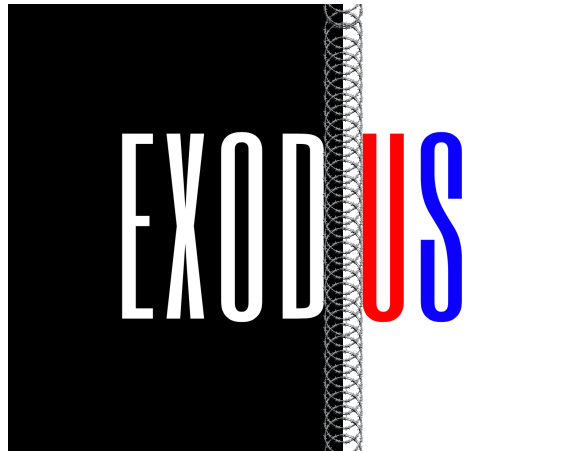




Written by

Charley Dane &
Michael Jones-Morales

ABC
Sony Pictures Television
MiddKid Productions

December 20th, 2019
2nd Rev. Network Draft

Copyright © 2019
SONY PICTURES TELEVISION INC.
All Rights Reserved

No portion of this script may be performed, or reproduced by any
means, or quoted, or published in any medium without prior consent
of SONY PICTURES TELEVISION INC.

* 10202 West Washington Boulevard * Culver City, CA 90232 *

ACT ONE

EXT. CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS - NIGHT

A gibbous moon illuminates the forest with its silver hue. A MAN and a WOMAN trek through the scrub-brush toting hard-shelled briefcases. The Man checks the GPS on his phone. Stops. He kneels, pulls a monitoring device from the case, and sets it on the ground. As he rises --

The earth begins to RUMBLE. They steady themselves, exchanging worried glances as the tremor passes. The Woman checks her watch as the Man hurries back to the device.

WOMAN

They're getting closer. Only ninety minutes since the last tremor.

MAN

Stronger too. That was a four-point-six.

Their faces tell us neither of those are good things.

WOMAN

Let's get closer to the Caldera.

Further on, they come to a stream. But there's something odd about it. The stream vanishes, flowing into a crack in the earth and disappearing underground. Off this mystery -- the CAMERA PLUNGES INTO THE STREAM!

INT. UNDERGROUND - CONTINUOUS

We ride the water through cracks deep into the earth until it gathers in a subterranean pool. At the bottom of the pool, a crack in the rock GLOWS RED. We squeeze through the crevice as water trickles down into --

AN ENORMOUS MAGMA CHAMBER! A virtual sea of molten rock bubbles red, POPPING and IGNITING under the trickle of water. When the roof of this chamber collapses, hell will unleash its wrath... As a shock of FLAME leaps up we CUT TO --

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - PUEBLO, CO - NIGHT

WHOOOP! -- A STOVE BURNER ignites beneath a pot of chili. KAREN MONROE (40s), proud, resilient and all-American, turns to her ruggedly handsome husband, HANK (40s).

A CHYRON tells us we are in: **PUEBLO, CO.**

KAREN

I shouldn't have told you. You need to focus on the Arizona contract.

HANK

No, I'm glad you did. She knows you found it, right?

KAREN

Had the gall to ask for it back!

They stand across from each other in the spacious, pre-fab kitchen -- all the trimmings of rural American comfort.

HANK

Take her car away for a month?

KAREN

Certainly hits her where it hurts.

GRACE (19), confident (at times to a fault), powers in, her brother, HENRY (12), buoyant and boundless, hot on her heels.

GRACE

Because it's *mine*. That's why.

HENRY

Didn't know we had "assigned chargers" in this house.

Grace unplugs a charger from the wall and hands the tablet it was charging to Henry. He snatches the tablet and stomps back out. Grace notices her parents' judgmental stares.

GRACE

What?

Then she pieces it together and turns to her mother.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You told him? I thought that was between us?

KAREN

I never agreed to that.

HANK

You and I are gonna have a conversation about disappointing us when I get back from Phoenix.

Grace notes the tenor in his voice, knows when to yield. She throws another look to Karen and heads back out. A silence hangs in her wake... Karen tries to shake it, serves up a bowl of chili and offers it to Hank.

KAREN

Was hoping for a nice family meal to send you off, but I guess those are a thing of the past.

HANK

They're kids, Karen. Centers of their own universes.

KAREN

I know... Just tough being an asteroid.

HANK

Still a star in my book, babe.

KAREN

Get over here, smooth talker.

