showing up soon.

FRANK
Hi, Bennie.

THIS TIME, IT IS BENNIE WHO DOES NOT SMILE. He takes a couple of steps into the room, stand there, flight bag bulging conspicuously in his hand. Max indicates it with a nod and a smile.

MAX

I can guess that's it, huh?

Bennie just nods.

MAX AND FRANK EXCHANGE SATISFIED LOOKS, then Max crosses to the desk, pulls out a thick envelope. During this:

FRANK

Hell'uva job, Bennie. Really. Well done. Just put it over on the table.

MAX

(holding out envelope:)
Here it is, Bennie. Count it if you want to. It's all there.

BENNIE TAKES THE ENVELOPE, OPENS IT JUST ENOUGH TO SEE THE GREEN, puts it in his coat pocket. Finally:

BENNIE

(indicates bag with a nod)
Don't you want to check it?

FRANK

We'll check it. But you're too smart to stiff us.

Bennie still hasn't made a move to put the bag down.

BENNIE

What's it really worth, anyway?

FRANK

(growing cold)
Ten grand is all you get, bartender.

BENNIE

And to who? Can't be you guys. What the hell'd you want with a...

MAX

(still smiling)

No questions, Bennie.. The ten G's
answers them all.

(then)

Put it on the table. We'll check it
then adios, huh? Go have yourself
a party or two...you earned it...

Bennie just looks at them, makes no move to put the
flight bag down.

FRANK

C'mon bartender. You deaf? You're
either that or a bigger schmuck than
you look like.

The "Old Bennie" smiles, shrugs.

BENNIE

Okay. But I keep my flight bag?
You know...a souvenir?

THE TWO MEN LOOK AT EACH OTHER, look at Bennie just like
he's the idiot they're sure he is. Max shrugs. The
smile is gone.

MAX

Keep it then.

BENNIE WALKS OVER TO THE TABLE, puts the flight bag on it
and begins tugging at the reluctant zipper; gaining an
inch with each jerk. During this:

BENNIE

(just rambling on)

Thanks...I know it sounds stupid but
you see... this bag...well...there was a
picnic lunch in it once..an' me and a very
special person...a girl of course, climbed
way up on this groovy mountain...and ate bolcos
she'd made and drank tequila...right outta
this very bag...

(almost has it open)

Elita was really special and that's why...

(reaches into it)

I want the bag as a souvenir and why I
want to know what...

Then, pulling out Alfredo, he tosses the head to Max, who
catches it awkwardly...

BENNIE

Check it, you son-of-a-bitch.

BENNIE CONTINUES AS HE COMES OUT OF THE BAG WITH HIS .45 and levels it at them:

BENNIE

(continuing)

Then tell me what the head of Alfredo Garcia is worth...and to whom! Comprendo?!

THIS CATCHES MAX AND FRANK COMPLETELY UNAWARE: But they are more surprised than frightened.

FRANK

(starting to stand)

Oh for Christ's sake...

THE GUNSEL BEHIND BENNIE digs for his gun but never reaches it as:

BENNIE WHIRLS, FIRES, drops the man in front of the door.

MAX'S HAND STABS INTO HIS COAT. Bennie nails him high in the chest, the impact sending him slamming back into the couch. He looks up at Bennie and his hand falls out of his coat, holding his wallet.

BENNIE STANDS ALERT, doesn't fire again. Max slowly pulls a card out of his wallet, holds it out to Bennie.

MAX

(dying)

This...is the man who pays...and he will, baby...double...

BENNIE

(taking the card)

No sense bein' in the game if you can't go for all the marbles, right?

But his words fall on ears that have heard their last. Bennie crosses quickly to the desk, checks the drawer for more money. But all he finds is:

INSERT: GOLD LOCKET. BENNIE'S HAND PICKS IT UP, flips it open. Alfredo smiles out at him.

BENNIE JAMS THE LOCKET IN HIS POCKET, grabs his flight bag, kicks the gungel out from in front of the door and splits.

EXT. JUAREZ HOTEL (NIGHT)

SIRENS CAN BE HEARD APPROACHING IN THE DISTANCE. BENNIE hurries down the steps, shifts the bag to the other hand and blends into the flow of tourists.

