

The Burning Plain
Written By
Guillermo Arriaga

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1 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- DAY

Five o'clock in the afternoon in the boundless desert. In the middle of a lonely plain, a mobile home is on fire.

The flames crackle in the distance. The house is being rapidly consumed. Flames lick out of the windows.

There is nothing, no one to be seen. The house is on fire.

2 INT. ROOM, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Dawn. The house has only one room. The room has been painted an ocean blue. There is a small wooden table, a kitchenette and four rustic chairs. A pantry with cheap cups and plastic plates. Pans sit filthy in the sink.

At one end of the room is a bed. A naked man: John (39), sleeps deeply. Beside him, Sylvia (30), also naked, stares at him silently. She is blonde, thin; her working class beauty has a certain elegance.

She shakes him.

SYLVIA

Get up... get up...

The man opens his eyes and looks up at her.

JOHN

What's the matter?

SYLVIA

Get dressed and go.

JOHN

Why?

SYLVIA

'Cause I want you to get out.

He shifts to get comfortable.

JOHN

At least gimme till eight.

SYLVIA

No, you gotta go now.

He sits up, picks his pants up off the floor and sits on a chair to put them on. He is a big gringo, a little heavy, with deep bags under his blue eyes.

She looks at him for a moment, gets up and walks out naked to the balcony.

3 EXT. BALCONY, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

The balcony opens onto a town at the edge of the sea in Northern Baja California. Sylvia leans on the rail to watch the sun emerge from behind the ocean.

4 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

Two local women (35) are walking their sons (10) to school. One of the kids turns to look up at the balcony and observes the beautiful, naked woman.

The mother turns up and sees her. She yanks the boy and makes him look away. The other woman is annoyed.

WOMAN

Pinche gringa descarada, ¿cuándo va a dejar de hacer tantas locuras?
[Goddamn shameless gringa: when's she going to stop being so crazy?]

The women hurry their kids along.

5 EXT. BALCONY, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sylvia seems oblivious to the little scene she caused. She grabs a pack of cigarettes from the table and lights one.

She sits down to smoke on a dirty white plastic chair. Through the curtains, she watches the man leave, slamming the door.

Calmly, Sylvia gives the cigarette a long drag and stares into the distance.

6 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Noon. Sylvia walks down the beach with a towel. The day is sunny and cloudless.

In the distance float a couple of fishing boats. Some kids play in the sand. A few tents have been set up about 100 yards away. Gringo backpackers sun themselves next to a cooler. Some surf.

Sylvia lays her towel on the sand, shakes off her sandals, puts them aside and without hesitation, takes off her dress and stands completely naked.

She squirts some sunblock on her hand and rubs it all over her body. She seems distracted. She stretches out her arm and looks at the scar tissue from a burn on her wrist.

Some of the backpackers turn around to look at her, flustered. Sylvia stares back at one of them backpackers. She lowers her eyes and lies down on the towel.

7 INT. SMALL SHACK -- DAY

From a rustic shack built out of boards and a tin roof, where they sell beer, soft drinks, junk food, and rent surf boards, John watches her, conflicted.

He carries some boxes of beer and, somewhat clumsily, begins to set them down in front of the shop. As he does, he almost knocks them over. Martín (22), his thin, clever assistant, goes to help him.

MARTÍN

Abusado pinche John. [Easy John.]

John grumpily shifts the boxes around, watching Sylvia out of the corner of his eye. Martín notices and smiles jokingly.

MARTÍN (CONT'D)

She drives you crazy, no?

Martín looks at her in the distance: she is beautiful. He sees two backpackers, both under twenty, approach her.

Martín turns toward John and, relieved, sees he is moving some other boxes without having noticed to the backpackers.

8 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Sylvia feels the presence of the backpackers and sits up. Her nakedness doesn't seem to bother her in the least. They put on an air of self-confidence, but it is obvious that she makes them nervous.

BACKPACKER 1

Hi.

Sylvia smiles and stares at him icily.

SYLVIA

Hi.

Backpacker 2 holds out a beer for her.

BACKPACKER 2

We got you a beer.

SYLVIA

No thanks. I don't drink.

The kid smiles, as if she'd said something funny.

BACKPACKER 2

Are you like some kind of hippie
vegetarian?

SYLVIA

Worse.

Backpacker 2 points at a spot next to her.

BACKPACKER 2

Is it cool if we sit with you for a
while?

SYLVIA

Knock yourself out.

Backpacker 1 sits to Sylvia's left. The other one unties his
shorts, starts to take them off. Sylvia watches quizzically.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

Backpacker 2 stops midway.

BACKPACKER 2

Isn't this, like, a nudist beach?

SYLVIA

No. If you take them off they're
gonna put you in jail.

Backpacker 1 doesn't seem to understand: he's being told
this by a completely naked woman.

BACKPACKER 2

What about you?

SYLVIA

They got tired of locking me up.

Backpacker 1 pulls up his shorts and sits next to her.

9 INT. SMALL SHACK -- DAY

John has spotted the two backpackers sitting next to Sylvia.
It pains him: he won't stop staring at them. Martín stands
next to him.

JOHN

Would it kill her to stop being such
a whore? Just for one day...

Martín looks up. His face says it all: she cannot.

10 INT. ROOM, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sylvia is fucking backpacker 1. He is on top, concentrating. She lies under him, staring elsewhere, completely abstracted. It seems as if she is there just to be there.

The sex act continues, and the longer it goes on, the further away Sylvia seems to be.

11 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT 1993 -- DAY

A run-down 1982 Chevrolet pickup drives down a path kicking up a dustcloud. Some jackrabbits jump out of its way.

12 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Behind the wheel is Cristobal (18), a blond chicano dressed in a cowboy hat and white shirt. In the middle is Xavier (18), and on the other side his brother Santiago (17), dark-skinned, clear-eyed, taciturn and quiet. The three travel in silence, listening to some Tex Mex music.

Cristobal drives aggressively, barely dodging potholes and shrubs. In the distance we can see the ruins of the burning mobile home.

CRISTOBAL

It's over there.

Santiago raises his head and looks at it for a long time.

13 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- DAY

Cristobal parks the truck and the three get out. They walk toward the house. It has been completely destroyed by the fire. The walls stand charred and roofless, the tires burst, soot and ashes everywhere.

Santiago seems most affected by the scene. He circles around without taking his eyes off it.

Cristobal examines the place leisurely.

CRISTOBAL

Holy shit!

He picks up a rod warped by the heat and shows it to Xavier.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

The heat twisted up the metal. Look.

Santiago looks at him askance, taken aback by the comment. He keeps looking through the remains.

Cristobal hops through a heap of scattered blackened metal and walks up to the house. He looks closely and sees a room with a scorched bed.

Santiago and Xavier approach. Cristobal points.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

That's where my dad and that fuckin'
slut burned.

Xavier looks into the room.

XAVIER

How'd the fire start?

Cristobal shrugs.

CRISTOBAL

The cops think they left the gas on
and boom!

Santiago, bewildered, silently examines the room.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

They were fucking when they died.
The bodies got stuck together with
the fire. They had to cut them apart
with a knife.

Santiago looks at his brother suspiciously. Everything
Cristobal says seems to hurt him badly.

XAVIER

Who was the bitch?

CRISTOBAL

Some married woman from Maroma. This
is where the motherfuckers met,
halfway between both towns.

Santiago grabs onto the windowsill and jumps inside.

14 INT. BURNT MOBILE HOME -- CONTINUOUS

He stands before the black mattress as if trying to understand
what happened. Cristobal looks in.

CRISTOBAL

What the fuck are you doing?

Santiago stands pensively and then turns to stare right at
Cristobal.

SANTIAGO

What do you guess was going through
dad's head while he was burning?

Cristobal twists his face into something like a smirk.

CRISTOBAL

In getting the fuck out.

Xavier pokes his head in and answers.

XAVIER

Maybe that he never went back to Mexico.

Santiago looks at Xavier and goes back to examining the place.

15 EXT. ARIZONA TOWN -- DAY

The truck parks in front of a humble wooden house on a dusty street in a small town in Arizona. Santiago gets out to let Xavier out, who waves goodbye.

XAVIER

Later.

16 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

The truck pulls away leaving Xavier behind. Santiago is visibly upset.

SANTIAGO

Why the fuck did you bring Xavier?

CRISTOBAL

He's my friend, what's the big deal?

SANTIAGO

We bury dad tomorrow and you're running a fucking circus.

Cristobal stops the truck and turns to look at him.

CRISTOBAL

I ain't runnin' no circus, bitch. I was just telling him what happened.

SANTIAGO

What the fuck for?

CRISTOBAL

(challenging)

Cause I wanted to. You got a problem with that?

SANTIAGO

Fuck you.

He gets out and slams the door. Cristobal takes off.

17 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

Santiago is left standing in the middle of the street. From the sidewalk, two curious women watch him: he and his family are in eye of the small town hurricane.

Santiago glares back and they hurry along. He walks off.

18 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago walks up to his house - a small town construction surrounded by a large plot of land fenced off with barbed wire. A mesquite grows in the middle of the plot. Several rusted farming tools lie strewn about the place. Toward the back, in the garage, is the truck. Santiago opens a green metal door and walks onto the property.

A white-winged dove sings on one of the mesquite's branches. Santiago sees it, rummages through a pile of tools for a slingshot, picks up a stone and aims. He lets fly and hits the dove in the chest. It flaps as it drops

Santiago picks it up off the ground and twists its head off. Blood shoots up in small squirts. He starts to pluck its feathers off as he heads home.

19 INT. KITCHEN, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

He opens a screen door and steps into the kitchen. He finds Ana (40), his mother, sitting at the kitchen table dressed in blue jeans and a black t-shirt. Ana was once beautiful, but her beauty has been erased under years of dust.

Next to Ana are her sisters, Paula (38) and Rebecca (37), both also worn-down beauties. Before them is a bottle of expensive whisky, half-empty glasses and ashtrays overflowing.

The three grow quiet when they notice Santiago.

SANTIAGO

Hey Mom. Hey aunt Paula, Rebecca.

Her mother stares at him.

ANA

Did you fight with Cristobal?

SANTIAGO

No.

ANA

I don't want any fighting. Now more than ever. Do you hear me?

Santiago nods and looks his mother in the eye for a moment. He guts the bird, pulls out the last clumps of feathers and washes it in the sink.

ANA (CONT'D)

And stop killing doves 'cause they're nesting.

SANTIAGO

'kay.

He sets the dove on a plate and puts it into the fridge. He turns around and points at the bottle of whisky on the table.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

That's my dad's whisky.

Ana looks at him angrily.

ANA

Is it now? And when the hell is he gonna drink it?

Santiago says nothing else and walks out of the kitchen.

20 INT. SANTIAGO AND CRISTOBAL'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Cristobal is playing video games on a computer. Santiago lies on his bed reading some magazines. Through the window we can see the desert lit by the moon.

We hear shouts and laughter from the three women. Cristobal lifts up his head, pricking up his ear.

CRISTOBAL

Mom's drunk again.

Santiago reads on for a bit and, without looking, answers.

SANTIAGO

What'd you expect?

The brothers remain silent and Santiago keeps reading.

21 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Several cars are parked outside the house. Some mourners mill about. Santiago and Cristobal, each dressed in a black suit, walk amidst the people.

Paula emerges dressed in black and walks toward the brothers.

PAULA

Santiago and Cristobal, c'mere...

She takes them to a corner of the property.

22 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

They arrive at a spot by the garage. Paula looks hung over. You cannot see the look on her eyes through her sunglasses.

PAULA

Your mom ain't going to the funeral.

Santiago and Cristobal seem like they expected this.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Me and Rebecca ain't goin' either.
The son of a bitch doesn't deserve
it.

Santiago turns to look at her angrily.

SANTIAGO

He never did anything to you.

Paula smiles sardonically.

PAULA

Don't you get it? You're the one he
really fucked up.

(a beat)

Take care of everything, the both of
you.

23 EXT. TOWN CEMETERY -- DAY

The cemetery is very small, at the edge of the town. It's hard to say where the cemetery ends and the desert begins.

All the mourners stand around the open grave. There are no more than fifteen. No pomp. Just some dirt shoveled and a silent goodbye.

Further off, at the edge of the cemetery, Robert, a blond man, six foot five and solid, is surrounded by four equally blond teenagers: two girls and two boys who watch the funeral.

Cristobal notices the family and points it out to Xavier.

CRISTOBAL

Who are they?

XAVIER

Don't know.

24 EXT. TOWN CEMETERY -- LATER

The burial is over and the mourners make their way out. As Santiago and Cristobal walk past the family, the blond man confronts them and glares with his reddened blue eyes.

ROBERT

I hope your father is rotting in
hell.

Cristobal and Santiago are taken aback. They are speechless.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

That wetback piece of shit took away
the best thing I ever had.

An adult overhears this and tries to calm him down.

MAN

Easy now. Leave the boys alone.

Robert, blind with rage, faces him.

ROBERT

Alone?

(He points at his
children)

Their father burned my kids' mother.

He turns to Santiago and Cristobal.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I hope you rot too.

He turns to leave. His children stand dumbstruck for a moment and then follow their father. All except Mariana (16) - slim, with an ageless face and green eyes - whose gaze meets with Santiago's just as she leaves.

25 EXT. RUSTIC HANGARS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

From behind a hangar, Maria (12) - tall, light brown-skinned with green eyes - jumps rope with some girls her age.

She jumps and loses. She points at one of the other girls.

MARIA

Te toca. [Your turn]

Maria takes the rope and the other girl starts to jump. A woman peers over to look at them.

WOMAN

María, te busca tu papá. [Maria,
your dad's looking for you]

María drops the rope and turns to her friends.

MARIA

Nos vemos al rato. [See ya.]

26 INT. ROOM, LANDING STRIP, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

In the small room decorated with a large map of Mexico, and furnished with a table and two chairs, Santiago (30), dressed in jeans and a khaki shirt, makes himself a cup of coffee while he speaks to an operator holding the microphone of a short wave radio.

SANTIAGO

Cuanto pagan? [How much do they pay?]

The operator holds down the button to speak over the radio.

OPERATOR

¿A cuánto la hectárea? [How much per hectare?]

The operator hears the answer and turns to Santiago.

OPERATOR (CONT'D)

500 pesos. Son ochocientas hectáreas.
[500 pesos. It's eight hundred hectares]

Santiago turns toward Carlos (35) - wiry, with a thick mustache, also dressed in a khaki shirt. He signals "five" and Carlos nods. Santiago turns to the operator.

SANTIAGO

Ok.

The operator grabs the mic.

OPERATOR

El piloto va para allá. [The pilot's on his way.]

Maria enters the office.

MARIA

Hi daddy.

SANTIAGO

Hey baby.

Carlos sneaks up behind her and pokes her ribs. She jumps up and laughs with him.

CARLOS

Vámonos que tenemos trabajo. [Let's go; we've got work to do.]

Carlos takes the cup of coffee that Santiago so painstakingly prepared, and takes it with him, leaving Santiago coffeeless.

27 EXT. LANDING STRIP -- DAY

On the strip are parked four crop dusters. The sun throbs on the asphalt. Santiago, Carlos and Maria walked toward one of the planes. Carlos opens the copilot's door and gestures for Maria to get in.

28 INT. CROP DUSTER -- DAY

The crop duster moves down the runway. Santiago sits in the pilot seat. Beside him, Carlos checks the instruments. They are forced to shout over the noise of the propeller.

SANTIAGO

Do you have the coordinates?

Maria shows her father a GPS.

MARIA

Yeah, I put them into the GPS.

Santiago gives her a thumbs up. They gather speed and take off. As they rise, Maria stares dreamily at the long fields of Tamaulipan sorghum stretching below her.

29 EXT. SKY -- DAY

The plane plows through the bright, hot sky.

30 INT. CROP DUSTER -- DAY

Maria examines the coordinates on the GPS and after a while points below her.

Santiago turns and locates the rustic landing strip made of packed dirt. Santiago tilts and descends.

31 EXT. RUSTIC LANDING STRIP -- DAY

A Ford 2005 pickup truck sits parked beside the runway. Two fat and sweaty ranchers in their forties, await the arrival of the crop duster as it approaches to land.

The plane lands softly and stops a few yards away from the truck. Santiago turns it around to face the ranchers, who walk over as soon as the propeller settles.

Santiago, Carlos and Maria get out. One of the ranchers goes to shake Santiago and Carlos's hand.

RANCHER

Buenas tardes. [Good afternoon.]

SANTIAGO

(In a thick accent)

Buenas. ['Afternoon.]