She calls him to her and slides her arms around his waist.

HANK

Seriously though, don't let the kids
put you on your heels. You're the
rock of this family.

Henry barrels in and switches on the TV on the counter.

HENRY

Check it out, there were like *nine*
earthquakes on the West Coast today.

THE TV SCREEN SHOWS -- Smoke rising from cracks in the earth.
A BANNER READS: **LONG VALLEY CALDERA, Central California.**

KAREN

Guess worse things could happen than
California falling to the sea.

We ZOOM IN on the TV as Henry turns up the VOLUME --

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Scientists say the unusual cluster
of tremors may be linked to *volcanic*
activity deep beneath the surface of
the Long Valley Caldera.

CLICK. The screen switches off as we PULL BACK to REVEAL --

INT. BAILEY FAMILY TOWNHOUSE - BERKELEY, CA - NIGHT

A cultured, urban home. Shelves lined with books, few toys
scattered about. LEAH (40s), with a soothing calm, puts the
remote down and turns to INDIA (8), wearing pajamas.

A CHYRON tells us we're now in: **BERKELEY, CA.**

LEAH

All right, India, say goodnight to
daddy, it's time for bed.

India stands at the kitchen table SKYPING with her father,
STUART BAILEY (40s), caring and intellectual, on a laptop.

INDIA

Daddy, if the volcano erupts, can we
go see it. Like in Hawaii?

STUART

Absolutely.

INDIA

Will we have to fly there?

INT. MODEST HOTEL ROOM - SANTA FE, NM (INTERCUT) - NIGHT

Stuart sits up in bed wearing a faded t-shirt and gym shorts.

STUART

No, we can drive. It's only a couple hundred miles east.

LEAH

Come on, pumpkin. Big day tomorrow.

STUART

That's right! Whale watching trip!

INDIA

If that girl, Gina, says I look like a boy again, I'm gonna punch her like one.

STUART

Probably not your best option. But I respect the grit. How about you just avoid her on the boat?

India scrunches her face -- such "dad advice".

STUART (CONT'D)

I'm just saying violence isn't the answer. Never is.

INDIA

I wish you could come... I don't like you being so far away.

STUART

I don't like it either, goober. But this sales trip is super important.

INDIA

Why's selling wine important? You said it just makes you dizzy.

LEAH

Valid question. We can talk about it when Daddy gets back from New Mexico. Now go brush your teeth.

India heads down the hall, voice rising the farther she gets.

INDIA

You should get a job selling candy. Or doughnuts. Something fun.

Leah slides in front of the laptop, full of encouragement.

LEAH

Sooo? How was day one?

STUART

Rough. Six accounts, only one sale.

LEAH

Well, keep your head up. It's just a numbers game.

STUART

You mean like finding a publisher for my book?

She shoots him a side-glance.

LEAH

Not fair. Those idiots passed up the most compelling *roman á clef* about prep school anxiety ever written... but the diligence it took to write that novel is what's gonna make you a rockstar salesman.

Suddenly, the floor beneath her begins to TREMBLE and the ceiling light fixture over the dining table SWINGS.

STUART

That another earthquake? How bad is it? Maybe I should come home early.

The tremor subsides as India bounds back into the room.

INDIA

That makes ten! Earthquakes are awesome.

Leah smiles at her daughter and thumps a fist to her chest.

LEAH

Fearless.
(then to Stuart)
We're fine here, darling. Now go sell some wine!

Stuart melts a little inside, so grateful for this family.

INT. POSH HOTEL ROOM - MEXICO CITY - NIGHT

MANUEL PACHECO (50s), fit and manicured, lies naked in bed -- a few beads of sweat on his brow -- enjoying a moment of post-coital bliss. He smiles as AMANDA KNOWLES (late 40s), poised with an air of accomplished intelligence, appears in the bathroom doorway wearing a towel.

AMANDA

I'm gonna miss this.

MANUEL

I'm going to miss you.

She absorbs the compliment a beat and heads for a bottle of MEZCAL on the dresser. Pours out two healthy glasses.

A CHYRON tells us we're now in: **MEXICO CITY, MEXICO**

AMANDA

We've been lucky to last this long.
Best to cash out while we're ahead.

We notice his WEDDING BAND (and her lack of one) as she offers one of the drinks, and he raises a hand to deny it.

MANUEL

I've had enough, thanks.

AMANDA

Well, that makes one of us.

She pours his glass into her own and takes a swallow.

MANUEL

What time is the call set for?

AMANDA

Nine A.M.... Wanna hear the letter?