EXT. JUAREZ RED LIGHT DISTRICT (NIGHT)

FITO THE CAB DRIVER exits a liquor store with 2 bottles of tequilla under his arm, climbs into his cab.

INT. FITO'S TAXI (NIGHT)

BENNIE IS IN THE FRONT SEAT. He takes the bottles from Fito, tucks two down by the flight bag at his feet, cracks open and drinks sizeable. Steadied, he hands the bottle to Fito, who drinks, puts the bottle on the seat between them.

FITO

Where now, Benito?

Bennie blows his mind by handing him two one hundred dollar bills.

BENNIE

Just drive south, Fito...

FITO

(staring wide-eyed at
the two bills)

To the moon?!

BENNIE.
We'll stop shortly this side.

FITO
My Chevy...it is not so...

BENNIE
It'll make it fine. How can it miss...
Andele hombre...just follow the rainbow.
You want to drive me in Spain?

FITO
Como no?

EXT. JUAREZ RED LIGHT DISTRICT (NIGHT)

THE TAXI PULLS OUT into the stream of traffic and disappears
into the Juarez night.

INT. AIRPORT (NIGHT)

They move to board a jet - Fito is full of dialogue.
Bennie is talking to Al.

EXT. MADRID AIRPORT

TO JET LANDING.

BENNIE AND FITO EXITING -

EXT. AREA ROUND (SAN MIGUEL ALLENDE? VERA CRUZ?
SAN BLAS? GUANAJUATO?) (DAY) (Some place that
looks like Spain)

BENNIE IS NOT TALKING - Fito is - Finally

BENNIE
Barcelona.

FITO'S CAR MOVES THROUGH some spectacular Spanish scenery.
The morning is peaceful, warm.

INT. FITO'S CAR (DAY)

BENNIE IS AT THE WHEEL - alone in the front seat. He appears at ease: Much like a matador watching an underling cape his bull before he steps into the ring to face it is at ease.

AND SHAKES FITO AWAKE.

BENNIE

Grab your socks, hombre...

BENNIE PULLS TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, slides over into the passengers seat. Fito climbs out, stretches, slips in behind the wheel. As he pulls back out onto the highway, his nostrils flare. He sniffs a couple of times, wishes he hadn't.

THE SKINNY CAB DRIVER drives in silence for a while - finally looks over at Bennie who is trying to get comfortable enough to grab a little snooze.

FITO

(finally)

Benito?

BENNIE

Yeah...?

FITO

I smell that smell again.

BENNIE

(without opening his eyes)

Maybe it's inside your nose.

Silence a ways more. Then:

FITO

Bennie...amigo?

BENNIE

YEAH...?

FITO

Why am I driving in Spain - I am Mexican -

BENNIE

It's the rules - this is where it all started - a lot of people dead.

FITO

And the sack?

BENNIE

(opening one eye)

Al -- Al's head...

Bennie closes the eye. Fito explodes into uproarious laughter; laughs and laughs and laughs. Then each outburst becomes less convincing than the one before, breaks down into half hearted guffaws, wheezing little gasps. He sneaks a look at Bennie, then tightly grips the wheel and stares starkly at the road ahead - not laughing anymore..

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RICH LANDSCAPE (DAY)

RICH IN CATTLE - WHEAT - SUGAR CANE - CORN - HORSES.
(And, if you could see into the distant valleys away from the main highway - grass. Fields and fields of grass)

FITO'S NEW RENTAL CAR looks perfectly in keeping here among the gleaming new machinery which can be seen here and there along the road.

The latest in harvesting combines; produce and livestock trucks:

Cadillacs and Mercedes. Even those working the fields look good.

INT. FITO'S TAXI (DAY)

BENNIE IS SILENTLY WATCHING THIS ALL GO BY. Fito is constantly sweating at flies. Bennie's eyes narrow, then: checking his map and card:

BENNIE

Take a right...at those arches.