Rancher 2 walks over.

RANCHER 2

Necesitamos que fumigue ese lado del rancho. Ya sacamos a los trabajadores y no queda nadie en las tierras. [We need you to dust this side of the ranch. We pulled all the workers out, so the lands are all clear.]

Rancher 1 points out a little shack in the distance.

RANCHER

Ahí hay estufa y pueden encontrar Maseca para tortillas. ¿Necesitan

(MORE)

RANCHER (CONT'D)

algo más? [There's a stove in there,
with corn flour to make tortillas.
D'you need anything else?]

CARLOS

No gracias, nosotros nos arreglamos.
[No thanks, we'll manage.]

RANCHER

Nos vemos entonces. [See you later
then.]

They say goodbye and the fat ranchers hop in the pickup truck.

32 EXT. RUSTIC LANDING STRIP -- DAY

Carlos pulls out a folding bicycle from the crop duster and starts riding around the runway while Santiago checks the plane to make sure everything is in order.

CARLOS

¿Quién fumiga primero? [Who goes
first?]

SANTIAGO

Va un volado. [We'll flip for it.]

Santiago takes out a coin.

CARLOS

¿Águila o Sol? [Heads or tails?]

SANTIAGO

Aguila. [Tails.]

Santiago flips it up in the air. The coin drops: tails. Carlos rides over on his bike to see and looks disgusted.

CARLOS

Mejor empieza tú. [Better you go
first.]

Santiago looks at him and smiles.

33 EXT. RUSTIC LANDING STRIP -- DAY

The plane's engines are running. Santiago is in the pilot's seat. At the edge of the runway, Maria shouts at him.

MARIA

I'll wait for you over there.

She points at the shack in the distance. Santiago gives her a thumbs up, drives the plane down to one end of the runway.

34 EXT. SORGHUM FIELDS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

The crop duster sprays the fields. It's wheels knock against the tallest stalks of sorghum.

35 EXT. SHACK -- DAY

Carlos, pushing his bicycle, and Maria, arrive at the shack.

36 INT. SHACK -- DAY

They walk in. Maria looks around the little kitchen.

CARLOS

¿Hay algo de comer? [Is there anything to eat?]

MARIA

No, sólo la Maseca. [Nope, just the corn flour.]

CARLOS

Voy al ejido a ver qué encuentro.
[I'm going out to the ejido to see what I can find.]

He exits the shack.

37 EXT. SHACK -- DAY

Carlos grabs the bike leaning against the wall and rides down a path, kicking up dust.

38 EXT. SORGHUM FIELDS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

The plane flies low overhead. Santiago is an expert and does his work impeccably.

39 INT. SHACK -- DAY

Maria dexterously kneads the corn flour and makes some tortillas. Through the window we can see the crop duster spraying in the distance.

40 EXT. PATH -- DAY

An '82 Chevrolet pickup truck is parked on a lonely path in the Arizona desert.

41 INT. TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Nick Martínez (42), tall, with thin features, light skin, longish hair and glasses, waits while listening to music. He sweats and, every now and again, has a swig of Coors. Below, at the feet of the passenger seat, he has a full cooler.

It's clear he's been waiting for a long time. He looks both ways: there is nothing, nobody, just the vast, boiling plain.

Suddenly, we see a '80 Ford Pinto barrel down a dirt path. Nick gets out.

42 EXT. PATH -- DAY

The Ford Pinto parks next to the truck. The driver is Gina (39) - a blond with remote nordic genes: light hair, blue eyes, freckles and a worn-down, though still seductive body.

Nick walks toward her. She has the window rolled down.

GINA

Sorry I'm late, but Robert just wouldn't leave for work.

NICK

Don't worry about it.

Nick's accent still has a hint of Mexican.

NICK (CONT'D)

Can I get you a beer?

She nods and unlocks the passenger door. Nick goes to his truck, opens the passenger door and pulls out the cooler. He opens a beer and brings it to her. She takes it without getting out of the car, puts the bottlecap in her shirt pocket and looks around.

GINA

Did you make sure nobody's around?

Nick nods. Gina sighs.

GINA (CONT'D)

I feel real strange doing this.

NICK

Me too.

A silence.

NICK (CONT'D)

'Bout what time d'you have to get back?

GINA

I've got to be in Maroma at six.

Again, silence. A coyote appears a few yards away and stares at them. The coyote trots off and Nick leans on Gina's car.

NICK

D'you want me to get in?

She nods. She unlocks the passenger door.

43 INT. GINA'S CAR -- DAY

Nick gets in. They are silent again. He reaches out and brushes against her leg. She lightly strokes his finger.

GINA

I'm half scared to death.

She squeezes Nick's hand. She looks very nervous.

NICK

D'you want us to leave it for some other day?

She shakes her head. She sits staring through the windshield when suddenly she grabs him by the neck and kisses him slowly. They start to make out. He puts his hand on her breast and she pulls it away. He tries again, and she does the same.

GINA

Not there... please...

She grabs Nick's hand and moves it down to her inner thigh. Nick rubs her. They start to get turned on. She stops, nervous and glances every which way.

GINA (CONT'D)

You're sure there's no one around?

Nick holds his breath: he is really hot.

NICK

One of my cousins leant me this place. It's far away from everything. You wanna go?

44 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

They drive up in Gina's Pinto and park before a mobile home in the middle of the desert.

45 INT. GINA'S CAR -- DAY

Gina and Nick sit and stare at the mobile home. With a toss of his head, Nick invites her in.

NICK

Shall we?

46 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

They walk in. The place is a mess. Empty glasses, ashtrays spilling over, dirty napkins, open bottles. A Remington pump-action shotgun, all rusty, lies on one of the sofas. Burnt-out 12 caliber shells lies strewn about: the place is a

disaster. Gina stands in the middle of the room, watching. Nick hugs her from behind and kisses her neck.

NICK
The Hilton it ain't.

He grabs her hand and leads her into the bedroom.

47 INT. BEDROOM, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Another mess: the bed unmade, bottles of beer lying about the carpet, the sheets in a bunch and the acrid stench of old cigarette smoke.

Nick opens the blinds and windows. Gina sits on the bed. Nick sits down beside her. They start to kiss. Hurriedly, Nick gets naked. He starts to take off Gina's pants. She allows this, but as soon as Nick tries to take off her blouse, she stops him and shakes her head.

Nick looks at her, puzzled, but continues. She is left naked from the waist down: her body bears the traces of four pregnancies. Gina climbs on top of him and Nick penetrates her. She hugs him tightly while they make love.

48 INT. KITCHEN, GINA'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Mariana (16), is making her younger brothers some dinner. The scene is all bickering and commotion. Bobby (10,) a rosy-cheeked blond kid, demands his dinner.

BOBBY
I want cereal, Mariana.

Mariana, who is frying some eggs for Monnie (8), turns around to tend to him. The eggs begin to burn.

MONNIE
I want my eggs over easy.

MARIANA
Well, that's real sad luck for you,
'cause you're gettin' them well done.

She drops them on the plate and Monnie pushes them away in disgust. Pat (14), walks in with three friends and opens the refrigerator.

PAT
What's for dinner.

MARIANA
You can make yourself some cereal.

Pat and his friends take out some milk and dishes. We hear the noise of a car. Mariana looks out and sees Gina, her mother, parking the Pinto. Monnie breaks her concentration.

MONNIE

The eggs taste yucky.

Mariana sighs, annoyed. Gina walks into the house, hurried. She leaves some supermarket bags on the floor.

GINA

(To Mariana)

Everything ok sweetie?

Mariana nods uninterested. Gina starts making excuses.

GINA (CONT'D)

The supermarket was packed. I mean, the lines went round the aisles.

MONNIE

Mommy, Mariana made me a stinky egg.

GINA

Then don't eat it honey, I'll make you another one. Did your daddy call?

MARIANA

Yeah, he said he'd be home tomorrow. He's making a delivery in Abilene.

Gina turns to fry up some more eggs. Mariana grabs the box of cereal and sits down to eat.

49 INT. LIVING ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The house is quiet. We can only hear the sound of the television that Mariana watches, alone.

Gina stands in the door.

GINA

Mariana, it's bedtime hon.

Mariana indolently turns to look at her.

MARIANA

As soon my show is over.

GINA

All right now, but no later than that. G'night.

Mariana waves goodbye and Gina walks off to her room.

50 INT. BATHROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Gina sits on a white plastic stool, looking at herself in a peeling mirror as she takes off her makeup. Her face shows joy, confusion, sadness. When she starts to unbutton her blouse, she feels something in her pocket: it's the beer

bottlecap Nick gave her. She looks at it for a moment, squeezes it in her hand and gets up.

51 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

She enters the room. From a closet, she takes out a shoebox and hides the bottlecap. She thinks for a moment and puts the box back in its place.

52 EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sylvia walks out of her house. It is early, and there is very little movement in the street. She is carrying a shopping bag, and is again dressed in a light cotton dress and sandals.

She crosses the street. A couple of teenagers stare at her lasciviously. They say something that we cannot hear.

She walks on. From the opposite sidewalk, a man is following her. It is Carlos, observing her carefully.

Sylvia stops outside a handicraft store. The shopkeeper steps out.

SHOPKEEPER

Hi Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Hey Lety.

Sylvia shows her what she's carrying in her bag.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I made them last night.

She pulls out an artisanal leather bracelet. It is hand made and has a strong, unique look to it. The shopkeeper takes one and puts it on her wrist.

SHOPKEEPER

They're nice, how much?

SYLVIA

They're five hundred pesos.

SHOPKEEPER

I can give you three.

SYLVIA

Four.

SHOPKEEPER

Ok.

Carlos won't take his eyes off Sylvia. He watches the shopkeeper pay her as she puts the bracelets in another bag.

53 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

Sylvia walks down the streets. Men constantly turn to look at her. Some women whisper as she passes.

Carlos follows at a prudent distance.

54 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Sylvia arrives at the beach, which has more or less its usual fauna: fishermen, backpackers, children playing.

Sylvia sets down her towel and the bag where she keeps the leather and instruments necessary for making bracelets.

Carlos approaches and sits some twenty yards away from her. Sylvia takes off her dress. Again, she is completely naked. Carlos gets flustered when he sees her.

Sylvia pulls out her bottle of sunblock and starts rubbing it all over. In the distance she can see the backpacker she fucked the day before. He greets her enthusiastically and walks toward her.

55 INT. SMALL SHACK -- DAY

From the small shack, John spies on Sylvia. He swears angrily.

56 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

The backpacker walks up to Sylvia, smiling.

BACKPACKER 1

Hi. D'you want me to help you rub on that sunblock?

Sylvia turns to look at him and smiles at him with a grimace.

SYLVIA

No thanks.

BACKPACKER 1

So, can I sit with you?

SYLVIA

No. I want to be alone.

The backpacker stares in disbelief.

BACKPACKER 1

You didn't like it?

SYLVIA

Like what?

BACKPACKER 1

Last night.

SYLVIA

Last night was last night.

Sylvia turns to look at the sea: she doesn't want to maintain eye contact with the boy.

BACKPACKER 1

I can't believe you're being such a bitch.

SYLVIA

I just want to be alone. Period.

These words seem to annoy the backpacker even more, who in response kicks some sand in her face. Some sand gets into her eyes, and she becomes furious.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

What's your fucking problem!

This just pisses him off even more, and he does it again.

57 INT. SMALL SHACK -- CONTINUOUS

From the shack, John sees what is happening. With agility uncommon for someone of his weight, he leaps over the counter and runs toward them.

58 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

The backpacker glares at Sylvia.

BACKPACKER 1

I ain't your chump.

John runs up and pushes the kid down.

JOHN

Leave her alone, you fuck.

The kid springs up and starts throwing punches. John dodges a few and, as soon as he's sized him up, he lets fly a hook followed by a right cross.

Sylvia, naked, gets up and tries to stop the fight, but she unfortunately gets in the way of one of John's right crosses and he cracks her right in the nose.

Sylvia kneels, bleeding. The backpacker panics and runs over to his tent. John stands there without knowing whether to tend to Sylvia or chase the aggressor.

Sylvia looks up. John faces her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's what you get for being such a slut.

He turns around and leaves, furious. Sylvia remains on her knees, with her nose split open. She grabs her dress and starts to put it on. Carlos approaches cautiously.

CARLOS

¿Estás bien? [You ok?]

Sylvia pays no attention, trying to get dressed.

SYLVIA

Noo speak spagnol...

Sylvia clumsily puts on her dress, and gets blood on it. She's dazed from the blow. Sylvia brings her hand to her nose: the blood will not stop flowing.

Carlos takes out a bandanna and holds her head back. He delicately begins to clean her up. She lets him.

CARLOS

Necesitamos ponerte hielo. [We need to put ice on this.]

SYLVIA

I can't understand a single word you're saying.

CARLOS

Hielo... hielo... [ice... ice...]

Carlos takes her by the arm and leads her towards the town.

59 INT. SMALL SHACK -- DAY

John, furious, watches her leave with Carlos. He turns to Martín and points at her.

JOHN

Look at her...

Martín doesn't know what to say. John, hurt, breathes agitatedly. In the distance, Sylvia and Carlos walk away.

60 EXT. BEACH RESTAURANT -- DAY

Sylvia is sitting on a rustic wooden chair under a palapa on the beach. Carlos stands before Sylvia, holding ice in a bandanna to her face. She complains.

SYLVIA

Ow!

He takes it off for a moment: the bleeding has stopped. Carlos cleans some of the blood off with the bandanna.

CARLOS

Listo. [You're set.]

Sylvia takes his hand.

61 INT. STAIRS, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Carlos and Sylvia walk up the stairs to Sylvia's apartment, which stands above a large house. They are both silent.

62 INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sylvia opens the door and Carlos walks in somewhat shyly.

SYLVIA

D'you want something to drink?

Carlos doesn't understand. She mimes "something to drink" and he shakes his head.

She goes to look at herself in the mirror: she examines her nose and then sees her bloodied dress. She turns to Carlos.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

That was my favorite dress.

Without another word she takes it off: she is wearing nothing underneath. Carlos holds his breath. She acts naturally.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I hope the blood comes out in the wash.

She throws it into the sink and walks over to Carlos. She leans in to kiss him, but he pulls away. She smiles and tries to kiss him again. He moves again.

CARLOS

No.

Sylvia is surprised: she's not used to being rejected.

SYLVIA

Don't you like me?

She smiles and tries again. Carlos now decisively stops her by holding her shoulders.

CARLOS

No.

She is confused. Carlos steps back and stares at her. He reaches out and with the back of his index finger he softly strokes her nipple. She looks at him even more surprised.

Suddenly, Carlos pulls his hand away, turns on his heel and leaves the house. Sylvia is left standing there.

63 INT. LIVING ROOM, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Cristobal, Xavier and Santiago are sitting in the room, silently, still dressed in black. Cristobal looks furious.

CRISTOBAL

Why the fuck did that cocksucker even come?

XAVIER

To come to a funeral and do that, I wouldn't take that shit.

CRISTOBAL

He caught me off guard. Otherwise I would've beat him right there in front of his kids.

XAVIER

He's got to pay.

Santiago stares at them impassively.

SANTIAGO

He already paid: his wife was roasted alive.

Xavier is disturbed by the harshness of Santiago's comment.

XAVIER

They're burying that bitch in Maroma tomorrow. We should go fuck him up.

SANTIAGO

What do you care? This is our problem.

XAVIER

I feel like I'm one of you guys.

SANTIAGO

Yeah, but you're not.

Xavier grows silent. Santiago and Cristobal exchange glances.

64 INT. NICK'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Several closet drawers are open and messy. Santiago and Cristobal, sitting on the bed, look through papers, photographs. Ana, a little drunk, looks through them sitting on a sofa.

Santiago takes out a black and white photograph of a five year-old next to a tall man with a bushy moustache. He shows it to Ana.

SANTIAGO

What's this one?

ANA

That was your dad when he came over here from Mexico. He was five.

SANTIAGO

Why didn't he ever go back?

ANA

What for?

Cristobal takes out another photograph: his parents' wedding.

ANA (CONT'D)

Tear that one up.

Cristobal stares at her and shakes his head.

CRISTOBAL

No.

ANA

I said tear it up, god dammit.

Cristobal hands it to her.

CRISTOBAL

You do it.

Ana looks at the photo for a bit, then hands it back to him.

ANA

I don't never want to see that picture again... I don't want to see any of this for as long as I live...

Her children remain silent.

65 INT. SANTIAGO AND CRISTOBAL'S ROOM -- DAY

It's early. The light is barely filtering in through the blinds. Santiago quietly gets dressed. He does his best not to wake Cristobal, who is asleep in the bed next to him.