Off his nod, she finds her briefcase by the nightstand, pulls out a binder, removes a printed sheet of paper, and reads:

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I'll just give you the opening.

(reading)

Dear Mr. President, I consider the time I have served as Ambassador to Mexico to be the most rewarding six years of my life. I take tremendous pride in the relationships I've fostered...

(she shoots him a wry look)

... and in the advancements we've achieved with trade agreements, increased border security and the bilateral effort to combat the narcotics empire. I'd like to think our countries are more aligned than ever before. However, I am writing today... to offer my resignation.

She glances dramatically his way then sets the letter back in the folder and returns it to her briefcase.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Then I get into some ass kissing and round it out with how I'd like to live in the same country as my son, before he leaves college. Make up for some of the time I lost.

MANUEL

I live in the same *house* as my son and he wants nothing to do with me.

AMANDA

Josh and I were close once, you know. Before his father died.

MANUEL

The letter is good... But Mexico
will miss you.

AMANDA

Susie will fill my shoes just fine.

MANUEL

No one can replace you down here.

She knocks back the rest of her drink, makes her way back to
bed and straddles him. Off their return to intimacy...

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - PUEBLO, CO - DAY

It's early and Grace slouches in, bee-lining for the Mr.
Coffee. She glares at Karen, cracking eggs at the counter.

KAREN

Morning, Grace. Breakfast?

GRACE

Liquid breakfast. Karen.

KAREN

That gonna get you through to lunch?

GRACE

Experts say I'll live.

A silence falls as Grace doctors her coffee with sugar.

KAREN

You put your clothes away?

GRACE

Nope. Still in a pile on the floor.
(off Karen)
Yes, I put 'em away. Anything else?

KAREN

I don't know, "thank you for washing
them" might be nice.

GRACE

You want me to thank you for
searching my pockets and *completely*
overreacting to something that
wasn't any of your business?

KAREN

You brought drugs home, Grace.

GRACE

It was a gram of pot, which, by the
way, is legal now.

KAREN

Not for nineteen-year-olds it's not.

GRACE

And I can't believe you told Dad.
Like I'm twelve. I'm an adult. Old
enough to vote, die for my country --

KAREN

Adults pay their own way in life.
When you get to that point, you can
smoke all the dope you want and
throw your ambitions away. Until
then, you live by the rules of the
house and the laws of the land.

GRACE

Can't wait to move into my dorm.

KAREN

You mean the one your father and I
are paying for?

GRACE

And what, that means you get to
subject me to four more years of
your ridiculous moral standards?

KAREN

I don't think "no drugs in the house
where your twelve-year-old brother
lives" qualifies as a "ridiculous" --

Suddenly, Henry barrels in and clicks the TV on!

HENRY

Guys, it's erupting! Right now!

ON THE TV -- LAVA SPEWS from the open earth and a COLUMN OF
ASH rockets into the sky as seen from a distant helicopter.

KAREN

Wow.

GRACE

Whoah.

HENRY

I know. Awesome right? And that
chopper's like fifty miles away!

KAREN

I hope everyone's okay.

HENRY

There's only a few towns close by
and they got evacuated yesterday.

As they stare at the screen, some sort of "forcefield"
ripples toward the camera until WHOOPH -- the IMAGE CUTS OUT.

GRACE

What the hell was that?

A LOCAL NEWSCASTER appears, just as surprised as the Monroes.

LOCAL NEWSCASTER

I'm being told the shockwave from the volcano's eruption that just hit our news chopper has knocked out the west coast feed, but we're working to restore it.

Henry MUTES the TV as they trade looks of wonder.

HENRY

I mean, was that cool, or what?

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - DAY

A SEDAN pulls to the front of the U.S. EMBASSY, and Amanda steps out of the back. She pauses and looks up at the FLAG over the door... a moment of nostalgia. SUSIE WILLIAMS (40s), the perfect "vice" anything, emerges to greet her.

SUSIE

Don't get too sentimental, your call with the President's been pushed.

AMANDA

And good morning to you, too, Susie.

They turn and make their way inside.

INT. US EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - CONTINUOUS

They travel a hall lined with photos of dignitaries.

SUSIE

Apparently, this volcano in California is turning into a thing.

AMANDA

Just saw a briefing on that, said they're evacuating the Governor?

SUSIE

And Sacramento's two-hundred miles away. Eruption must be massive.

AMANDA

Lotta Mexican nationals up there. We need to assure the Mexican Government we'll coordinate with their California Consulates to see their people get what they need.