EXT. HACIENDA ENTRANCE (DAY)

THE CAR SLOWS OFF THE HIGHWAY, TURNS onto the even better paved road which leads under beautiful stone arches and up through pastures of grazing thoroughbreds and registered Santa Gertrudis cattle and disappears into a distant clump of huge trees and lush greenery. As the car passes under the arches:

ARMANDO STEPS IN FRONT OF IT, HOLDS UP HIS HAND. (He's one of the two who likes to break pregnant young girl's arms)

FITO HITS THE BRAKES, STOPS INCHES FROM HIM. Only now does Armando move. He steps up to the side of the cab.

ARMANDO

What do you want?

BENNIE

To see El Jefe...Miquel Escomilla.

Armando looks in at Bennie; obviously doesn't feel richer for the experience.

ARMANDO

(good English; cold)

Why do you want to see Senor Escomilla?

BENNIE

He wants to see me.

ARMANDO

Who are you?

BENNIE

Just tell your boss Alfredo is here. Alfredo Garcia.

HE OPENS THE SACK. ARMANDO LOOKS - PALES, THEN SMILES.

ARMANDO

Wait.

HE STEPS OVER TO AN ALCOVE IN THE STONE ARCH, LIFTS A TELEPHONE RECEIVER.

BENNIE WAITS, HIS FACE COOLY IMPASSIVE. Fito definitely wishes he was back in safe old Juarez. Armando turns.

ARMANDO

He will see you.

He gestures them on. Fito puts the Chevy in gear and:

THE CAR MOVES UP THE ROAD TOWARD:

EXT. HACIENDA (DAY)

THE IMMENSE FRONT DOORS OPEN AND THE OTHER ARM BREAKER, GUSTAVO, steps out, waits for them to arrive.

THE CAR PULLS IN THROUGH THE TREES, comes around the circular drive, stops near the door. Bennie climbs out, flight bag in hand, looks back in to Fito:

BENNIE

(quietly)

Wait for me, baby...

FITO

I'll wait.

BENNIE

You healed.

FITO

(showing a .38)

You want me to come with you.

BENNIE
(grinning)
Not now.

BENNIE STEPS AWAY FROM THE CAR, UP TO GUSTAVO; his own eyes equally as impassive. After a moment of just looking at each other, he raises his arms. Gustavo shakes him down.

BENNIE
Well?

GUSTAVO
(finally)
This way please.

AND THE MASSIVE DOORS CLOSE BEHIND THEM with a finality that makes Fito cross himself and leave the engine running.

INT. HACIENDA DEN (DAY)

EL JEFE STANDS AT THE HEAD OF A LONG TABLE, his back to the door and CAMERA.

ANOTHER BODYGUARD IS IN THE ROOM. SO IS THERESA, her arm healed but stiffly twisted from the breaking. The bodyguard moves aside as:

THE DOOR OPENS: BENNIE AND GUSTAVO ENTER. Bennie grins, waits. Then crosses to the table, looks at the figure at the other end then back at the rest.

GUSTAVO SOFTLY CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM, leans against it next to the other guard.

BENNIE UNZIPS THE FLIGHT BAG AS SMOOTHLY as he can bring it off. He lifts out the head.

THERESA WATCHES - looks at her father; her eyes undiluted in their hate.

BENNIE NOW HAS ALFREDO GARCIA'S HEAD IN HIS HANDS. (It's not looking too spiffy about now.)

HE ROLLS IT THE LENGTH OF THE TABLE and:

IT BUMP, BUMPS TO A STOP A FOOT FROM EL JEFE - facing up.

BENNIE STAND THERE, waiting.

EL JEFE TURNS LOOKS AT BENNIE. HE IS HOLDING A RECENTLY BORN BOY CHILD IN HIS ARMS. Then he looks down at the head - turns away from it in disgust...looks at his daughter.

THERESA CROSSES TO HER FATHER, takes the baby - backs away; her eyes, flat and cold with hatred, never leave him.

BENNIE AND EL JEFE MEASURE EACH OTHER ACROSS THE LONG TABLE: Just who is on the stick's short end is obvious. Bennie knows it - couldn't care less. Silence. Finally:

EL JEFE

What do you want?

That, he wasn't ready for! And it damned near takes the wind out of him:

BENNIE

What do I want?! What kind of a question is that!!?

EL JEFE

A very simple one, senor.