He walks out, trying not to make any noise.

66 EXT. GROUNDS, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago steps into the pickup truck, quietly closes the door, starts the engine and leaves.

67 EXT. MAROMA CEMETERY -- DAY

A large group of mourners accompanies Gina's family. Robert is torn apart, weeping. His children cry quietly, except for Mariana, who watches the coffin descend with a hard, mute expression on her face. Hidden under the shadow of a mesquite is the Martinez pickup truck.

68 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Santiago spies the funeral, and, specifically, Mariana.

69 EXT. MAROMA CEMETERY -- DAY

The mourners file out of the cemetery and get into their cars. Santiago ducks so as not to be seen. Further off, Mariana, her siblings and her father get into a Ford 1980 ten-seater van and leave.

70 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Santiago starts the truck and follows them.

71 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

The Van drives down some dusty streets until it stops in front of Gina's house.

72 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Santiago parks at a safe distance and watches how Mariana and the rest of the family enter the house.

73 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

Torrential rain falls turning the dusty streets into muddy rivers that drag pebbles and branches along with them.

74 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Santiago sits in the truck listening to Mexican songs on the radio while he watches Gina's house. A chow-chow scampers out of the house and starts to drink water from the torrent.

After it does, the dog shakes itself off and runs back.

75 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

The rain has stopped. The sky begins to clear. Robert steps out of the house with two men, Mariana, and Pat.

76 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Santiago watches Robert and the men get into the van and leave. Pat walks back inside and Mariana starts to walk down the street in the opposite direction.

Santiago makes sure no one is watching him, and he discretely gets out of the truck and follows her.

77 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

Mariana walks five blocks until she enters a small grocery store. Santiago follows her at a distance.

78 INT. GROCERY STORE -- DAY

Santiago spots Mariana in the back, taking some quarts of milk out of the refrigerator. Santiago walks up to her. She feels his presence and turns around. She stares at him.

SANTIAGO
Do you know who I am?

Mariana nods. They are quiet for a moment.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
I'm not here to fight.

MARIANA
Then what do you want?

SANTIAGO
I want to know more. That's all. Who your mom was, what she did with my dad.

MARIANA
We already know what she did.

SANTIAGO
No, we don't.

Again, they are silent.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Can I talk to you some day?

She nods.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)
Ok. I'll come look for you.

79 EXT. SORGHUM FIELDS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

The crop duster passes flying low over the sorghum and then pulls up again. A jackrabbit shoots out of the field, frightened by the plane, and zig-zags away for cover.

80 EXT. STREET, EJIDO -- DAY

Carlos pedals all the way to a small ejido. Some of the locals greet him with a nod.

CARLOS
Buenos días. [Good morning.]

LANDOWNERS
Buenas. ['Morning.]

81 EXT. SHACK -- DAY

Maria cooks in the shack. Through the windows we can see the plane spraying, turning, flying low.

We hear the plane making a strange noise. Maria turns toward the window. The plane is diving, but does not seem like it is going to pull up. Maria watches, frozen.

Suddenly, the plane crashes loudly into the sorghum fields, lifting up a dustcloud. We hear the shattering of glass, the rending of metal. Maria stands stupefied, then runs out.

82 EXT. SORGHUM FIELDS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

The girl runs through the fields. Further off, we see the crop duster destroyed, smoke burgeoning out of one of its wings. Maria runs anxiously up to the scene of the accident.

MARIA

Daddy... daddy...

Santiago sits with his face covered in blood. He can barely move. Two lengths of twisted metal are sticking into his left thigh. The raw muscle is bleeding through his torn pants.

Maria climbs onto the wreck.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Daddy... daddy...

SANTIAGO

I'm fine sweetie... don't worry...

She struggles to climb into the cockpit.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Sweetie... be calm...

She hugs him, crying. Santiago grabs the radio and tries to call, but it is broken.

With a rag she finds between the seats, Maria cleans the blood off her father.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

You need to get help.

MARIA

I'm not leaving you.

SANTIAGO

Maria: you need to get help.

Maria looks at him, assents and runs off.

83 EXT. SORGHUM FIELDS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

Maria runs through the fields, screaming.

MARIA

Auxilio...auxilio... [Help...help...]

No one is there. Only the stalks of orange sorghum and white winged doves flying overhead.

She stops to gather her breath. She is sweating. The cicadas grate and whirr. She turns toward the plane. She has left it far behind, wrecked, with her father dying inside it.

She starts to run again, anxious, pouring sweat and panting.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Auxilio...auxilio... [Help...help...]

Far away she spots Carlos on his bike, approaching. Determined, she starts to race desperately toward him.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Carlos...Carlos...

84 EXT. PATH -- DAY

Carlos hears Maria's distant shouts, and sees her diminutive figure running towards him. He pedals hurriedly toward her.

85 EXT. SORGHUM FIELDS, TAMAULIPAS -- DAY

Even though she sees Carlos coming, Maria doesn't stop. Carlos accelerates until he reaches her.

CARLOS

¿Qué pasó? [What happened?]

Maria, panting, can barely talk.

MARIA

Mi papá...se estrelló...allá... [My dad...crashed...over there...]

She points to where the crop duster crashed.

CARLOS

¡Subete... [Get on...]

Maria sits on the back of the bike. Carlos pedals furiously and they disappear on the path into the sorghum fields.

86 EXT. SCENE OF THE CRASH -- DAY

They reach the plane. Maria jumps off the bike before Carlos even slows down and she runs to her father.

Carlos surveys the damage: one hundred yards of flattened sorghum, pieces of plane, broken glass, the smell of gasoline and fertilizer - the smell of blood.

87 EXT. WRECKED CROP DUSTER -- DAY

Carlos hurries to reach Santiago.

CARLOS

¿Estás bien? [Are you alright?]

SANTIAGO

Podría estar mejor. [Could be better.]

Carlos uncovers the leg perforated by the shattered metal, and reveals the deep wound from which blood oozes thickly.

CARLOS

Voy a tratar de sacarte. [I'm going to try to pull you out.]

He tries to pull the metal out of Santiago's thigh, but cannot. He pulls with all his might, but only manages to slice open the palm of his hand.

Carlos takes off his shirt, tears it apart and fastens a tourniquet to Santiago's upper leg.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Necesito buscar ayuda. Aflójale el torniquete cada quince minutos y luego lo vuelves a apretar. [I need to find help. Loosen the tourniquet every fifteen minutes and then tighten it again.]

Carlos pats Santiago on the back.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Ahorita regreso compadre, aguanta. [Hang in there, I'll be right back.]

Carlos gets on his bike and leaves. Maria, distressed, watches him go. Santiago smiles at her, trying to calm her down.

SANTIAGO

I'm fine sweetie, honest.

Maria loosens the tourniquet a little. The blood flow has lessened, but still hasn't stopped.

MARIA

Is that ok?

Santiago nods and strokes her hair.

SANTIAGO

Honey, I know where you can find
your mom.

Maria turns to look at him, somewhat upset.

MARIA

I don't want to meet her.

SANTIAGO

Maria, listen to me...

MARIA

I don't want to know anything about
her.

SANTIAGO

She lives in a town in Baja California
called Todos los Santos. If anything
happens to me, you have to find her.

MARIA

Nothing's going to happen to you?

She starts to cry. Santiago caresses her.

SANTIAGO

Promise me you'll find her.

MARIA

(disconsolate)

I'm never going to look for her...
never...

88 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Gina is feeding maize to some chickens. They hurry to snatch
the grains away from each other.

An enormous trailer parks in front of the house. The door
opens and Robert hops out dressed in jeans, a white t-shirt
and a John Deere cap.

He opens the door to the patio, walks in and approaches Gina.

ROBERT

Hey darlin'.

He gives her a kiss on the cheek.

GINA

Hi... I thought you didn't get back
till tomorrow.

ROBERT

Yeah, but I wrapped up early. Where
are the kids?

GINA

They get out of school at one today.

(a beat)

You wanna wait for them for lunch?

Robert nods.

89 EXT. PORCH, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Robert and Gina are sitting on rocking chairs on the porch. Robert is drinking a beer, and for some strange reason, keeps reading the label after each gulp.

GINA

I have to go out in the evenin'.

ROBERT

Where?

GINA

The Santa Elena Wal-Mart.

ROBERT

I'll come with you.

GINA

But then I've got to go buy some fabric and then go to the butcher's.

ROBERT

Doesn't matter, I'll ride along. I need to get me a radio.

Gina remains silent, watching the chickens run around just past the porch. Her four kids come down the street. Monnie runs when she sees her daddy.

MONNIE

Daddy, daddy...

She hugs and kisses him.

MONNIE (CONT'D)

I'm so happy you're here.

Mariana and Pat come in after the others.

MARIANA

Hi daddy.

ROBERT

Hey little girl.

Mariana kisses him on the cheek. She turns to her mother.

MARIANA
 (gesturing at her
 siblings)
 D'you want me to fix them some lunch?

GINA
 Set the table baby. I'll be right
 in.

Mariana and Pat enter. Monnie sits on her father's lap.

90 INT. KITCHEN, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mariana ladles soup into some bowls while her siblings wait at the table. Bobby starts to eat in a hurry. Robert and Gina walk in. Robert stares at his son in disapproval.

ROBERT
 Aren't you forgettin' something?

Bobby looks at his father, afraid.

BOBBY
 Sorry...

He lowers his head and holds out his hands for his siblings. Mariana finishes serving, sits down and holds Monnie and Bobby's hands.

MARIANA
 We thank you oh Lord for our daily
 bread, and for the love and happiness
 you bestow upon this home.

They let go of each other and get ready to eat.

ROBERT
 Bobby, let that be the last time you
 offend our Lord.

BOBBY
 Yes sir.

Mariana and her mother exchange glances. Robert smiles and leans on the sink.

ROBERT
 (to the kids)
 Boys and girls, me and your mom are
 goin' to Santa Elena. You wanna come?

BOBBY AND MONNIE
 Yeah!

Gina quickly interrupts.

GINA

But the kids have homework to do.

ROBERT

We'll go and come back in a flash,
right?

BOBBY AND MONNIE

Yeah, come on, please...

Gina sighs, disappointed.

91 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

The children and Robert are getting into the van. Gina doesn't get in and stands in front of the passenger door.

GINA

Damn, I forgot my wallet.

She goes back in. Then, Mariana decides to also go back in.

MARIANA

Then I'm gonna use the bathroom.

92 INT. HALLWAY, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gina is on the phone. She looks nervous.

GINA

Nick, I don't think I can see you...
Robert said he'd come with me and
he's bringin' the kids... I'm dying
to make love to you too... I'll try
to get loose... bye bye.

She hangs up and sees Robert and the kids in the van. She turns around and encounters Mariana, at the end of the hallway, watching her. Gina gets flustered.

MARIANA

Who were you talking to?

GINA

(trying to regain her
composure)
Your aunt Letitia...

Mariana looks her straight in the eye. Gina signals the van.

GINA (CONT'D)

Come on now, they're waitin' for us.

93 INT. WAL-MART -- DAY

The family enters the Wal-Mart. Monnie stops in front of some dolls.

MONNIE

Daddy, I want that one...

ROBERT

No baby, we have to save up now...

Gina turns to Mariana and hands her a list.

GINA

I need you to get these and you need to help Monnie pick out a blouse.

(to Robert)

Can you give me the keys to the van, I'm gonna go get the fabric I ordered.

Mariana looks at her mistrustfully.

MONNIE

I wanna come with you...

GINA

No. Go with your sister and pick out a blouse. I won't be long.

Robert hands her the keys to the van. Gina takes the keys and turns to leave. She walks toward the exit breathing through her mouth.

94 INT. VAN -- DAY

Gina shuts the door and, nervous, leans on the steering wheel.

95 EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

Mariana walks out into the parking lot just in time to see her mother make a right and drive off toward the town.

96 INT. VAN -- DAY

Gina drives down a dirt road. Further off she spots Nick's truck, and he is sitting on the hood.

97 EXT. PATH -- DAY

Upon seeing her arrive, Nick slides off the hood to greet her. She parks and gets out.

GINA

We don't have much time; I need to get back.

He smiles, happy.

NICK

But you came, that's the important thing.

He draws near her, holds her head and kisses her.

NICK (CONT'D)

Do we have time to go to the mobile home?

She shakes her head.

NICK (CONT'D)

D'you want to make love here?

She looks at him and nods. Nick lifts her off her feet and she laughs. This kiss all the way to Gina's van.

Nick opens the back door and drops her on the seat.

98 INT. VAN -- DAY

They kiss hurriedly. He pulls down her pants and panties. He tries to unbutton her blouse, but she won't let him and she kisses him on the mouth. Nick unbuttons his pants and starts to make love to her.

99 EXT. WAL-MART -- DAY

Robert and the kids are outside, waiting with their shopping carts full of the things they bought.

PAT

Mom's takin' a long time.

ROBERT

She had stuff to do.

Mariana looks at both of them and then at the parking lot. In the distance we can see the van arrive.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

There she is.

Gina pulls up in front of them and gets out.

GINA

I'm real sorry, but they didn't have my order ready and they made me wait. I have to come back tomorrow to pick it up, or I won't be able to make Monnie's dress for her school presentation.

She talks quickly and clumsily. Robert points at the trunk.

ROBERT

Can you open the trunk?

GINA

Oh sure, sure...

Gina turns around to open. The others wheel their shopping carts to the back of the van and start unloading. Gina helps.

GINA (CONT'D)

(to Mariana)

Did you get everything on the list?

Mariana just stares at her. She turns around and gets into the van. Gina, disconcerted, watches her go. Robert snaps her out of it when he moves her aside to close the trunk.

100 INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sylvia sits at the table, eating a couple of fried eggs for breakfast. Her nose is swollen and starting to bruise. Someone knocks at the door. Sylvia gets up to open. It's John.

JOHN

Hey.

SYLVIA

What d'you want?

JOHN

I came to apologize.

Sylvia signals for him to come in and goes to sit back down. John enters, closes the door, and remains standing. Sylvia continues to eat breakfast.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to hit you, but you got between us. I was defending you.

SYLVIA

I can defend myself.

Sylvia takes some bread to soak up the yolk. John looks nervous.

JOHN

Why do you sleep around so much?

Sylvia goes to get some orange juice from the fridge.

SYLVIA

'Cause I like it... you want some?

She shows him the juice. John shakes his head. Sylvia drinks straight from the carton.

JOHN

So, then, what am I to you?

SYLVIA

Someone close... I think.

John remains pensive for a moment.

JOHN

I'm thinking of moving to Marfa, Texas, to rent ATVs. I hear there are lots of tourists. Why don't you come with me.

SYLVIA

What for?

JOHN

So we can live together. I can take care of you.

Sylvia smirks ironically and shakes her head.

SYLVIA

I can also take care of myself.

101 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Sylvia is walking along some rocks, gathering sea shells. She is wearing a light cotton dress with sandals, and she keeps the shells in a shopping bag.

She feels someone there and turns. Carlos is watching her some twenty yards away. She looks at him for a moment, then goes back to what she was doing. Carlos slowly walks over until he is close to her.

SYLVIA

What do you want?

Carlos holds out his hand and gives her a beautiful shell. Taken aback, she takes the shell and puts it away.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

You're like an alien from outer space.

Carlos doesn't understand. Sylvia keeps looking for shells. Carlos sits on a rock and watches her. Suddenly, a wave crashes against the rocks and soaks them. Sylvia laughs to see him wet. Without hesitation, she takes off her dress and is naked. Carlos, embarrassed, turns to look at the ocean.

Sylvia walks up to him and runs her hand over her breast.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

If you don't want this, what the fuck do you want?

Carlos glances at her and quickly looks back at the sea. Sylvia studies him for moment. She grabs her wet dress and her bag of shells and walks away.

102 EXT. BEACH -- MOMENTS LATER

Sylvia, dressed, sits on a different beach from the one we've seen her on: a long, solitary beach. She is working on some necklaces and bracelets, using the shells.

Out of the blue, Carlos sits down next to her. There is a certain sexual tension between them that remains unresolved.

SYLVIA

What's your name?

Carlos can't understand. Sylvia points at his chest.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

What's your name?

Carlos smiles: he's got it.

CARLOS

Yo, Carlos. ¿Y tú? [I'm Carlos. What about you?]

SYLVIA

Sylvia.

Carlos, hesitant, stares at her.

CARLOS

¿Silvia? [Sylvia?]

SYLVIA

Yeah, Sylvia.