SUSIE

Want me to get the Secretary of the Interior for you?

AMANDA

No, I want to talk to POTUS first. See how soon you can get him for me.
(turning to her)

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

And I'm still handing over the reins, just need to smooth over this California situation first.

A look of trust between them. These two are a team.

INT. RESTAURANT WINE CELLAR - SANTA FE, NM - DAY

OPEN WINE BOTTLES line the tasting counter as Stuart, whom we last saw Skyping with his daughter, slowly pulls an ornate bottle from his wine bag with dramatic flair.

STUART

And finally, The Paragon -- nothing shy of life changing. I'm talking "last supper" worthy.

A groomed SOMMELIER rinses his wine glass in anticipation.

SOMMELIER

Don't know how you get more lush and supple than the last bottle, but I'm eager to find out.

STUART

Let the French have their rustic *terroir*. I'll take the cultivated polish of top-tier Napa Cab any day.

Stuart is about to uncork it when a concerned WAITER pops in.

WAITER

I know you guys are busy, but that volcano erupted. Like, *massively*.

STUART

Okay. How "massively"?

WAITER

Like, there're rumors San Francisco is getting buried in ashes.

STUART

What do you mean *rumors*?

WAITER

The whole area went dark. No cell service, internet... nothing.

Stuart whips out his phone and speed dials his wife. Straight to voicemail. He puts The Paragon back in his bag.

STUART

Sorry to cut this short, but my family's in Berkeley, need to make sure they're okay. I owe you a glass of The Paragon.

SOMMELIER

And I owe you an order.

STUART
Nothing would make me happier.

He zips his bag and heads for the door.

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Karen washes dishes as Henry searches the Web on her phone.

HENRY
They still can't get a signal out of California. Seems weird, right?

KAREN
The ashes are probably blocking the satellites, or something.

HENRY
Hope they don't cancel the 'Niners' game, Garoppolo's on my fantasy team.

Karen is only half listening, her attention drawn to something happening outside the kitchen window.

KAREN
I'm sure it'll be fine, sweetie.

She shuts the tap and dries her hands, still focused outside.

EXT. MONROE HOME - CUL-DU-SAC - DAY

TIM and CAROL ROSS (50s), skittish, load their pick-up with supplies in the back of their open garage as MITCH, a fellow neighbor, questions them with a skeptical eye.

MITCH
You guys don't think maybe you're being a little paranoid?

CAROL
Mitch, we're trying to help you.

Karen crosses the tidy cul-de-sac of two-story spec-homes.

KAREN
Didn't know you guys were heading out of town.

TIM
We're evacuating.

KAREN
From what?

MITCH
The volcano. In California. It's like evacuating Kansas for Katrina.

CAROL

Look, you don't have to believe me,
but my brother says they can measure
the debris output from space and
it's like nothing they've ever seen.
WAY bigger than anyone realizes yet.

KAREN

This the brother who works for NASA?

MITCH

The one who only eats food he grows
himself and won't touch doorknobs.

Carol ignores him, turns to Karen, serious now.

CAROL

Maybe we are overreacting. But if
we're not, things could get real bad
around here. Especially for Henry.
If that ash cloud reaches this far
east, he's gonna have one hell of a
time breathing with his asthma.

Off Karen, weighing how seriously to take this warning...

INT. COMPANY MAN OFFICE - ARIZONA OIL FIELD - DAY

Hank Monroe, Karen's oilman husband, leans over a set of
DRILL PLANS with a stout TOOL PUSHER inside a spartan
construction trailer. His cell BUZZES. He MUTES it.

TOOL PUSHER

Casing is set and we're ready to
drill. You say go and we should hit
the target zone in ten days, max.

HANK

Or we take our time, go horizontal,
try and tap a bigger vein.

His cell BUZZES again. This time he takes it out, checks it.

HANK (CONT'D)

Sorry, wife calls five times in ten
minutes, you better answer it.

TOOL PUSHER

If you know what's good for you.

HANK (ON PHONE)

Hey darlin', everything all right?

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - GARAGE - PUEBLO, CO (INTERCUT)

Karen pulls camping gear out of cupboards and loads it into
the back of their king-cab Silverado.

KAREN

You following this volcano?

HANK

I'm in a trailer in the middle of the desert, babe. What's going on?

KAREN

Carol's brother at NASA told her the ashes could blanket the entire southwest.

HANK

From an eruption in California? Didn't he also tell her he had proof of aliens?