BENNIE

Well shit, man! Just take another peak at who's lookin' up at you, for Christ's sake! That's the valuable merchandise you ordered delivered. "Sir".

EL JEFE

Senor...when I value something, I always pay well. Very well.

BENNIE

Well now...that's a little better. For a minute there, I thought....

EL JEFE

But that head has no value to me any longer...

(looks at Theresa)

...it is as worthless as last Sunday's bull.

BENNIE SLUMPS AGAINST THE TABLE - let's the slack out of his jaw - gapes at the man at the other end.

BENNIE

Huh? No value...? No...?

EL JEFE

You heard correctly, senor. Now, please leave, immediately. And take... that with you.

THE GUARDS STIFFEN AS BENNIE SNATCHES UP HIS FLIGHT BAG, SPINS TO FACE EL JEFE.

BENNIE

Fourteen people are dead because of the price you put on that...

He emphasizes his point by stabbing at Alfredo's head with his finger as he continues:

BENNIE

(continuing)

...head!! An' one of them was worth more'n you or all the rest put together! What do I want??! Mister... you are responsible! You wanted it... you got it...an' now you're gonna pay for it!!

EL JEFE

(completely unruffled)

Is it so hard to understand, Senor? The vengeance I once felt for that man is gone. So his head has no value to me now.

(looks contemptuously over at his daughter)

I only had one child...unfortunately, it was a girl. Now I have a beautiful grandson. Which is your misfortune, Senor. For had it have been born a Girl....?

BENNIE

But...

EL JEFE

There is no room left in my heart for vengeance, Senor. It is too full of love for this child...he is now the heir of all that is mine. My life is complete.

BENNIE

Love?! Let me tell you about lo...

EL JEFE

Take the head, Senor. And leave while you are still alive.

BENNIE LOOKS AT EL JEFE LIKE A MAN WHO'S MISSED the last train out of hell. He shakes his head with the utter utterness of it all, then slowly puts the head back in the flight bag. Then he raises his eyes, looks at El Jefe again.

BENNIE

(quietly)

And...the money...?

EL JEFE LOOKS AT BENNIE AMAZED at such foolish persistence.
Back by the door, Gustavo laughs softly.

BENNIE
(the "old Bennie")
Mister...you just don't know what
I went through.

EL JEFE
Nor do I care.

BENNIE
(the new Bennie)
No. I know you don't. It's
just that...well ...can I just see it?

EL JEFE
Why?

BENNIE
This is as close as I've even been to the
end of the rainbow. And...I'd kind of
like to know...just for myself...
that the pot was really there.

El Jefe shakes his head at such idiocy, even laughs
a little for the first time. Then he crosses to a huge
oak desk, unlocks a drawer - counts out ten packets of
bills.

BENNIE WATCHES AS HE RETURNS TO THE TABLE - stacks the
money there for Bennie's inspection.

EL JEFE
Look at it, then, Senor. But like
the rainbow...it is not yours to touch.

AND BENNIE LOOKS:

IN THE MIRROR AS EL JEFE SIGNALS TO THE GUARDS with an
almost imperceptible nod of his head. Gustavo eases
his pistol out of its holster. But:

NEVER GETS A CHANCE TO AIM AS BENNIE'S .45 OPENS UP, blasting. And the second guard is dead on his feet before Gustavo even hits the floor. Bennie whirls back to:

EL JEFE - WHO STARES AT HIM INCREDULOUSLY - freezes with a small hand gun of his own half raised.

BENNIE
(suddenly transfixed with
rage)
You Goddamned-chickenshit-son-of-
a bitch!

EL JEFE
(hoarsely)
Take the money...please Senor... perhaps
my life is not so complete after
all...

THERESA
(soft with venom)
Kill him.

AND BENNIE DOES - ONE SHOT: BELT HIGH. Then, cursing under his breath, he begins jamming the money into his pockets, into the flight bag.

THERESA
Senor!!

Bennie spins around just as:

THE DOOR FLIES OPEN. HE KILLS the first two guards through. The last one fires from the hip, catching B-nnie in the leg and sending him sprawling over the table.

THE GUARD ADVANCES SLOWLY - his carbine leveled and ready.