With her hand, she mimes eating.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

D'you want to get something to eat, Carlos?

103 EXT. EATERY -- DAY

Carlos and Sylvia are sitting under a large palapa on the beach. Before them are some dirty plates and several empty beer bottles. A waitress approaches them.

WAITRESS

¿Algo más? [Anything else?]

Carlos shakes his head. The waitress is about to go when Carlos stops her.

CARLOS

Oye ¿puedes decirle algo en inglés?
[Hey, can you say something to her
in English?]

The waitress nods.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Pregúntale cuál es su apellido. [Ask her what her last name is.]

WAITRESS

He wants to know your last name.

SYLVIA

By now I've forgotten it.

WAITRESS

Dice que ya se le olvidó. [She says she forgot it.]

CARLOS

Pregúntale si está casada. [Ask her if she's married.]

WAITRESS

(To Sylvia)

Are you married?

Sylvia smiles at the question.

SYLVIA

I used to be, but I'd rather be alone.

(a beat)

Tell him my husband got eaten by a shark over there...

She signals the sea with her chin. The waitress takes a while to translate.

WAITRESS

Dice que estuvo casada, pero que a su marido se lo comió un tiburón. [She says she was married, but that a shark ate her husband.]

Sylvia again addresses the waitress.

SYLVIA

Ask him if he likes me.

WAITRESS

La señora quiere saber si te gusta. [She wants to know if you like her.]

Carlos turns to look at her and nods.

SYLVIA

(to the waitress)

Tell him I want to sleep with him.

The waitress clams up.

WAITRESS

You really want me to tell him that?

Sylvia nods.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Dice que quiere acostarse contigo.
[She says she wants to sleep with
you.]

Carlos and Sylvia exchange glances.

104 INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

The door opens and Carlos and Sylvia enter. Sylvia closes the door and starts kissing him. Without stopping for even a moment, she leads him to her bed and pulls him onto it.

She tries to start undressing, but he prevents her.

CARLOS

No.

She gets upset.

SYLVIA

What the fuck is wrong with you?

She pushes him. Carlos sits up on the bed.

CARLOS

No puedo, Mariana. [I can't Mariana.]

Upon hearing her name, Sylvia freezes.

SYLVIA

What did you say?

Carlos repeats what he said, almost automatically.

CARLOS

No puedo, Mariana. [I can't Mariana.]

Sylvia gets up from the bed half-naked and furious.

SYLVIA

My name's Sylvia, understand? Not
Mariana; Sylvia.

She goes to open the door.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Get out.

Carlos, on the bed, stays still. She stamps over to him, grabs him by one of his wrists and pulls him out.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Get out you fucking asshole.

Carlos breaks loose and stares straight at her.

CARLOS

Hazle como quieras, pero yo no me voy de aquí, Mariana. [You do whatever you want, but I'm not leaving, Mariana.]

He walks out to the terrace and doesn't come back.

105 INT. OFFICE, CHURCH -- DAY

Some boxes of clothing are lying on a desk. A tall, emaciated priest (50) is examining several items of men's clothing. Cristobal and Santiago watch him.

PRIEST

I don't know if I should take them.

CRISTOBAL

You can give them to the homeless.

The priest mulls it over.

PRIEST

No, I can't take them...

CRISTOBAL

Why?

PRIEST

You know son, the circumstances in which your father died.

Santiago takes a step forward and gets in the priest's face.

SANTIAGO

What exactly do you mean by that?

PRIEST

Your father died while breaking one of the ten commandments.

SANTIAGO

What does that have to do with clothes? They're for the poor.

PRIEST

I'm sorry, but I can't take them.

The two brothers look at each other and pick up their boxes.

106 EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Santiago and Cristobal carry the boxes back to the truck. Santiago's eyes are full of rage. They set the boxes down on the floor and, while Cristobal opens the back, Santiago looks for something behind the seat.

He takes out a small hose and some matches. Without saying anything to his brother, he inserts the hose into the gas tank and starts sucking at it.

The gas spurts out and Santiago aims it at the boxes.

CRISTOBAL

What the fuck are you doing?

Santiago doesn't answer. He lifts up the gas soaked box and carries it toward the priest's office.

107 INT. OFFICE, CHURCH -- DAY

The priest looks at Santiago, puzzled.

PRIEST

What can I do for you, son?

Santiago sets the box on the desk. He takes out the matches, lights one and throws it into the box. Flames shoot out. The priest steps back, startled. The box catches fire.

Santiago watches it burn for a moment, then turns and leaves. The priest, scared, grabs a coat and tries to put out the fire, which threatens to spread.

108 INT. TRUCK -- DAY

Santiago sits in the truck, waiting. The temperature hovers around 110 degrees, and he sweats profusely.

He carefully watches Gina's house. He sees Robert and Pat walk out, get into the van and leave.

109 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago carefully opens the gate and enters the garden. He peers in cautiously through one of the windows, and spots Bobby and Monnie in the living room, reading comic books.

Santiago walks around and examines the place, room by room, through the windows. He walks over to the main bedroom, which is empty. On the wall is a large photograph of Gina and Robert (20 and 22 respectively) on the day of their wedding.

Santiago scans Gina's face, her hands, her hair. He then keeps walking until he reaches Mariana's room. She is lying on her back, staring at the ceiling.

Santiago knocks on the window.

110 INT. MARIANA'S ROOM -- DAY

At first, Mariana can't tell where the noise is coming from, until she turns and encounters Santiago's penetrating gaze.

She gets up and opens the window.

MARIANA

What are you doing? If my dad finds out you're here he's gonna kill you.

SANTIAGO

I told you I'd come look for you.

MARIANA

Yeah, but not here.

(a beat)

Wait for me at the black gate, on the way to Guadalupe.

SANTIAGO

Ok.

Santiago leaves and Mariana closes the window.

111 EXT. BLACK GATE -- DAY

The pickup truck is parked under a cluster of mesquites. Santiago is leaning on a truck with a slingshot in his hand. A white winged dove alights on the top of the tree and Santiago shoots at it. He misses.

Mariana arrives on a bike. She dismounts and walks toward Santiago, who puts the slingshot in his back pocket.

MARIANA

Why d'you want to see me?

Santiago shrugs his shoulders.

SANTIAGO

I dunno.

MARIANA

I don't think it's ok for you to talk to me.

SANTIAGO

Why?

Mariana doesn't answer. Some quails run along the path. Santiago pulls out his slingshot, picks up a stone and fires without hitting them. The flock takes flight.

They are silent. They look uncomfortable.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Do you look like your mom?

MARIANA

No. Do you look like your dad?

SANTIAGO

A little.

(a beat)

Do you know how your mom and my dad met?

MARIANA

No. I have no idea.

A quail that was left behind appears on the path. Mariana points at Santiago's slingshot.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Hand it over.

Santiago hands it over. Mariana picks up a stone. She shoots and hits. Mariana turns and looks at him, overjoyed.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

I got it.

They walk over to it and find the quail on its last legs. Mariana picks it up and shows it to him.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Let's eat it.

112 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- DAY

Mariana and Santiago are sitting around a small fire. The quail is roasting on a stone slab.

SANTIAGO

Do you like hunting?

MARIANA

A lot. A boyfriend used to take me, but I haven't gone back since we broke up.

SANTIAGO

My dad taught me to hunt.

They are quiet for a moment. The fire sputters.

MARIANA

Did you love your dad?

Santiago nods.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

I also loved my mom, but I didn't like her.

(a beat)

D'you have any pictures?

Santiago pulls out his old, worn wallet, and rummages among the pockets until he takes out a black and white photograph of Nick, - the kind taken at a photo booth.

He shows it to Mariana, who looks at it disdainfully.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

You don't look like him at all.

Mariana hands it back and points at the quail.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

It's done, take it off.

Santiago tries to get the quail out with a stick, but the flames make him pull his arm back.

SANTIAGO

I can't, it's too hot.

Mariana looks at him, and then, undaunted, grabs the quail, pulls it out, and holds it on the palm of her hand.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Doesn't it burn?

MARIANA

Yeah, but I can control the pain.

Mariana grabs the quail with her other hand, splits it down the middle and hands Santiago his half, who juggles with it to avoid getting burned. Mariana starts to eat her half.

113 EXT. DESERT PATH -- DAY

Dusk. The sun drops below the horizon. Santiago's truck drives down a desert road and stops near the cluster of houses.

Mariana steps out of the truck, and gets her bike from the back. She hops on and as she passes Santiago he leans out the window.

SANTIAGO

I'll come get you tomorrow. Bring pictures of your mom.

Mariana stops to listen to him and then rides on.

114 EXT. WRECKED CROP DUSTER -- EVENING

Maria is laying next to her father when, far off, she sees a convoy of pickup trucks approaching.

MARIA

Daddy, they're here.

Santiago smiles weakly. Maria runs toward the trucks, waving her arms.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Over here... over here...

Three trucks arrive with the ranchers, Carlos and some cowboys and workers. Carlos jumps out of one and runs up to Santiago.

CARLOS

Te vamos a sacar compadre, tú aguanta.
[Sit tight brother, we're gonna get
you out.]

One of the workers jumps out of the back of a pickup truck with a chainsaw. Upon seeing it, Mariana becomes hysterical.

MARIA

¿Qué le van a hacer a mi papá? [What
are you going to do to my dad?]

Carlos holds her by the shoulders and pulls her away.

CARLOS

Déjanos, no hay otra forma de sacarlo.
[Let them work, it's the only way.]

Maria looks anxiously upon the bustle that has formed around her half-conscious father.

Carlos joins one of the cowboys, and they both pull on the scrap of metal stuck in Santiago's leg. He screams in pain.

SANTIAGO

Aah!

Carlos and the cowboy keep pulling. One of the workers cuts at the metal with the chainsaw until Santiago is freed.

They quickly pull him out of the plane and carry him over to the back of one of the pickup trucks. They lay him down. Maria and Carlos get in with him.

Maria sits next to him and holds his hand. The truck drives off, leaving the destroyed plane behind.

115 INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

Carlos and Maria sit in a small waiting room. Carlos points at a soda vending machine.

CARLOS

¿Quieres una Coca? [D'you want a coke?]

Maria nods. Her eyes are swollen from crying and she is filthy with dust and blood. Carlos puts some coins in the machine and takes out two cans. He opens one and gives it to Maria.

MARIA

Gracias... [Thanks...]

She starts to drink. A doctor walks up to them.

DOCTOR

¿Es usted Carlos Alarid? [Are you Carlos Alarid?]

CARLOS

Sí, yo soy. [Yes, I am.]

DOCTOR

El paciente pidió hablar con usted.
[The patient asked to talk to you.]

Maria gets up, but the doctor stops her.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Pidió hablar sólo con él. [He asked to speak to him alone.]

Carlos caresses her head to calm her down.

CARLOS

Ahorita vengo por ti. [I'll be right back.]

He heads toward the room.

116 EXT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Carlos and Santiago talk for a long time in the room, while Maria watches them from the hall. After a while, Carlos looks out and calls her in.

CARLOS

Maria, ven. [Come in, Maria.]

117 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

Maria walks in quietly. She is stunned to see her father hooked up. Carlos moves aside.

SANTIAGO

Maria, I want you to listen to Carlos.
I want you to do whatever he says.

MARIA

Are you going to be ok?

SANTIAGO

Yeah, I'm going to be fine. But
promise me you'll do whatever Carlos
tells you.

MARIA

You promise you'll be ok?

Santiago thinks about his answer for a moment.

SANTIAGO

I promise. Do you?

Maria thinks for a second, then nods.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Just do whatever Carlos tells you to
do, ok?

118 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Nick arrives in his truck and parks. Gina's Ford Pinto is
parked outside the trailer. Nick gets out of truck, opens
the door to the mobile home and walks in.

119 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

The place looks neat and clean. Nick sees Gina washing dishes
in the sink. She turns to look at him.

GINA

Hi.

Nick looks around, amazed.

NICK

Wow, look at this place!

Nick walks up to her and kisses her neck. She writhes.

GINA

It's been a month, today.

NICK

So, are you happy?

GINA

Very, but I'd be even happier if we
had some hot water. I couldn't shower.

Nick starts to lick her.

NICK
Even better. You're tastier this way.

Nick keeps licking her. He tries to put his hand under her blouse, to touch her breasts, but she stops him.

GINA
Not there. Please.

Nick pulls back and looks at her.

NICK
Why?

GINA
I don't like that part of my body.

NICK
How d'you know I'm not gonna like it?

Gina remains quiet, pensive.

GINA
I don't want you to leave my life.

NICK
And I don't wanna leave it.

Again, Gina is silent. She slowly starts to unbutton her blouse. She opens it and takes off her bra. In place of her right breast is a long scar.

GINA
I had cancer two years ago.

Nick draws close to her. He opens her blouse even wider, kneels down and softly kisses her scar. She hugs him tightly as she starts to cry.

120 INT. LIVING ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

All the lights are off. Gina walks in and silently closes the door.

She takes off her shoes and tiptoes toward the hallway.

121 INT. HALLWAY, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

She quietly peers into her boys' room: they are asleep. She then looks into Mariana and Monnie's room. Monnie is asleep, and Mariana is reading in bed.

MARIANA

Where were you?

GINA

I was at Libby's.

Mariana looks at her skeptically.

MARIANA

Bobby cut his arm with a piece of glass and dr. Williams had to sew him up.

GINA

Is he ok?

MARIANA

Yeah, he's fine. But he wouldn't stop crying and asking for you... Good night.

122 INT. KITCHEN, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gina is serving her children breakfast on the kitchen table. Bobby's arm is bandaged. Gina talks while making hot cakes.

GINA

So, how'd you cut your arm?

BOBBY

I tried to get into Chuck's basement and I cut my arm on the broken window.

GINA

I told you not to go crawlin' through basement windows.

MARIANA

I told him too, but he won't listen.

GINA

Always listen to your sister.

Gina lifts some hot cakes out of the pan and serves them onto the younger kids' plates.

GINA (CONT'D)

Hurry up so you won't be late.

123 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mariana and her siblings leave with their backpacks on. Gina waves goodbye from the door.

GINA

Y'all be good, now.

She walks in and closes the door.

124 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

The four are walking away when Mariana stops.

MARIANA

I forgot my homework. Keep goin' and
I'll catch up with you later.

PAT

We'll wait for you.

MARIANA

No, go on.

They part. Mariana watches them disappear among the streets.
She walks back home.

125 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

She carefully opens the gate. She goes to get her bicycle,
which is leaning on the porch. She gets on, rides out of the
house and pedals toward the town exit.

126 EXT. CLUSTER OF TREES -- DAY

Mariana hides behind some trees, scoping out the highway.
The heat makes her sweat. She hears the sound of white winged
doves flying overhead.

In the distance, a car is approaching: her mother's Pinto,
which soon enough drives past. Mariana jumps on her bike and
starts to follow it, pedaling as fast as she can.

127 EXT. PATH -- DAY

Just when it seems as if Mariana is going to lose the Pinto,
it turns onto a path.

Mariana follows her up to the turn off. She stops to look.
The Pinto is hard to miss: it kicks up a huge dustcloud that
Mariana decides to follow.

128 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Gina reaches the mobile home and parks. Nick's truck is
already there. She hears noises from behind the house and
goes to see. It is Nick, trying to hook up a gas tank.

Upon seeing her, Nick smiles.

NICK

Now we're gonna finally get us some
hot water.

She hugs him from behind and kisses the back of his neck.

129 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- DAY

From a cluster of mesquites, Mariana watches her mother kissing the unknown man. She breathes agitatedly, her eyes nailed to the couple.

130 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Nick lifts Gina up and carries her indoors.

131 INT. ROOM, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Nick and Gina kiss, sitting on the bed. Nick suddenly pulls away from her and stands up.

NICK

Come on, let's take a shower.

Gina looks pensive.

GINA

I don't know if I can.

NICK

Yes, you can, come on.

He draws close to her and starts to unbutton her blouse. He takes it off and then her bra. She covers herself with her arms, but doesn't resist.

Then Nick softly lays her out on the bed and takes off her pants and underwear. She is completely naked. He holds out his hand.

She takes it, stands up and holds him tightly. Naked, she looks more fragile than ever: a little bird between his arms.

132 INT. SHOWER -- DAY

Nick and Gina are under the shower, kissing. Nick caresses her whole body: her buttocks, her belly, her back.

Nick starts softly making love to her.

133 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Mariana is spying on them through the window. She cannot see them, but, horrified, listens to their moaning.

134 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Gina and Nick leave the home. Gina notices that her two back tires are flat.