The Tool Pusher ducks back in and interrupts --

TOOL PUSHER

Somethin' you oughta see out here.

Hank nods and makes his way toward the door.

KAREN

Sure. But what if she's right? If it could reach Colorado, it's gonna hit Arizona even harder. I'm packing up, just in case, but tell me if I'm being stupid.

EXT. ARIZONA OIL FIELD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Hank steps out onto the unmanned derrick site. Far on the horizon, A COLUMN OF BLACK ASH stretches into the stratosphere, mushrooming across the sky like a cancer.

HANK

You're not. I'm on the next flight.

INT. CAR RENTAL HUB - ALBUQUERQUE, NM - DAY

Stuart totes his wine bag and a suitcase through the car rental center. The place is a zoo. STAFF ignore the lines. PEOPLE desperate to rent cars. Stuart spots a CAR RENTAL CLERK passing and walks with him.

STUART

Can I just drop my keys off, I need the next shuttle to the terminals.

CAR RENTAL CLERK

Airport's closing. They say planes can't fly when there's a volcano.

STUART

Wait, is it *closing*, or *closed*?

CAR RENTAL CLERK

Everything westbound is grounded. Eastbound's got another hour.

STUART

I don't care about eastbound, I need
to get to Oakland.

CAR RENTAL CLERK

Sorry, man. Good luck with that.

Stuart looks around, weighs his options... and runs back out.

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - KAREN'S ROOM - DAY

Karen dumps her jewelry box into a ziplock and stuffs the bag
in an open duffle on the bed. Grace watches from the door.

GRACE

Mom, you're acting insane.

KAREN

With Henry's asthma we can't risk
getting stuck in some "*ash cloud*."

Karen takes Hank's only suit from the closet, pulls a ROLL OF
BILLS from the pocket, and tucks the cash into the duffle.

GRACE

So you and Henry go. Classes start
next week, I can't take a road trip.

Karen shoulders past her with the duffle out into the hall.

KAREN

This isn't a negotiation.

IN THE BATHROOM -- Karen sets down the bag, opens a drawer,
and transfers essentials: first aid kit, toothpaste, Advil...
She stops, holds up an ALBUTEROL INHALER, and turns to Grace.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Where are the inhalers you picked up
for Henry?

GRACE

I -- I was gonna do that today.

KAREN

Dammit, I asked you two days ago.

GRACE

He hasn't used one in weeks. That
one's probably still full.

Karen checks the counter.

KAREN

Nope. Ten puffs left. And, not the
point. The point is, you keep
asking to be treated like an adult,
but you can't seem to act like one.

Henry appears in the door and hands Karen her phone.

HENRY
I think Dad just texted.

Karen opens the phone and checks it, suddenly looking grave.

KAREN
He says the airports are closed.
All of them.

HENRY
So how's he getting home?

KAREN
He's driving. Wants us to meet him
in Las Cruces.

Karen takes a breath. This is getting all too real.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Pack clothes, grab essentials, meet
me in the truck in five.

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - GARAGE - DAY

A RATCHET STRAP pulls taut across a load of supplies.
Karen's phone sits on the frame of the truck bed, on speaker.

KAREN (INTO THE PHONE)
Got your message, but it seems like
the phones are down now, so... we'll
just meet you at the motel address
you texted. Stay safe. I love you.

Grace enters with a camping pack just as Karen hangs up.

GRACE
Was that Dad?

KAREN
Voicemail again. And hey, don't
tell Henry about the inhalers.
Anxiety's a trigger and I don't need
him getting nervous.

HENRY
Nervous about what?

GRACE
'Bout me calling *shotgun*!

Grace is quick to cover, and Karen is grateful as they pile
into the truck. Karen turns the key, only to watch the gas
gauge barely crest EMPTY. She closes her eyes. Shit.

GRACE (CONT'D)
My car's got gas. I never ride
fumes. *Super* responsible like that.

Karen looks over at the much smaller CHEVY CRUZE...

INT. CHEVY CRUZE - DAY

The Cruze is packed to the gills. Henry, stuffed in the back, clings to his prized PUNT, PASS & KICK TROPHY as Karen navigates past an endless LINE OF CARS at the gas station. She takes in the mayhem -- *is this really happening?!*

A staticky AM STATION on the car RADIO --

RADIO NEWSMAN (V.O.)
... Reports say the toxic ash cloud
consumed Las Vegas and now continues
east at an alarming rate.

HENRY
Is our house going to be okay?

Karen clicks it off, turning into a Walgreens parking lot.