BENNIE WIGGLES UNDER THE TABLE, pops up on the other side and:

BLOWS A HUGE HOLE IN THE MAN.

THERESA RUNS TO A SIDE DOOR, beckons to Bennie:

THERESA
Andele, Senor. Others are coming!

BENNIE GRABS THE FLIGHT BAG, limps toward the door,
trailing the wounded leg.

EXT. HACIENDA (DAY)

A HORDE OF VERY ARMED MEN RACE PAST THE FITOS CAR AND
into the hacienda.

FITO WATCHES THIS, eyes wider than his mouth. He puts
the car in gear.

THERESA LETS BENNIE OUT A SIDE DOOR.

THERESA
Thank you...

Bennie digs out the locket, hands it to her.

BENNIE
Here. Guess this is yours.
Take care of the kid. His ol'
man couldn't've been all bad.

THERESA
Adios.

She closes the door behind him. He limps down a
manicured garden path, starts around the edge of the
building, flattens against the wall.

THREE MORE ARMED GUARDS SPRINT INTO THE HACIENDA. Fito
decides the time to split was five minutes ago - eases
out the clutch and starts moving away.

BENNIE SEES THIS - starts limping as fast as he can after the departing car. But it is already almost to the drive leading out.

FITO SHOOTS A QUICK GLANCE back across the circular drive, sees:

BENNIE HANGING HELPLESSLY NEAR THE FRONT doors.

HE JAMS THE CAR IN SECOND, continues back around the circle, picks Bennie up.

INT. FITO'S CAR (DAY)

FITO JUST LOOKS AT BENNIE, at the money sticking out of him everywhere.

BENNIE
Now, NOW...vamonos.

EXT. HACIENDA (DAY)

THE TAXI BURNS RUBBER AROUND THE CIRCULAR DRIVE. (Fito damn near rolls it.) He swerves, disappears down the road through the trees.

INT. FITO'S TAXI (DAY)

BENNIE LOOKS BACK OVER HIS SHOULDER - begins to breath a little easier - maybe even grin, when:

FITO
Benito!!

Bennie's head snaps around.

EXT. HACIENDA ENTRANCE (DAY)

ARMANDO STEPS AWAY FROM THE TELEPHONE, draws his Colt and steps into the road. He faces the oncoming car, spreads his legs and aims with dead certainty.

INT. FITO'S TAXI (DAY)

BENNIE LEANS OUT THE WINDOW, steadies his gun with his other hand, aims carefully...fires. Misses. He aims again, pulls the trigger..nada. Empty. He swears, ducks back inside, shoots a look at Fito, then up at:

SHOOTING THROUGH WINDSHIELD - ARMANDO LOOMS CLOSER - FIRES:
The windshield explodes between them.

FITO HANGS ONTO THE WHEEL, FIRM, MAD - BENNIE DUCKS, TRYING TO RELOAD.

BENNIE GLANCES QUICKLY UP OVER THE DASHBOARD.

THROUGH THE SHATTERED WINDSHIELD: ARMANDO IS AIMING AGAIN - from about ten yards out - five. He leaps to the side.

FITO YANKS THE WHEEL, THE CHEVY SWERVES - hits something very hard - bumps over it; front and back wheels. Fito laughs.

FITO LOOKS AT BENNIE. BENNIE GRINS AT HIM SOFTLY, THEN turns in the seat - looks out the rear window.

EXT. HACIENDA ENTRANCE (DAY)

THE CAR SLIDES ONTO THE MAIN HIGHWAY - finally regains control and speeds away.

ARMANDO UNDER THE ARCHES ON THE PAVEMENT. Like a mashed rabbit - only bigger.

INT. FITO'S TAXI (DAY)

BENNIE SINKS BACK INTO THE SEAT - looks down at the bulging flight bag - pats it.

BENNIE
Relax Al...we're goin' home.

EXT. HIGHWAY (DAY)

AND THE CAR CARRIES HIM OFF DOWN THE HIGHWAY WITH ALL OF THE MARBLES BUT ONE - The only one that really mattered. As the car gets smaller and smaller.

FADE OUT

-- finito --