GINA

Nick, look.

Nick comes over.

NICK

Don't worry, I'll take it into town
and have them fixed. I'll be back in
less than an hour.

He goes over to his truck and pulls out a jack and a cross
wrench. Gina stares at her two flat tires, miserable.

135 EXT. TERRACE, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Carlos sits on the terrace, lists to the ocean rumble. Sylvia
comes out and sits in the other chair. She looks calmer.

SYLVIA

How d'you know my name is Mariana?

Carlos doesn't understand. He points at a pack of cigarettes
on the table.

CARLOS

¿Me regalas un cigarro? [Can I have
a cigarette?]

Sylvia nods. Carlos takes out the cigarette and lights it.
He takes a long drag, exhales and turns to her.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Me mandó Santiago a buscarte.
[Santiago sent me to look for you.]

Upon hearing Santiago's name, Sylvia looks disturbed: it
weighs on her.

SYLVIA

Santiago? Now I get it.

CARLOS

Santiago está muy mal. [Santiago's
in bad shape.]

Sylvia doesn't understand. Carlos stands up and, from his
wallet, takes out a photograph and lays it on the table.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Esta es tu hija María. [This is your
daughter, Maria.]

Sylvia looks at the picture and grows pale: something seems
to have stirred inside her - she loses her breath.

SYLVIA

Where are they?

Carlos doesn't understand. He shows her the photograph.

CARLOS

Es María, tu hija. [It's Maria, your daughter.]

Sylvia suddenly tears up the photograph into several pieces. Her eyes well up. She stands up and points at the door.

SYLVIA

Please, get out.

She picks up the pieces of the photograph and goes inside.

136 INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Sylvia is sitting at the table. She carefully reconstructs the fragments of the photograph with tape.

Sylvia stares at it for a moment. She gets up, goes to a small closet, opens a drawer and takes out some photographs.

She sits back down and lays them on the dining room table: they are pictures of a newborn baby. She stares at them for a while, then takes the patched up picture and compares them.

Sylvia lets her head drop back, her eyes full of tears. She stands up, lights the burners on the stove and holds her forearm over the flame for a long time, without reacting.

137 EXT. EMBANKMENT, TOWN -- DAY

Sylvia rides on a bicycle taxi along the embankment. A young, dark-skinned, sunburned man pedals, sweating. The wind runs through Sylvia's blonde hair, her light cotton dress.

138 EXT. SMALL SHACK -- MORNING

The bicycle taxi stops before John's store. Sylvia pays the driver, who leaves immediately. Sylvia enters.

139 INT. SMALL SHACK -- MORNING

Sylvia finds John dusting some shelves.

JOHN

Hey, what brings you here?

Sylvia summons up a little smile.

SYLVIA

I wanted to see you.

John wipes his hands on the dustcloth and goes to her.

JOHN

Can I get you a beer?

Sylvia nods. John opens a fridge, takes out two beers and gives one to Sylvia, who opens it and drinks slowly.

SYLVIA

You still thinking about going back to the States?

JOHN

Yeah, this joint just isn't working out.

SYLVIA

If you leave tomorrow, I'll come with you.

John is caught off guard.

JOHN

What d'you mean?

SYLVIA

You said you'd take care of me, right? Well, I can't stand it here anymore. Let's leave tomorrow.

JOHN

Tomorrow? I need to sort some things out. We can leave on Friday.

SYLVIA

Tomorrow, or you can forget about it.

Sylvia draws close to him, and leans in to kiss him on the mouth. He takes her hips and hugs her.

140 INT. JOHN'S TRUCK -- AFTERNOON

John and Sylvia ride in his truck on the street that leads to the ocean. She looks out the window, lost. John, happy, holds out his hand and caresses her leg. She ignores him.

141 EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- EVENING

John's truck parks before Sylvia's house.

142 INT. JOHN'S TRUCK -- EVENING

Sylvia is about to get out of the truck.

JOHN

I'll come pick you up at 10.

SYLVIA

Ok.

She gets out and John drives.

143 EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Sylvia looks both ways and opens the door.

144 INT. STAIRS, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

She walks in and sees Carlos sitting with Maria on the stairs that lead up to her house.

CARLOS

Esta es Maria. [This is Maria.]

Sylvia stares at her daughter, dumbfounded.

145 EXT. STREET, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago walks down the street with a group of schoolmates, and raises his hand to say goodbye.

SANTIAGO

Later.

He opens the gate and walks into the grounds of his house.

146 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Santiago spots his mother sitting on a rocking chair on the porch. She is wearing a red shirt and jeans.

SANTIAGO

Hi mom.

Santiago leaves his books on a table and pulls up a chair to sit down next to her.

ANA

How was school?

SANTIAGO

It was ok. I got a B in Math.

His mother nods, but it is clear her mind is elsewhere. She sighs and looks into the street.

ANA

You know how long ago your father and I bought this house?

SANTIAGO

Ten years ago.

ANA

No. Fifteen. And you know how much we had to pay for the mortgage?

Santiago doesn't answer. He just looks at her.

ANA (CONT'D)
 Five hundred miserable fucking dollars
 a month.

Ana remains silent, mulling over her thoughts.

ANA (CONT'D)
 D'you think I look fat?

SANTIAGO
 No.

ANA
 Then why'd your daddy cheat on me?

Santiago prefers to remain silent.

ANA (CONT'D)
 Did you know the woman your daddy
 was fucking had cancer? A sick woman,
 rotting on the inside. He chose her
 over me. I don't get it.

They both are quiet, staring into the space between them.

147 EXT. CLUSTER OF TREES -- AFTERNOON

Santiago and Mariana sit, looking at photographs. Santiago has a picture of Robert and Gina in the Grand Canyon.

MARIANA
 Here they are, at the Grand Canyon,
 on their honeymoon.

Mariana hands him another photograph.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
 That's my mom and dad with us when
 we were little.

Santiago looks at her: Robert and Gina are surrounded by their four children. He looks closely at Mariana's face in the picture.

SANTIAGO
 You look like Betty, from Archie.

Mariana gives him a little push. She shows him another one.

MARIANA
 This is my mother's last picture.
 It's her birthday.

Santiago takes it and looks at it for a long time: Gina is smiling, holding Mariana.

SANTIAGO

Can I have this one?

Mariana considers her answer.

MARIANA

Only if you give me a scar.

SANTIAGO

What?

MARIANA

I want a scar, a mark to remember
this afternoon.

SANTIAGO

Will you give me one?

They remain silent. Mariana puts the other photos away.

MARIANA

Come get me tonight. My dad's away
on business.

148 INT. PICKUP TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago drives, listening to the radio. The moon is full
and the desert expanse is lit in its entirety.

149 EXT. TRUCK -- LATER

Santiago arrives at Mariana's block. He shuts off the engine
and gets out.

150 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Santiago hops over the gate and as soon as he lands on the
other side, the chow-chow runs over to sniff him. Santiago
remains motionless. The dog smells him, then seems to lose
interest and walks away.

Santiago cautiously walks around the outside of the house
until he reaches the window to Mariana's room. He tries to
look in, but he can barely see through the closed drapes.

He knocks on the glass. Nothing. Again. Nothing. He tries to
open the window, when Mariana suddenly appears, annoyed.

MARIANA

Shh. You're gonna wake up my sister.

Mariana looks back at the room. Monnie is still asleep.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Wait for me and don't make any noise.

Moments pass and then Mariana jumps out of the window dressed in sweatpants and sneakers. She closes the window and drapes.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Let's go.

SANTIAGO

Where?

MARIANA

To the desert, to burn chollas.

SANTIAGO

To burn chollas?

MARIANA

Yeah, I love it, they burn like fireworks.

151 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- NIGHT

Mariana and Santiago stand before a cholla. Mariana sets fire to it with a lighter. The cholla burns quickly, turning the darkness orange together with both their faces. The fire burns for less than a minute and the charred cholla collapses.

MARIANA

A cowboy told me that the smoke of a burnt cholla is purifying.

(a beat)

Roll up your sleeves.

SANTIAGO

What for?

MARIANA

So I can have your scar.

Santiago rolls up his sleeves. Mariana flicks on the lighter and sets the flame on his arm. Santiago holds for a while, then pulls away.

SANTIAGO

Shit! That burns!

MARIANA

If you concentrate it doesn't hurt.

She lights the lighter and holds it under her forearm. Santiago watches her fixedly. Several seconds go by and smoke starts to come out of her skin.

SANTIAGO

Stop, you're going to hurt yourself.

Mariana remains impassive as the flame chars her forearm. Santiago stops her, nervous.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Enough now, stop it.

Mariana shows her a large burn above her wrist.

MARIANA

This scar's for you.

Santiago takes the lighter away from her, lights it and holds his forearm over the flame. He stoically holds it as long as he can. He is in tremendous pain, but doesn't pull away.

Smoke emerges. Tears roll out of Santiago's eyes, but Santiago bears the pain. After a while he shows her his scar.

SANTIAGO

And this one's yours.

152 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The truck parks behind the house.

153 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

MARIANA

Night night.

Mariana is about to get out. Santiago holds her elbow.

SANTIAGO

Let me sleep with you.

MARIANA

Are you crazy?

SANTIAGO

I just want to sleep with you. I swear I won't lay a finger on you.

Mariana thinks about it.

MARIANA

You're gonna wake up my sister Monnie.

SANTIAGO

You're dad's not home. We can sleep in his room.

154 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Mariana and Santiago enter the bedroom. She carefully closes the door, walks over to a nightstand and turns on a bedside lamp. Santiago, full of curiosity, examines the room.

SANTIAGO

What side did your mom sleep on?

Mariana points at the right side. Santiago sits there and looks over the items on the nightstand: a box of kleenex, medicine, a glass.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

What did your mom wear to bed?
Pajamas? A slip?

MARIANA

Why d'you wanna know?

SANTIAGO

I want to know everything about her.

MARIANA

A slip.

SANTIAGO

Can you put it on? Please.

Mariana looks at him mistrustfully.

MARIANA

It's not right to dress in the clothes
of the dead.

SANTIAGO

I'm wearing my dad's socks.

Mariana considers.

MARIANA

You promise not to touch me.

SANTIAGO

I promise.

Mariana goes to a closet, takes out the slip and goes into the bathroom. Santiago looks over the place, the photographs, the pillows. Mariana walks out dressed in her mother's slip.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Lie down here.

Mariana obeys and lies on her mother's side. Santiago takes off his boots and lies down on the other side. He turns off the lamp. They remain silent in the room lit by the moon. We can only hear their nervous inhalations.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Does your burn hurt?

MARIANA

A little.

SANTIAGO

Mine hurts a lot.

They both smile. Santiago reaches out and strokes her hair. She allows it. He lowers his hand and caresses her neck.

MARIANA

You said you wouldn't touch me.

He lowers his hand a little more and brushes against her breasts. She does not protest. He moves over and puts his face next to hers.

SANTIAGO

Do you want me to go?

She shakes her head. Santiago starts to kiss her.

155 INT. TAXI -- MORNING

Dawn. Carlos and Maria ride in a taxi. Both are silent and stare at the road.

MARIA

¿Adónde vamos? [Where are we going?]

CARLOS

A tu casa, a recoger unas cosas que me pidió tu papá. [To your house, to pick up some things your dad wanted.]

156 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- MORNING

The taxi stops outside a humble one-floor house in a lower-middle class neighborhood. A Nissan pickup truck is parked in the driveway.

Carlos and Maria get out of the taxi.

157 INT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- MORNING

They enter the house.

CARLOS

Necesito que hagas una maleta con tu ropa, para una semana. [I need you to pack a suitcase with enough of your clothes to last you a week.]

MARIA

¿Para qué? [What for?]

CARLOS

Tú sólo haz tu maleta. [Just pack your bag.]

Maria goes to one room and Carlos to another.

158 INT. ROOM, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- MORNING

Carlos enters and goes straight to a closet. He opens it, takes out some pants and uncovers some shoeboxes behind them. He pulls one out and opens it. Inside are some rolls of money.

He takes a small bag from above and packs the money. He then pulls out a suitcase and randomly bundles clothes into it.

He closes the suitcase and dials a number from his cellphone.

CARLOS

Juan, ya voy por el mosquito. [Juan, I'm coming to get the mosquito.]

Maria walks into the room with a small suitcase.

MARIA

Ya estoy lista. [I'm ready.]

159 INT. NISSAN PICKUP TRUCK -- MORNING

Carlos drives the Nissan pickup truck. Maria looks through the windshield. In the distance we see a landing strip.

MARIA

¿Qué hacemos aquí? [What're we doing here?]

CARLOS

Tenemos que ir a recoger un dinero que le deben a tu papá. [We have to go pick up some money that someone owes your dad.]

MARIA

Prefiero quedarme con él. [I prefer to stay with him.]

CARLOS

Tu papá me pidió que te llevara. [Your dad asked me to take you.]

160 EXT. HANGARS -- CONTINUOUS

They park in front of some hangars. We see a man approach. Carlos grabs the small bag from the back seat of the four-door pickup truck and gets out.

CARLOS

Quiubo Juan... [Hey Juan...]

Juan points at a small plane.

JUAN

Ahí está el mosquito... [There's the mosquito...]

Carlos digs in the small bag and pulls out a roll of bills.

CARLOS

Te la devuelvo en una semana. [I'll
bring it back in a week.]

161 INT. SMALL PLANE -- MORNING

Carlos and Maria get ready to take off. She looks anxious.

MARIA

¿Adónde vamos? [Where are we going?]

CARLOS

Ya te dije que a recoger un dinero
para poder pagar el hospital. [I
told you already: to pick up some
money to pay for the hospital.]

MARIA

No te creo ¿adónde vamos? [I don't
believe you, where are we going?]

Carlos gathers speed for takeoff. She becomes alarmed.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Me quiero bajar. [I want to get out.]

CARLOS

Todo está bien, no te preocupes.
[Everything's ok, don't worry.]

The plane takes off.

MARIA

Me llevas con mi mamá ¿verdad? [You're
taking me to my mom, aren't you.]

The plane starts to gain altitude.

MARIA (CONT'D)

No quiero ir con ella, bájame. [I
don't want to go to her, let me out.]

Carlos ignores her and keeps rising. She suddenly starts
pressing buttons.

162 EXT. SKY -- MORNING

The plane rises and falls, out of control.

163 INT. SMALL PLANE -- CONTINUOUS

CARLOS

Estáte quieta. [Stop it.]

Carlos flips the switches back to their original positions. She tries to switch them back again. Carlos grabs her hands

CARLOS (CONT'D)
¿Quieres que nos matemos? [Do you
want us to get killed?]

Maria tries to wriggle out of his grip to push the buttons. Carlos stops her, but in doing so the plane loses control and shifts violently, scaring Maria. The plane seems to plummet downward for a moment.

Carlos lets go of her to take control again. Maria breathes agitatedly.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
¿Te vas a estar en paz? [Are you
going to calm down?]

Maria, pale, assents. Carlos steadies the craft.

164 INT. GINA'S CAR -- NIGHT

Gina arrives home in her Pinto. Worried, she sees Robert's trailer parked outside her house.

165 INT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Robert and the kids are watching television. Gina acts naturally while Mariana stares at her fixedly.

GINA
Hey everybody, y'all had dinner yet?

Robert and the kids don't answer, absorbed in the box. Mariana answers.

MARIANA
No. We were waiting for you.

GINA
I'll get right on it.

166 INT. KITCHEN, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Gina is focused on finding the ingredients in the pantry when Mariana walks in.

MARIANA
Why are you so late?

Mariana's sudden emergence startles Gina, who drops a can and spills some flour.

GINA
Honey, you scared me.

Gina starts to clean up the flour. Mariana grabs a washcloth, moistens it and helps her mother clean.

MARIANA

What did you do today?

GINA

I stopped by to pick up the fabric and then went to Libby's.

MARIANA

I also went to Libby's and I didn't see you there.

GINA

Maybe you weren't there when I was.

MARIANA

I was there since four o'clock.

They exchange glances. Mariana seems to be challenging her.

GINA

All right now girl, stop askin' questions and help me clean up.

167 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Robert is asleep and snores. Gina is sitting on the edge of her bed dressed in a slip, thinking. We hear voices in the street. Gina looks out the window and sees her children walking to school.

Gina closes the curtains and quietly leaves the room.

168 INT. HALLWAY, GINA'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Gina talks on the phone, nervously looking around.

GINA

Nick, it's Gina. I need to talk to you... No, not at the trailer, no... I'll meet you at the supermarket at eleven.

She hangs up, then looks around again.