KAREN
Let's not worry about that. Just
gonna pop in here for some snacks.

She shoots Grace a look -- she's not here for snacks.

INT. WALGREENS - DAY

LOOTERS stuff shopping bags and run without paying. Karen pauses, rattled by the chaos. It's not safe, but Henry needs his meds, so she bee-lines for the pharmacy in the back...

She slides over the counter, sees cases smashed open, most of the inventory's been stolen. She finds Rx bins, grabs the "M" box and searches PRESCRIPTION BAGS for "Monroe"...

From the back of the pharmacy, TWO TWEAKERS emerge with bags of stolen drugs -- one of them shirtless, sweating and agro.

TWEAKER
Where the hell's the Oxy!
(spots Karen)
Hey!

He lurches toward Karen as she frantically searches the rest of the bags, none for Henry. Dammit! The shirtless Tweaker GRABS AT HER SLEEVE, but she YANKS AWAY, leaps back over the counter and runs down the aisle, checking over her shoulder to see if he's chasing -- he's not.

She finds a shopping bag and races through the aisles -- grabs bandages, HEPA masks, water, snacks, anything that might come in handy.

She starts for the exit and realizes she hasn't paid. She looks around and spots a timid CLERK helplessly watching people tear the place apart. Karen approaches and hands him a few twenty-dollar bills.

KAREN
I'm not a thief.

INT. CHEVY CRUZE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Karen jumps into her seat, hands shaking with nerves.

KAREN
Didn't have what I needed. But I
grabbed a few things anyway.

She passes the shopping bag to Grace, throws the car in gear,
and they tear out of the parking lot.

INT. AMANDA'S OFFICE, U.S. EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - DAY

Amanda stands before a monitor on the wall; PRESIDENT AMOS
REED (60s) stares back at her from the Oval Office.

U.S. PRESIDENT REED
Afternoon, Ambassador.

AMANDA
Mr. President.

U.S. PRESIDENT REED
Whatever our scheduled call was
about, shelve it. I need you
focused on the crisis at hand.

AMANDA
Understood.

U.S. PRESIDENT REED
By now you've seen reports of panic
across the west of the country and
you know millions of Americans are
fleeing south toward Mexico.

AMANDA
And I'm hoping you're about to tell
me the hysteria is unwarranted.

U.S. PRESIDENT REED
Wish I were. Trying to understand
how the worst eruption in recorded
history happens with such little
warning, but I'm told the magnitude
of a volcano is even harder to
predict than that of an earthquake.

AMANDA
How bad is it?

U.S. PRESIDENT REED
It erupted with over a *million* times
the power of Hiroshima. Reno, San
Francisco and Sacramento are a total
loss, not even the governor made it
out. A few ships off the coast,
west of the damage, may have
survived, but that's about it.

(then)

(MORE)

U.S. PRESIDENT REED (CONT'D)

If that's not bad enough, damn thing is still ejecting billions of pounds of debris *per minute*. Jet stream is sweeping it all across the country.

Amanda steadies herself, stays focused. Woman is a rock.

AMANDA

What's the projected impact?

U.S. PRESIDENT REED

I'm going to show you something NASA sent over, but it stays between us.

He nods off camera and his image changes to a MAP of NORTH AMERICA. On it, A DARK MASS spreads across the continent, following the jet stream, as a TIMELINE rolls out days until the mass covers most of the country.

U.S. PRESIDENT REED (CONT'D)

Everything you see in grey will be uninhabitable within days. Southern Florida, Washington State and everything north of Manhattan might be alright. So there are pockets we can work with, but Canada and Mexico will have to bear a heavy burden. Canada is on board, Mexico's in your hands.

The map clears and President Reed's image returns.

AMANDA

Has this data been shared with anyone else down here?

U.S. PRESIDENT REED

Only you. Now, chances are Northern Mexico will suffer toxic air as well, so they'll be worried about their own people.

AMANDA

And if they realize the scale of the exodus, they could shut their border to protect themselves from getting overrun by panicked Americans.

U.S. PRESIDENT REED

Exactly. We've already lost nearly twenty-million civilian lives. If Mexico doesn't keep its border open, that number could double... I'm counting on you to see that doesn't happen.

Off Amanda, the weight of the nation now on her shoulders.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CHEVY CRUZE - DAY

Karen navigates southbound traffic, focused and intense. Her mind racing as the AM Radio spouts news.

RADIO NEWSMAN (V.O.)
Best guess is two magma chambers
merged after an earthquake deep
beneath the mantle. We just don't
have the equipment to predict these
things. In 1980 we evacuated Long
Valley, but it never erupted.