169 INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Gina pushes a cart with some items in it. Nick peers into one of the aisles. With her head, Gina signals the dairy section at the end of the aisle.

170 INT. DAIRY SECTION, SUPERMARKET -- DAY

Nick approaches Gina.

NICK
What happened?

GINA
I think we're going too far.

NICK
What're you talking about?

Gina remains silent when she sees two older women approach. She feigns ignorance among the yogurt until they leave.

GINA
I think my girl knows.

NICK
How's she gonna know?

GINA
Nick, a river can't run in two directions at once.

NICK
Those are the lyrics to a really bad song. What we have is special.

GINA
I want to stop seeing you.

Nick looks at her straight in the eyes.

NICK
Forever?

GINA
Nick, I can't keep seeing you.

NICK
I'm gonna wait at the mobile home for you every day at noon until you come back.

Nick steps forward and kisses her. She responds, keeping an eye out while she kisses him. They separate, and he turns and leaves.

171 INT. KITCHEN, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gina sits alone, waiting at the kitchen table. She hears something and goes to see: Robert and the kids have arrived.

Gina gets up to greet them. Monnie and Bobby enter first. Robert, Pat and Mariana come in behind them.

MONNIE
Hi mommy.

Gina hugs her and gives her a kiss.

PAT

I'm starving. Is lunch ready yet?

Gina smiles.

GINA

I got y'all a surprise.

172 EXT. GARDEN -- DAY

Gina opens the door. Laid out on a table in the garden are sandwiches, hot dogs and soda. A plastic pool has been filled with water. Robert turns to Gina.

ROBERT

What's this?

GINA

It's been a while since we had a picnic.

ROBERT

In the garden?

173 EXT. GARDEN -- LATER

Pat, Robert and Mariana eat their sandwiches, bored, sitting on white plastic chairs. The only ones having fun are Bobby and Monnie, who splash about in the pool.

GINA

(To Mariana)

Don't you wanna swim?

MARIANA

Mom, I'm not a little girl.

She gets up.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

I gotta go to Cherry's house to work on a school project.

GINA

Stay just a bit longer. We're gonna be here all afternoon.

MARIANA

I can't. I'll be back later. Bye dad.

She raises her hand to say goodbye and leaves the garden.

174 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mariana leaves on her bike.

175 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Mariana arrives at the mobile home. She parks her bike under a mesquite and approaches cautiously.

She knocks on the door. Nobody answers and she enters.

176 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Mariana examines the place. It is now neat and clean.

177 INT. ROOM, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

She goes to the room and sits on the bed. She walks over to the pillows and smells them. First one, then the other. She lies back. She looks around.

She gets up, smooths out the covers and leaves.

178 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

She goes to the stove. She turns a knob and listens the the gas hiss. She closes it. The turns around, studies the place.

179 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Gina, in her slip, sits on the edge of the bed, waiting. Robert walks out of the bathroom in his pajamas and gets in bed. Gina tenderly nudges up against him.

She tries to kiss him on the lips. He responds lamely. Gina insists and Robert, with no preamble, no tenderness, climbs on her, pulls down her panties and starts to fuck her.

His rhythm is mechanical and monotonous. Robert strokes her chest, and when he does he touches her scar. He dismounts.

ROBERT

I can't do this... sorry.

He turns aside, fixes his pillow and gets ready to fall asleep. Gina, frustrated, stares at him. She turns out the light and gets tangled in the sheets.

180 INT. STAIRS, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sylvia looks at her daughter. They both look at each other and, suddenly, Sylvia runs away, down the stairs. Angry and confused Maria watches her leave.

Carlos runs after her.

181 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

He does not immediately spot Sylvia on the street. Then he sees her hurrying away. Carlos runs to catch up with her.

CARLOS

¿Adónde chingados crees que vas?
[Where the fuck d'you think you're
going?]

She dodges him and keeps walking. He catches up again.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Es tu hija... ¡carajo! [She's your
daughter... Christ!]

SYLVIA

Fuck you.

With a sudden turn, she crosses the street without caring that a cyclist almost runs her over. Carlos won't stop.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Get away from me asshole.

CARLOS

Tu hija está allá. [Your daughter's
over there.]

Carlos grabs Sylvia's arm and starts to pull at her. Sylvia tries to break loose, but Carlos is tough and drags her back before the astounded eyes of the townsfolk, who prefer to stay out of the way.

SYLVIA

Stop it you shit, let go...

It is futile: Carlos hauls her all the way back home. He pushes the back door open and shoves her into the stairwell.

182 INT. STAIRS, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

They walk up two steps: Maria is no longer there.

CARLOS

Ya se fue ¡carajo! [She's gone...
Shit!]

183 EXT. STREET, TOWN -- DAY

Carlos goes out to look for her. He searches among the people and cannot find her. Sylvia stands beside him.

CARLOS

No está... [She's gone...]

He walks a few steps forward: nothing. Sylvia also surveys the street. She seems to spot her in the distance.

SYLVIA

Over there.

CARLOS

No, no es ella. [No, that's not her.]

Carlos points at the opposite side from the corner.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Tú busca por allá, yo busco por acá.
[You look that way, I'll go this way.]

He sends her off in one direction, while he takes the other.

Sylvia takes a few steps and then turns to see Carlos get lost among the people. She then continues her search.

184 EXT. STREETS, TOWN -- DAY

Sylvia walks down the streets. As soon as she sees a girl she walks up to her but can't if its Maria: she can barely recognize her own daughter.

She looks all over the place: nothing.

185 EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Dusk. Sylvia comes back home. There is no trace of Carlos, or her daughter. Sylvia rests on the wall for a moment and then goes back to her hunt.

186 EXT. STREETS, TOWN -- NIGHT

She walks along the streets. There is almost nobody outside; she decides to head to the beach.

187 EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

She walks down the beach, dimly lit by the streetlamps. Further off she sees someone sitting in the darkness. Sylvia heads over to her, and once she gets there, sees Maria hugging herself for warmth.

SYLVIA

Maria?

Maria just looks at her. Sylvia sits beside her.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

We've been looking for you all day.

Maria doesn't answer.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Are you hungry?

Maria won't taker her eyes off Sylvia. Suddenly, tears start running down her cheeks. Sylvia doesn't know what to do. The girl looks at the ocean, still crying.

Sylvia hugs her and Maria lets herself drop onto her lap, crying her eyes out.

188 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Dawn. Santiago and Mariana are asleep, naked. The slip and his clothes are strewn on the floor. We hear a voice.

MONNIE (O.S.)

Mariana... Mariana...

Mariana opens her eyes and sees Santiago sleeping beside her. She sits up and hears Monnie's voice, loud and clear.

MONNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mariana, where are you?

Mariana elbows Santiago.

MARIANA

Get up...

Santiago opens his eyes, and his first gesture is to caress her. Mariana points at the window.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Go, run.

Santiago jumps out of bed, picks up his clothes and runs to the window. Mariana opens it.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Quick, get out.

Santiago hugs her naked body and kisses her neck.

SANTIAGO

See you tomorrow.

He quickly slips on his pants and shirt and leaps out the window. Mariana closes it and, naked, runs to get in the bed just as Monnie enters the room.

MONNIE

Why'd you sleep here?

Mariana covers herself with the blankets.

MARIANA

I dunno. I felt like it.

MONNIE

You know daddy doesn't like us in his room.

MARIANA

Don't tell. Please?

MONNIE

I didn't like sleeping alone. I was scared. I kept thinking about mommy.

MARIANA

Yeah, I know.

MONNIE

Can you help me get dressed?

MARIANA

Sure, I'll be right there.

189 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago parks his truck in the garage and gets out. Through the window of the house he can hear an 80's pop song.

190 INT. LIVING ROOM, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago walks into the living room and sees his mother and his aunt Paula, both wearing light, colorful dresses, decorating the house with wild flowers. There are different kinds of flower arrangements all over the living room.

Paula sees Santiago and lowers the volume on the radio. Ana notices her son.

ANA

Hello.

SANTIAGO

Hi, what's goin' on?

ANA

We're fixin' up the house.

Santiago looks uncomfortable.

SANTIAGO

What for?

Paula walks up to him, pretending to be joyful.

PAULA

Life goes on and your mom's got to move forward.

Santiago just nods. Ana walks up to him.

ANA

I've got a headache, d'you mind
getting me some aspirin?

191 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago leaves the house. The volume on the pop song gets very loud again.

192 INT. PHARMACY -- DAY

Santiago is standing in line with the aspirins.

CASHIER

Will that be all?

Santiago picks up a pack of gum and lays it on the counter. The manager sees him and goes to the cashier.

MANAGER

Don't take his money.

(to Santiago)

You're not welcome in this
establishment.

SANTIAGO

Why?

MANAGER

We all heard what you did at the
church. So just get out.

SANTIAGO

I need these aspirins. You gonna
charge me for them, or do I just
take them?

MANAGER

If you don't leave, I'm callin' the
cops.

Santiago glares at him. He grabs the aspirin and heads for the door.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I'm gonna sue you.

SANTIAGO

Oh yeah? Then I better make it worth
my while.

He doubles back and grabs a fistful of gum and chocolates. He stuffs them into his pants pocket and exits, satisfied.

193 INT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago enters the house and sees Mariana drinking coffee with Ana and Paula. Santiago stops dead in his tracks when he sees her.

ANA

Hi hon. You've got a visitor.

Santiago and Mariana's eyes meet.

MARIANA

Hi.

PAULA

You never told us about Mariana.

SANTIAGO

She's a friend from school. Here's the aspirin.

He hands her the bottle. Ana takes it and stands up.

ANA

Are you gonna stay for lunch, darlin'?

MARIANA

Sure, thanks.

ANA

(To Santiago)

I'm goin' to Paula's house.

(To Mariana)

Good to meet you.

Ana and Paula leave. Santiago stands in front of Mariana.

SANTIAGO

What're you doing here?

MARIANA

I want to see your parent's room.

Santiago is silent.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

You afraid?

194 INT. ROOM, NICK'S HOUSE -- DAY

They enter. Mariana looks around the room.

MARIANA

Did your mom and dad get along?

SANTIAGO

So so.

Mariana sits on the bed.

MARIANA

Come here.

Santiago locks the door and sits beside her. Mariana points at the burn on his arm.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Still hurt?

SANTIAGO

Nah.

Without another word, Mariana gets up and undresses. Santiago hugs her and kisses her belly. Mariana holds him away.

MARIANA

Would you marry me?

In answer, Santiago throws her onto the bed and starts to kiss her all over.

195 EXT. RUNWAY, BAJA CALIFORNIA -- DAY

The Cessna lands on a runway in the desert.

196 INT. SMALL PLANE -- DAY

Carlos takes off his seatbelt and turns to Maria.

CARLOS

Vente. [Come on.]

Maria remains motionless, staring out the window.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Que te vengas. [I said come.]

She angrily turns to look at him.

MARIA

A mí no vuelvas a hablarme. [Don't you talk to me again.]

CARLOS

Ok. [Ok.]

Carlos gets out and closes the door. He walks away without looking back. Maria decides to get out and runs up to him.

197 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Carlos and Maria enter a cheap motel room. There is only one full size bed and a small, doorless bathroom. Carlos puts the suitcases to one side.

CARLOS

¿Te gusta? [Do you like it?]

Maria doesn't answer. She flips a switch and a ceiling fan turns on. Maria lays on the bed to watch the fan turn.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Voy a buscar a tu mamá. Aquí espérame.
[I'm going to go find your mother.
Wait for me here.]

Maria doesn't answer, engrossed in the motion of the fan.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

No vayas a salir. No me tardo. [Don't
go out. I won't be long.]

She still won't speak. Carlos says no more and leaves.

198 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- EVENING

Dusk. Maria sits at the window, watching the town. She hears church bells ringing, the remote ocean, the sounds of the afternoon.

199 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

It is dark. Maria is sitting on the bed, doing nothing, bored. In the neighboring room she hears voices, someone turning on a radio.

MAN (O.S.)

Cámbiale de estación. [Change the
station.]

WOMAN (O.S.)

Espérate, a mí me gusta. [Wait, I
like this one.]

MAN (O.S.)

Te dije que le cambiaras ¡chingados!
[I said change it. Fuck!]

She hears them change the station, leaving it on a Norteña song. Maria puts her ear to the wall.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Eres un idiota. Siempre se hace lo
que tú dices. [You're an idiot. We
always have to do whatever you want.]

MAN (O.S.)

Cállate pendeja... [Shut up, stupid
bitch...]

WOMAN (O.S.)

No me callo. [No, I won't.]

She hears the sound of blows and furniture moving. Maria gets scared and goes to sit at the far edge of the bed.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Déjame estúpido. [Let me go, you idiot.]

We hear them open a door, then slam it shut. Maria hears the woman knocking and shouting.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ábreme...Ábreme... [Open the door... Open it...]

The woman keeps knocking. Maria opens the door a sliver and peers out. The woman sees her and furiously rushes at her.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
¿Tú qué ves pendeja? [What are you looking at, bitch?]

Maria quickly closes the door. The woman bangs on her door.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
¿Qué quieres estúpida? Deja de espiar y de meterte en lo que no te importa. [What d'you want, you little shit? Mind your own fucking business.]

Maria jams a chair against the door and goes to hide in the bathroom, terrified. The woman keeps banging hysterically.

200 EXT. PHONE BOOTH -- EVENING

Carlos is in a phone booth by the sea. Carlos watches the waves crash further away.

CARLOS
¿Dr. Vallejo? Hablo para ver el estado del paciente Santiago Martínez. Sí... [Dr. Vallejo? I'm calling to see how Santiago Martínez is doing. Yes...]

Suddenly his face grows somber.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
¿Cree que sobreviva?...Ok, gracias... [Do you think he'll survive?... Ok, thank you...]

He hangs up and remains pensive, worried.

201 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Maria is still hiding in the bathroom. We no longer hear noise in the neighboring room. Someone tries to open the door. Maria is frightened, and shrinks behind the toilet.

The chair has the door jammed. A male hand squeezes in and pushes the chair out. Carlos enters. He finds Maria hiding.

CARLOS

¿Qué haces ahí metida? [What are you doing in there?]

Maria looks up, frightened.

MARIA

Ya no quiero estar aquí. [I don't want to be here anymore.]

Carlos crouches down to face her.

CARLOS

¿Qué pasó? [What happened?]

Maria starts crying.

MARIA

Quiero irme con mi papá. [I want to go back to my dad.]

Carlos tenderly caresses her head.

CARLOS

Vente, vamos a que cenes. [Come on, let's get you some dinner.]

202 INT. EATERY -- NIGHT

Carlos and Maria are having dinner at a modest eatery. Maria eats half-heartedly.

CARLOS

Acábate la sopa. [Finish your soup.]

She looks sad, depressed.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

¿Sabes qué? Yo nunca conocí a mi papá. Me pasó un poco lo que a ti. [You know, I never met my dad. Sort of what happened to you.]

She turns to look at him skeptically.

MARIA

No te creo. [I don't believe you.]

CARLOS

No, es verdad. Nos dejó a mi mamá y a mí cuando nació. [No, really. He left me and my mom when I was born.]

MARIA

Mi mamá también nos dejó cuando nació.
[My mom also left us when I was born.]

CARLOS

Lo sé. Tu papá trató de encontrarla varias veces. Supo donde estaba hasta hace poco [I know. Your dad tried to find her several times. He didn't find out until recently].

Maria's eyes well up.

MARIA

No quiero conocerla. Ya hay que regresarnos a Victoria. [I don't want to meet her. Let's go back to Victoria].

CARLOS

No podemos, le juré a tu papá llevarla de vuelta [I can't, I promised your dad I'd bring her back].

203 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Carlos draws the blankets over Maria, who is lying in bed. He lays a comforter and pillow on the floor.

MARIA

¿Llamaste al hospital para ver cómo está mi papá? [Did you call the hospital to check on my dad?]

Carlos is shaken by the question.

CARLOS

No, llamamos mañana. [No, we'll call tomorrow.]

Maria's eyes brim with tears.

MARIA

Si se muere mi papá ¿me vas a dejar aquí con mi mamá? [If my dad dies, are you going to leave me here with my mom?]

CARLOS

No, tu papá no se va a morir. [No, your dad isn't going to die.]

She starts to cry quietly. Carlos hugs her.

MARIA

No me vayas a dejar sola, por favor. [Please don't leave me on my own.]

204 INT. GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gina is alone in the living room. She looks at the clock: 11:56 a.m. She thinks for a moment. She hears scratching at the door. She opens: it's the dog, trying to get attention.

GINA

What's the matter Choco, you hungry?

205 EXT. PORCH, GINA'S HOUSE -- EVENING

On the porch, Gina is emptying a pot of meat and rice into the dog's dish. The dog waits eagerly.

GINA

There.

She gets out of the way and the dog lunges. Through the window, Gina looks at the clock: 12:01pm. She sighs, grabs a chair from the porch and goes to sit in the garden.

She raises her face to the bright sun and closes her eyes.

206 INT. KITCHEN, GINA'S HOUSE -- EVENING

The family is eating dinner. Robert is at the head of the table. The kids chat animatedly. Gina is lost in thought.

BOBBY

The teacher said that if I got an A she'd give me a chick.

MARIANA

You never take care of them and the cat eats them.

ROBERT

Your mama's chickens never get eaten, do they Gina?

The question startles Gina out of her haze.

GINA

What?

ROBERT

I said you know how to take care of your chickens.

She nods automatically. Robert watches her.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Why're you sunburnt?

Gina shrugs. Pat makes fun of her.

PAT

You look like a barbecued sausage.

Everyone laughs.

GINA

I fell asleep in the garden.

ROBERT

Remember the doctor said you shouldn't get too much sun.

GINA

Yeah, I know.

207 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Robert is asleep. Gina, awake, cries quietly.

208 INT. LIVING ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gina is alone again. Now she is vacuuming. She picks up sofa cushions, lifts rugs. She looks at the clock: 11:34 a.m. She keeps cleaning as if on auto-pilot.

209 INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Gina is ironing some of Robert's shirts, absorbed in her chores. She looks into the living room at the clock: 11:58 a.m. Gina unplugs the iron and leaves.

210 EXT. ENVIRONS MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Gina's Pinto tears down the path.

211 INT. GINA'S CAR -- DAY

Through the windshield, in the distance, Gina sees Nick get into his truck and get ready to go. She honks repeatedly.

The truck engine starts. Gina accelerates.

212 INT. TRUCK -- DAY

Through the rearview mirror Nick sees the Pinto approach at full speed. He stops the car and shuts off the engine.

213 EXT. TRUCK -- DAY

Gina parks the Pinto in front of him. Nick walks toward her, and she immediately gets out of the car.

NICK

What's happened?

She throws her arms around him.

GINA

Don't ever leave me again. Never,
never, never...

214 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

The truck and the Pinto are parked before the mobile home. It's hot and the cicadas are ringing. Mariana emerges amid the mesquites, and approaches carefully. She reaches the home. Backed up against the trailer walls, she sidles up the window of the room her mother is in. She hears moaning and her face grows pale.

She looks around and sees a 19 gallon plastic bucket. She carries it to the window and looks in. Through the blinds she sees her mother and Nick making love.

She carefully climbs down. She puts the bucket back and silently walks away.

215 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Gina sits on the bed, thinking, while Nick finishes dressing.

GINA

D'you have to go back to the factory?

NICK

Yeah, I've got the night shift again.
I'm sick of it, I wish I could change
my life, go live somewhere else...

Nick's answer sets Gina thinking.

GINA

Would you take me with you?

Nick doesn't hesitate to answer.

NICK

Yes.

Gina is surprised.

GINA

You'd leave your family for me?

NICK

I wouldn't think twice about it.
You?

Gina mulls over her answer, staring at the worn carpet. She suddenly looks up.

GINA

My kids are younger.

NICK

Would you?

Gina looks back at the carpet. Her eyes fill with tears and she slowly nods.

216 EXT. ENVIRONS, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

At a distance, Mariana watches how her mother and Nick give each other a long kiss goodbye, then get in their cars.

Mariana quickly hides when she sees her mother's Pinto coming toward her. It passes just some twenty yards away from her.

Mariana waits until both cars drive away and as soon as they do, she heads over the the mobile home.

217 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

Mariana opens the door and looks around to make sure nobody is watching her. She enters.

218 INT. ROOM, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Mariana explores the trailer. She stops in front of the bed. It is still wrinkled with its pillows ruffled after Nick and Gina made love.

She walks out into the kitchen.

219 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

She goes to the stove. She turns one of the burners on, then off. She thinks for a moment, then walks out.

220 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Mariana circles the home in search of something until she finds the gas tank. She looks at it and closes the valve. She goes back in.

221 INT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Mariana lifts up the grates on the burners and fiddles with the gas lines that feed the pilot light. She tries to disconnect them, but can't.

She turns around and tries to find something with which to disconnect them. She finds some wirecutters. With them, she snips the thin copper tubing. Then she goes back out.

222 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

She opens the gas valve. She leaves it on for a few moments, then sniffs. She closes the valve again. She sits beside the tank, her gaze lost in the vast desert.

223 EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

Maria and Sylvia silently walk along the shore. Sylvia seems to have some trouble talking to her.

SYLVIA

D'you want anything to eat?

Maria looks up at her and shrugs her shoulders.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Let's go to my place. I've got food there.

224 INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Maria sits at the dining room table. Sylvia pours her some coffee. Maria stares at the mug.

MARIA

Is that coffee?

SYLVIA

Yeah.

MARIA

My dad won't let me drink coffee.

Sylvia smiles. She opens the fridge, pours a glass of milk and sets it before her. Maria drinks it down in one shot.

SYLVIA

Where's your dad?

MARIA

In the hospital. He had an accident.

SYLVIA

What kind of accident?

Maria remains pensive, then turns to her.

MARIA

Can you take me to Carlos?

SYLVIA

You don't like being with me?

MARIA

I don't know you.

Maria's words hurt Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Who's Carlos?

MARIA

My dad's business partner. Can you take me to him now?

225 EXT. HOTEL -- NIGHT

Carlos is sitting on the steps that lead up to the hotel door. He looks tired, sweaty, lost in thought. He hears voices and turns. He sees Maria and Sylvia coming and stands up.

CARLOS

María ¿Dónde estabas? [Maria, where were you?]

MARIA

En la playa. [On the beach.]

Carlos grabs the girl's hand and without even acknowledging Sylvia's presence, leads her toward the hotel. Sylvia stands speechless, then runs up to them.

226 INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- NIGHT

In the bare hotel lobby there is only an old counter, a cupboard holding the keys to all 30 rooms and a cream-colored disc-dial phone. A thin, gaunt man (35) tends the counter.

RECEPTIONIST

Buenas noches. [Good evening.]

Carlos pays no attention and heads straight to the stairs. Sylvia runs behind them.

SYLVIA

Where are you going?

227 INT. STAIRS, HOTEL -- NIGHT

Carlos and Maria don't stop. Maria turns, every now and then, to see her mother following them. Carlos, fuming, keeps walking up. Sylvia runs past them and stands before him.

SYLVIA

What the fuck is wrong with you?

CARLOS

Quítate. [Get out of my way.]

He tries to walk around her, but she gets in the way.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

(To Maria)

Dile que se quite. [Tell her to move.]

Maria just stares, silent.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Que se quite, icarajo! [Tell her to
move goddammit!]

Sylvia, defiant, remains motionless.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

¿Quieres quedarte con nosotros? [Do
you want to stay with us?]

Sylvia, who doesn't understand, stays in the same position.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Ok, quieres quedarte. [Ok, so you
want to stay.]

Carlos angrily grabs Sylvia's wrist and pulls her into the
reception. Sylvia tries to break loose; Carlos won't let go.

Midway down the stairs, he lets her go and keeps walking
without turning to look at her. Sylvia, out of sheer inertia,
follows him all the way to the reception.

228 INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Carlos stops before the receptionist.

CARLOS

¿Hablas inglés? [Do you speak
English?]

RECEPTIONIST

Un poco. [A bit.]

Sylvia walks down the stairs and looks at them.

CARLOS

Dile a esta pendeja gringa que
viajamos hasta acá para encontrarla.
[Tell this fucking idiot gringa that
we flew all the way here just to
find her.]

The receptionist listens carefully and then translates.

RECEPTIONIST

He says they came here to find you.

Carlos continues, speaking furiously.

CARLOS

Y dile a esta pinche puta que Santiago
se está muriendo y que quiere hablar
con ella. Que a huevo tiene que venir
con nosotros. [And tell this fucking
whore that Santiago is dying and he

(MORE)

CARLOS (CONT'D)
wants to talk to her. And that she
better fucking come with us.]

The man is about to translate when Carlos interrupts.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Y díselo con todo y groserías. [And
say it with the swear words.]

The receptionist nods and translates.

RECEPTIONIST
He says Santiago's dying and he wants
to speak to you. And that you have
to go with him.

Carlos glares at Sylvia.

CARLOS
Dile que la espero en el aeropuerto
a las ocho de la mañana y que si no
llega voy y le rompo el hocico. [Tell
her I'll be waiting for her at the
airport at 8am, and if she doesn't
make it I'm gonna beat the shit out
of her.]

He turns on his heels walks up the stairs two at a time.
Surprised, the receptionist sees him walk away and exchanges
glances with Sylvia.

229 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Santiago is washing the truck, with the radio on, listening
to a country song. Suddenly, a hand lowers the volume.
Santiago, who's been soaping up one of the tires, looks up
to see what happened.

Xavier and Cristobal are standing over him, staring.

CRISTOBAL
Is it true you're fucking that whore's
daughter?

Santiago stands up holding the soapy brush.

SANTIAGO
What do you care?

CRISTOBAL
Is that the slut you brought home?

Santiago sizes up his brother and assents.

SANTIAGO
Yeah, so what?

XAVIER

You can't do this shit to your own mom.

SANTIAGO

You stay the fuck out of this, bitch.

Cristobal points at him threateningly.

CRISTOBAL

If I hear you're fucking her one more time, I'm gonna pull your balls off.

SANTIAGO

You just try that.

CRISTOBAL

I'm warning you.

Cristobal and Xavier walk away. Santiago stares at them contemptuously.

230 EXT. TRUCK -- DAY

The truck is parked under a cluster of mesquites. Santiago and Mariana are making love half-dressed on a blanket.

231 EXT. TRUCK -- LATER

Santiago and Mariana are lying, staring at the sky.

MARIANA

You know, when I was little I used to think the sun could melt me.

SANTIAGO

Like an ice cream cone?

MARIANA

Uh huh. I thought that sweat was my flesh turning into water.

SANTIAGO

You almost don't sweat now.

MARIANA

No, I don't melt anymore.

They both smile.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

What d'you think your dad and my mom talked about?

SANTIAGO

I dunno, the weather, music...

MARIANA

D'you think they talked about us?

SANTIAGO

Maybe... I don't know.

They remain silent for a moment. Mariana turns and kisses him tenderly on the cheek. He looks at her, surprised.

MARIANA

D'you think they didn't use a condom, like us?

SANTIAGO

Yeah.

MARIANA

You know, they say that if you make love with real passion, the sperms burn and die before they reach the egg.

SANTIAGO

Like they were melted by the sun?

Maria smiles and remains pensive.

232 EXT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Santiago's pickup truck parks in the garage. Santiago gets out and walks toward his house. Suddenly, from the darkened porch, we hear a voice.

ANA (O.S.)

Do you enjoy betraying your family?

Santiago squints in the dark. He can barely make out his mother's face.

ANA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm talking to you, you son of a bitch.

Santiago turns on a light and sees his drunken mother sunk into one of the worn porch sofas.

SANTIAGO

I didn't betray anyone.

ANA

You're worse than your father: you even dared to bring her home. You're going to be buried in hell with him.

Santiago points at his head with his index finger.

SANTIAGO

Hell's already in here.

Santiago turns and walks indoors.

233 INT. LIVING ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Pat and Monnie are watching t.v. Suddenly we hear the loud crash of shattering glass, and a large rock wrapped in paper lands next to Monnie, who screams, frightened.

MONNIE

Ahh!

Pat runs to look out the broken window and sees a truck speeding away.

Pat picks up the rock and opens the piece of paper. He reads "Santiago Martinez is fucking your daughter Mariana."

Robert walks into the living room.

ROBERT

What happened?

Pat shows him the piece of paper.

234 INT. MARIANA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Robert stands before Mariana, humiliated and indignant. She only listens.

ROBERT

Tell me it ain't true.

Mariana says nothing, stays silent. Robert holds the piece of paper up to her face.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Tell me this is a lie.

Mariana looks at the piece of paper and doesn't answer.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Did you actually sleep with him?

Mariana just looks at him. Robert takes this as a yes, and immediately starts rabidly slapping Mariana. She resists with a certain dignity.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You're a whore. How dare you?

Robert seems incapable of stopping. Each blow is fiercer than the last. Mariana resists fearlessly.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'm gonna kill him.

Robert storms out. After a while, Mariana also leaves.

235 INT. LIVING ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

All her siblings have been listening, frightened, from the living room. The father rushes out and slams the door. Mariana crosses the living room, opens the door and watches her father get into the van and leave.

She spins around, walks past her brothers and heads for her father's bedroom.

236 INT. ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Mariana enters the room and locks it. She goes straight to the phone and dials.

SANTIAGO (O.S.)

Hello.

MARIANA

Santiago. My dad is on his way to kill you.

There is an urgency in her voice.

SANTIAGO (O.S.)

What are you talking about?

MARIANA

He left in the van to go find you. Get out of there and come get me.

SANTIAGO (O.S.)

What?

MARIANA

Come get me, let's leave together.

SANTIAGO (O.S.)

Ok. I'm coming right now.

237 INT. HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

Maria is sitting on the bed. She looks anxious, worried, with her head in her hands, looking down.

CARLOS

Si quieres no vengas. [You don't have to come if you don't want.]

Maria raises her head and stares at him.

MARIA

No, no quiero volver a quedarme sola.
[No, I don't want to be left alone
again.]

CARLOS

Te llevo a la playa y ahí me esperas.
[I'll take you to the beach and you
can wait for me there.]

Maria shakes her head and looks down again.

MARIA

No, quiero verla, no la conozco ni
en foto... [I don't want to see her,
I've never even seen a photograph of
of her.]

238 INT. STAIRS, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Carlos and María are sitting on the stairs. Waiting. She
looks nervous. Carlos holds her hand.

CARLOS

No debe tardar. [She won't be long.]

They remain silent. After a while we hear the lock turn.
Maria is anxious. The door opens and Sylvia looks both ways.

She enters and starts to walk up the stairs. She looks up
and sees Maria and Carlos. She stares at them, surprised.
Carlos gets up.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Esta es María. [This is María.]

Sylvia and María look at each other. Suddenly Sylvia runs
down the stairs. Maria watches her leave, angry and confused.

Carlos looks at Maria. He says nothing and bolts out after
Sylvia. Maria sits on the steps for a while. She gets up and
hurries down the stairs.

239 EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

She walks out and sees Carlos chasing Sylvia. She runs toward
them on the opposite sidewalk.

She runs parallel to them for a moment, then passes them and
gets lost in the town's streets.

240 INT. LIVING ROOM, GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Gina is playing cards with her kids on the dining room table.
They look like they're having fun. The only one who isn't
playing is Mariana, who watches them silently from a couch
in the living room.

Gina lays a card down.

GINA
I won... I won...

Pat counters.

PAT
No, I won...

They laugh. Gina seems happy. Mariana will not take her hard, penetrating eyes off her.

GINA
Don't you wanna play?

MARIANA
No, I don't.

Gina just looks at Mariana until Monnie gets her attention.

MONNIE
It's your turn mommy.

Gina looks at Mariana for another moment, then plays on.

241 INT. MARIANA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Gina is sitting on Monnie's bed. Monnie is praying.

MONNIE
And that you take care of us and
everybody else... Amen...

Gina blesses her and then goes to Mariana's bed.

GINA
You prayed yet?

MARIANA
No, I don't pray anymore.

GINA
That's wrong, Mariana.

MARIANA
There are lots of things that are
wrong, mom, and that can't be fixed
by praying.

GINA
You've been actin' real strange.
Tomorrow, I want to hear what's on
your mind.

Gina blesses her and walks out.

MONNIE

Is it true you don't pray anymore?

MARIANA

Yes.

MONNIE

Why?

MARIANA

Because God never listens.

242 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

All the lights are off. Total silence. We hear a door slowly open. Mariana walks out with a bag in her hand.

The chow-chow runs up and wags its tail. Mariana pets its head and keeps going toward the garage.

243 INT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

Mariana walks in, closes the door and turns on the light. The garage is now being used for storage.

From behind some boxes she pulls out a can of gasoline, and from her bag she takes out a ball of yarn. She cuts five yards of yarn and soaks it in gasoline.

She walks a few steps laying out the yarn. She lights it and it catches fire quickly.