Grace stares WEST out the passenger window when she notices a transparent SHOCKWAVE rippling toward them with insane speed.

GRACE
What the hell is that?!

Then -- BOOOOOM! The car rocks sideways and a thunderous CRACK echoes all around. They exchange stunned glances.

KAREN
Everyone all right?
(they are)
Must've been the shockwave, just
took a couple hours to get here.

HENRY
Think Dad's okay? He was a lot
closer to the eruption.

KAREN
Arizona is far enough away. Daddy's
fine. We'll see him in Cruces.

RADIO NEWSMAN (V.O.)
I mean, how do you prepare for
something that *might* happen *sometime*
in the next thousand years?

Karen reaches over and CLICKS off the radio.

HENRY
Why doesn't his phone work?

KAREN
I'm not sure, sweetie.

GRACE
Nobody knows anything right now.

Grace reaches over and clicks the RADIO back on.

RADIO NEWSMAN (V.O.)
Scary part is, it's ejecting more
debris than any volcano in history
and we have no idea when it'll stop.

Karen CLICKS it off again with a loaded glance to Grace.

GRACE
Mom, we need to know what's going on.

KAREN
What we need is to get to Las Cruces
to meet up with your father.

Henry looks at the STATION WAGON in the next lane. An OLDER
MAN with FIVE DOGS packed inside. As he WAVES at the pups --

HENRY
The shockwave why planes can't fly?

GRACE
No, it has to do with ashes clogging
the turbines. I read about it.

HENRY
So the ones that were in the air
just crashed?

GRACE
I guess so.

Grace sees the thought churning inside Henry. Pretty grim.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You know what else I was reading
about? Fantasy football.

HENRY
No you weren't.

GRACE
Okay, maybe I wasn't. But as long
as we're gonna be in the car all day
maybe you can finally sell me on it.

HENRY
Like for real?
(off Grace's nod)
Alright, first, you're looking for
high-volume players that get a lot
of touches. Those are your studs.

Karen reaches over and squeezes Grace's hand, grateful.

I/E. RENTAL CAR - HEADING WEST ON 1-40 - DAY

Heavy traffic clogs the eastbound lanes as Americans flee the
volcano. The two westbound lanes are empty, save one car...

Stuart rips it toward home. A ROAD SIGN tells us he's just crossed from New Mexico into ARIZONA. He taps CALL on his phone. It RINGS once... then a VOICE MAIL GREETING.

SANJIT (V.O.)
Hey, this is Sanjit. I'm putting this on here because, um... there's a good chance I'm about to die, so... Just wanted to let everyone who's been a part of my life know how much all of you mean to --

WHOO-KSHH -- the sound of a THOUSAND WINDOWS SHATTERING. And the line goes dead... Stuart is lost in emotion until -- WHAAA -- a HORN draws his focus back to the road where --

A WALL OF TRAFFIC RACES STRAIGHT AT HIM! Stuart careens onto the shoulder, barely dodging a SEMI speeding east in a westbound lane! Then, he sees why...

An OMINOUS CLOUD OF ASH looms on the distant horizon as LIGHTNING splinters through its folds! Stuart pauses... and JAMS the gas, determined to get home.

INT. AMANDA'S OFFICE, U.S. EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - DAY

Amanda leans against her desk, conferring with iron-jawed U.S. Defense Attaché COL. BRENT ZAIN (40s).

COL. ZAIN
We gotta revise the Status of Forces Agreement. We need staging areas, airfields, and FOBs for supplies and personnel. No questions asked.

AMANDA
Colonel, I'm focused on humanitarian concerns. Secretary of Defense can negotiate military matters himself.

COL. ZAIN
He's a little busy getting our nuclear arsenal off the continent.

Susie RAPS on the door and pops her head in.

SUSIE
We're on the books with President Benitez in an hour.

AMANDA
Perfect. Thank you, Susie.
(then to Col. Zain)
People first. Then guns.
Understood.

He nods in reluctant consent and follows Susie out. Amanda's cell BUZZES in her pocket. She pulls it out and checks it --

A TEXT: *"Guessing you didn't turn in that letter?"*

INT. ELEGANT HOME - MEXICO CITY - SAME

Manuel, Amanda's lover from our opening, stands over an open briefcase on the dining table, cell phone in hand as --

Amanda TEXTS BACK: *"Ooof. I need a drink."*

Manuel's wife, VERÓNICA (40s), with iconic Latin class, brings him a packed lunch, as he slips his phone back in his pocket.