Mariana seems to be satisfied with her experiment. She hides the yarn and gasoline and leaves the garage.

244 INT. STAIRS, SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

John, excited, bounds up the stairs. He knocks on the door: no answer. He knocks again: nothing. He opens and enters.

245 INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- DAY

John closes the door.

JOHN

Sylvia... Sylvia...

No answer. He looks out on the terrace: nothing. He goes to open the closets: none of Sylvia's clothes, no suitcases. John, furious, pulls down a chest of drawers, which splinters when it hits the ground. He then sits on the bed and brings his hands to his face.

246 EXT. RUNWAY, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- DAY

The Cessna approaches and softly lands.

247 INT. SMALL PLANE -- DAY

Carlos parks the plane near the hangar from where they left. He descends from the plane and walks toward Juan, who is expecting him.

Sylvia and Maria remain inside, quiet.

SYLVIA

Where are we?

MARIA

Ciudad Victoria. I grew up here.

SYLVIA

Does your dad know I'm coming?

MARIA

I dunno.

SYLVIA

Did you want me to come?

Maria doesn't answer. Carlos shouts for them at a distance.

CARLOS

Vámonos. [Let's go.]

248 INT. TRUCK -- DAY

Dusk. The three ride in the Nissan truck. Sylvia, in front, smokes nervously with the window open. Anxious, she gazes at the Tamaulipan landscape.

249 EXT. CLINIC -- DAY

They park outside the clinic. They get out and Carlos heads toward the entrance. Sylvia looks at the place and holds Maria by the arm when she is about to go in.

SYLVIA

How did Santiago get hurt?

MARIA

His plane crashed.

SYLVIA

He's a pilot?

MARIA

He's a crop duster. Didn't you know?

Sylvia shakes her head. Maria looks at her for a moment. She turns around and leaves.

250 INT. CLINIC -- EVENING

Sylvia and Maria wait together. Carlos sits a few seats away. Three peasants - their faces wrinkled from endless hours working in the sun - sit before them. The eldest naps with his mouth open. Sylvia watches him uneasily.

SYLVIA

What grade are you in?

MARIA

I'm about to start eighth grade.

SYLVIA

Do you have a boyfriend?

MARIA

No, but one of the boys in my class likes me.

An uncomfortable silence. Sylvia goes on.

SYLVIA

Has your dad been good to you?

MARIA

The best. If anything happens to him I'll die.

A nurse enters and calls out loud.

NURSE

Enrique López.

The peasants get up. They wake up the older one and help him stand. Sylvia hadn't noticed that he has a long gash on his arm that is still bleeding.

Impressed, she follows them with her eyes until they enter the emergency room.

MARIA

How long has it been since you saw my dad?

The question breaks her concentration.

SYLVIA

I stopped seeing him two days after you were born.

Maria seems hurt by the answer.

MARIA

Why didn't you want to stay with me?

SYLVIA

Because I didn't deserve you.

They look at each other for a moment, then Maria looks away.

251 INT. GINA'S CAR -- DAY

Nick waits for Gina sitting on the steps to the mobile home. The Pinto approaches and Nick stands up to greet Gina, who parks in front of him.

252 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Gina gets out of the car and hugs him tightly.

GINA

I can't take it anymore, I'm losing my mind.

NICK

Me too.

GINA

No, seriously. I feel like everybody knows about us.

Nick caresses her face.

NICK

I swear, I'm also goin' crazy.

253 INT. ROOM, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

Nick and Gina are hugging on the bed, naked.

GINA

D'you think I'm pretty?

NICK

I think you're real pretty.

GINA

I want to have plastic surgery done on my breast.

NICK

Don't do it, I like how you look.

GINA

Yeah, but...

Nick interrupts her with a kiss.

NICK

Come and live with me. Leave it all and let's go together.

As an answer, she hugs him and starts kissing him.

254 INT. KITCHEN, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

While Nick and Gina make love, gas starts leaking through the stove. They don't notice, wrapped up in each other.

255 EXT. MOBILE HOME -- DAY

We see the mobile home in the distance. We suddenly hear a tremendous explosion, followed almost immediately by another. The home burns quickly; the flames rise skyward.

256 EXT. ENVIRONS, MOBILE HOME -- DAY

From far away, Mariana stares at the burning trailer. She starts to wail mournfully.

257 INT. CLINIC -- EVENING

It is getting dark. Sylvia leans on a doorframe, smoking as she watches some moths flutter around a streetlamp.

A doctor arrives and Carlos and Maria get up immediately. Sylvia notices, takes a last, hurried drag and walks over.

CARLOS

¿Cómo sigue? [How's he doing?]

DOCTOR

El cuadro del paciente se complicó. Vamos a tener que operarlo en las próximas horas. Quizá sea necesario amputarle la pierna. [The patient has had some complications. We're going to have to operate soon. We may have to amputate his leg.]

Carlos is struck by the news. Maria doesn't seem to get it.

MARIA

¿Qué es amputar? [What do you mean by "amputate"?)

DOCTOR

Cortarle la pierna, hija. [We may have to cut his leg off.]

Maria cries quietly. Sylvia, still without understanding, hugs her.

CARLOS

¿Podemos verlo? [Can we see him?]

DOCTOR

Por ahora está sedado. Lo mejor es que regresen mañana temprano. [Right now he's sedated. It would be best if you come back tomorrow morning.]

MARIA

Yo me quiero quedar. [I want to stay.]

DOCTOR

No tiene caso. [There's no point.]
(a beat)
Buenas noches. [Good night.]

The doctor retires. Maria collapses onto a bench to cry. Sylvia steps away from them and walks toward the doctor.

258 INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL -- EVENING

Sylvia catches up to him.

SYLVIA

Excuse me, do you speak English?

DOCTOR

Yes.

SYLVIA

I'd like to see my husband.

DOCTOR

I don't think that's a good idea.

SYLVIA

I'm begging you, let me see him.

The doctor considers it.

DOCTOR

Ok, just one minute.

259 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- EVENING

Sylvia enters the room. Santiago sleeps hooked up to several machines. His destroyed leg lies outside the sheets. We can see the wounds, the sutures, the spillage.

Sylvia is disturbed to see him: a whirlwind of memories seems to overwhelm her. She approaches him slowly.

SYLVIA

Santiago, can you hear me? It's Mariana.

Santiago doesn't react: he keeps breathing steadily. She watches him for a moment.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

You're not going to die, are you?
Because if you die, I wouldn't know
what to do with Maria. I can barely
look her in the eyes.

Sylvia doesn't cry, but has trouble going on.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

You don't know how much I missed you
both. And how much I still miss my
mother. Christ, I miss her.

She looks at him for a moment and fixes his hair.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to kill my mom and
your dad. I just didn't want them to
fuck there anymore.

She starts sobbing quietly.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

And I don't know what to do. Because
no matter how hard I try, I can't
hide from myself.

She gazes at him again and strokes his hair.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

I don't understand why you wanted me
to come back.

She leans over, kisses him softly on the lips and leaves.

260 INT. SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Santiago hangs up the phone and remains pensive for a moment.
He gets up and leaves the room.

261 INT. KITCHEN, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

He walks into the kitchen and find Cristobal and Xavier
sitting at the kitchen table, smoking and drinking beer.

Ignoring them, Santiago looks some keys on a rack. After
checking several, he doesn't find what he's looking for.

SANTIAGO

Where are the keys to the truck?

Cristobal turns to look at him sardonically.

CRISTOBAL

What d'you want them for?

SANTIAGO

What the fuck d'you care?

Cristobal laughs mockingly.

CRISTOBAL

My mom says you won't be driving it anymore, so why don't you ask her.

262 INT. ROOM, NICK'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

He opens the door and sees his mother lying down, with the light from the nightstand on, watching t.v. He turns it off.

SANTIAGO

I need the keys to the truck.

Ana straightens up and sits on the edge of the bed.

ANA

You're not driving that truck anymore. In fact, you won't be living in this house anymore either.

Santiago doesn't budge.

SANTIAGO

Where are the keys.

ANA

Hid.

SANTIAGO

Tell me right now.

ANA

What d'you want them for? To go see your little whore?

Santiago throws the television onto the floor, and sparks fly when it shatters. Ana is frightened.

SANTIAGO

Where are the keys?

Upon hearing the noise, Cristobal and Xavier enter the room.

CRISTOBAL

What the fuck are you doing?

SANTIAGO

(screaming at Ana)
Give me the keys, goddammit!

Ana opens a bedside drawer and throws them at him.

ANA

Get out and don't ever come back.

Santiago catches them and is about to leave when Cristobal gets in his way.

CRISTOBAL

Where the fuck d'you think you're going?

Santiago pushes him so hard it knocks him over. Without stopping, steps around him and leaves the bedroom.

263 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago is driving full speed down the highway. He sees some lights approaching further off. Santiago realizes it's Robert's van. He switches lanes and accelerates.

264 INT. ROBERT'S VAN -- NIGHT

Robert is driving. He is furious. He sees some lights coming at him on the wrong side of the street. He flashes his headlights, but the approaching vehicle won't move.

265 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago keeps accelerating. The truck is doing just over 100 miles an hour. The van's lights are getting dangerously close, but Santiago speeds on.

266 INT. ROBERT'S VAN -- NIGHT

Robert sees the car coming full speed toward him. He honks his horn and flashes his lights desperately.

267 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago floors the pedal and aims the truck at the van before it. With just a few yards between them, the van tries to dodge, loses control and drives off the pavement.

268 EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The van rolls along the side of the road.

269 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago watches the van in his rearview mirror. After four rolls it finally stops.

Instead of braking, Santiago accelerates again.

270 EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

Santiago's truck gets lost in the darkness.

271 INT. DINING ROOM, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- NIGHT

Carlos, Maria and Sylvia are dining in silence. Maria's eyes are swollen from crying, and rather than eat, she pushes a piece of bread around her plate. Sylvia, broken, drinks her coffee and won't look up. Carlos finishes his dinner and stands up.

CARLOS

Hay que irnos a dormir. Tenemos que ir temprano al hospital. [We should go to bed. We have to get up early to go to the hospital.]

He puts his dirty plate in the sink and points at Sylvia.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Dile que va a dormir en tu cuarto. Tú duérmete en la sala. Buenas noches. [Tell her she's going to sleep in your room. You sleep in the living room. Good night.]

He kisses Maria on the forehead and raises his hand at Sylvia.

SYLVIA

What'd he say?

MARIA

That you're gonna sleep in my room and I'm sleeping in the living room.

SYLVIA

I can sleep in the living room.

MARIA

No, it's ok.

272 INT. LIVING ROOM, SANTIAGO'S HOUSE, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- NIGHT

The living room couch has been made up with sheets and blankets. Maria gets ready for bed.

SYLVIA

Good night.

MARIA

Good night.

Maria covers herself with the blankets.

SYLVIA

Don't you pray before bed?

MARIA

No, I don't pray.

SYLVIA

Didn't your daddy ever teach you?

MARIA

No.

SYLVIA

Do you want to pray for him?

MARIA

Good night.

She switches off the light. Sylvia makes her way to her room in the dark.

273 INT. MARIA'S ROOM, CIUDAD VICTORIA -- NIGHT

Sylvia gets ready for bed. Before she turns out the light, she looks around: her daughter's teddy bears, her paintings.

She opens the closet drawers and takes out her daughter's blouses. She lays them out and looks at them. She smells some of them.

She opens another drawer and takes out a photo album. She sits on the bed to look through it.

The album contains pictures of Maria and Santiago. Maria as a baby. Santiago bathing her. Maria, two years old, next to a dog; seven years old on a bicycle; in a pool with her friends; eight years old, sitting on Santiago's lap.

While she looks through the pages, Sylvia starts to break up, until she can no longer stifle a deep sob.

274 EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The van lies upturned by the side of the road. The headlights, still on, light the dust, the broken cacti.

275 INT. ROBERT'S VAN -- NIGHT

Robert is caught in his seat with his seatbelt on. After struggling upside down, he manages to get loose and pull himself out the window.

276 EXT. ROBERT'S VAN -- NIGHT

Robert drags himself away from van. He sits on the dust, battered and confused.

277 EXT. GINA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Santiago's truck parks outside Gina's house. Mariana, who's been waiting, runs out to get in the truck.

278 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago opens the door. When Mariana is about to get in, Pat runs out after her.

PAT

Mariana, where are you going?

Mariana ignores him and is about to get in. Pat pulls her by the blouse.

PAT (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

MARIANA

Let me go.

PAT

You can't leave with him.

Mariana pulls away from him, tearing the blouse, and climbs into the van. Pat tries to stop her from closing the door.

PAT (CONT'D)

I'm going to tell dad.

MARIANA

You tell him whatever you want.

Mariana closes the door and, immediately, Santiago starts the engine. Pat picks up a rock and throws it at them.

279 INT. TRUCK -- NIGHT

Santiago skillfully cuts around the parked cars at full speed as he drives through the dusty town streets.

280 EXT. ARIZONA TOWN -- NIGHT

Santiago drives and Mariana watches the night landscape. They don't speak for a long time.

MARIANA

Where are we going?

SANTIAGO

To Mexico.

MARIANA

What for?

Santiago turns to look at her.

SANTIAGO

I love you, Mariana. I just want to be with you.

Mariana just stares at him and says nothing else.

281 EXT. ARIZONA DESERT -- DAY

The truck is parked on a path in the desert. The sun has barely risen. Mariana and Santiago are asleep in cargo box holding each other. Santiago wakes up and carefully lifts Mariana's head off his chest and gets up.

He jumps off the back and looks around. Mariana opens her eyes and sits up.

MARIANA

Where are we?

Santiago points at some mountains.

SANTIAGO

That's Mexico.

Mariana turns and looks at the mass of mountains.

MARIANA

What are we going to do over there.

SANTIAGO

Live in peace.

Mariana thinks for a moment.

MARIANA

We'll never have peace again.

Santiago walks over to help her get out. He takes one of her hands and she jumps down.

She looks at Mexico again.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

I'm pregnant.

SANTIAGO

What?

MARIANA

I'm pregnant and I don't want it.

Santiago considers Mariana's disclosure.

SANTIAGO

We can live in Mexico, the three of us.

MARIANA

No, I can't. I can't have it.

282 EXT. CLINIC -- DAY

The sun barely rises. The Nissan truck is parked outside the clinic. Carlos gets out and closes the door.

283 INT. NISSAN PICKUP TRUCK -- DAY

Maria, in the back seat, is about to get out, but Sylvia holds her arm. Maria looks at her.

SYLVIA
Maria, forgive me.

MARIANA
Forgive you what?

SYLVIA
Forgive me for not being with you
all these years.

Maria stares at her silently.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
It hurts me not to have seen you
grow up. Please, forgive me...

Maria looks at her, dumbfounded.

MARIA
I want to see my dad now.

Without saying another word, she gets out, leaving Sylvia baffled.

284 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Carlos, Maria and Sylvia are sitting in a doctor's office. Waiting. After a while, the doctor comes in.

DOCTOR
Buenos días. [Good morning.]

CARLOS
¿Cómo salió Santiago de la operación?
[How did the operation go?]

DOCTOR
Muy bien. Pudimos drenar y limpiar
la infección y fusionamos el fémur
con clavos. [Very well. We were able
to drain and clean the infection,
and we fused the femur with pins.]

Maria anxiously interrupts.

MARIA

¿Le cortaron la pierna? [Did you cut off his leg?]

DOCTOR

No, no perdió la pierna, pero va a tener muchas dificultades para caminar. Calculo que en tres semanas podemos darlo de alta. [No, he didn't lose his leg, but it's going to be difficult for him to walk again. I figure we can release him in about three weeks.]

Maria smiles and holds Carlos's hand. Sylvia feels excluded: because of the language and for being left out.

MARIA

¿Puedo verlo? [Can I see him?]

DOCTOR

Sí, pueden verlo. [Yes, you can.]

285 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Santiago is on his bed, conscious. A little bit dazed. Maria, upon seeing him, runs over to embrace him. Carlos stands at the door, and Sylvia behind him, feeling estranged.

MARIA

¿Cómo te sientes? [How do you feel?]

SANTIAGO

Madreado. [Beat up.]

MARIA

Te quiero mucho. [I love you very much.]

She hugs her father again. Carlos walks over to his friend. Sylvia watches the scene for a moment, then slips away.

286 EXT. CLINIC -- DAY

Sylvia exits the clinic and starts walking quickly down the streets of Victoria.

She stops a moment and looks back at the clinic. She sighs deeply, then walks on.

T H E E N D

Mexico City, February 26th, 2006.