[NOTE: Spanish dialogue will be indicated by italics.]

MANUEL

Thank you. You talk to your sister?

VERÓNICA

She says you're overreacting. But she agreed to come. She left Chihuahua an hour ago.

MANUEL

Tell her even if the air stays clean up there, the north will be flooded with Americans by tomorrow.

JUAN-CARLOS (24), their clean-cut son, enters, interjecting --

JUAN-CARLOS

And we're just letting the gringos come in?

MANUEL

They stay a week, spend a bunch of money and go home. Everybody wins.

JUAN-CARLOS

Or, we let them suffocate, then take back the land they stole from us.

MANUEL

Like it, or not, Juan-Carlos, these days, the U.S. and Mexico are partners.

JUAN-CARLOS

As long as we do what they tell us.

He kisses his mother and heads out. Manuel watches him go in frustration as Verónica makes her way over.

VERÓNICA

He's just young. His heart's still growing.

MANUEL

Sometimes I'm not so sure.

Verónica zips up his suitcase and hands it to him.

VERÓNICA

When this thing's over, we need to talk.

MANUEL

About what?

VERÓNICA

Like I said, when this thing's over.

She gives him a tender kiss on this cheek, but the gesture does little to soothe him.

INT. CHEVY CRUZE - DRIVING SOUTH ON I-25 - DAY

Karen grips the wheel, nerves fraying, as they pass another out-of-gas car on the side of the road. She checks the fuel gauge, about half-a-tank, and takes a breath.

HENRY

We have anything to eat?

KAREN

Of course, sweetie.

She forces a steady smile, reaches into the Walgreens bag and pulls out a few protein bars. Tosses one back to Henry and hands one to Grace, who regards it with disinterest.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You okay?

GRACE

I was six days from starting my own life.

Karen watches Grace stare out the window, where --

A pair of BLACK TEENAGERS help an OLD LADY change her tire. A human kindness in a chaotic moment. Something about it moves Karen to call Grace out on her selfish perspective.

KAREN

I am so sorry a disaster that's costing people their *lives* is putting your college debut on hold.

GRACE

Gearing up for another "I don't know how good I have it" speech?

KAREN

You know what, don't eat the bar.

She reaches over and snatches the bar back from her daughter. Henry COUGHS in the back seat, but the ladies don't notice.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Chew on your self-importance a while.

GRACE

On the bright side, you get to stay
in control of everything a little
longer now.

KAREN

We're on the road running from
something we don't even understand,
what exactly am I in control of?

Henry COUGHS some more and now they notice.

KAREN (CONT'D)

You alright? Need your inhaler?

Henry shakes his head. Takes a few steady breaths.

HENRY

I'm good. What are you guys
fighting about?

Karen and Grace exchange glances, they'll stop for his sake.

KAREN

Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DRIVING WEST ALONGSIDE THE 40 - DAY

The air is smoky-grey and volcanic debris TINKLES the roof
like hail. Stuart clocks a line of cars turning onto a
southbound road as he continues west, into the storm. He
hits a Contact -- "Brian" -- on his phone. It rings...

BRIAN (V.O.)

Stuart?

STUART

Brian! SO good to hear your voice,
man! You still in Berkeley?

BRIAN (V.O.)

No, Tijuana. We were in Santa
Barbara when -- Wait, where are you?

STUART

Arizona -- I was in New Mexico for
work. Leah and India are back in
the Bay. I'm driving there now.

Brian's voice CRACKLES as the connection weakens.

BRIAN (V.O.)

Have you heard from them?

STUART

No, I can't get through.

BRIAN (V.O.)

Um, I don't know how to... even in
Santa Barbara, we barely got out.

(MORE)

BRIAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The ash rolled in so thick you
couldn't breathe. And we were
south. The Bay Area... it's gone.

STUART

But... Okay... Well, India was on a
boat. So, if she was far enough
west, like out at sea, she could be
okay, right? And the ashes are
moving east, so...

BRIAN (V.O.)

Sure... Maybe. And if she is alive?
What good are you going to do her
dead? 'Cuz you keep driving west...
you'll die, Stuart. Period. You
need to get as far south as --

The line CRACKLES and dies. The connection lost.

STUART

Brian? Brian, you there?

Stuart watches the ash cloud thicken; checks the GPS display
on the dash -- BERKELEY, CA 844 miles... there's just no way.
The engine SPUTTERS as he coasts to a stop and drops his
head. He shudders with emotion... takes a breath to steady
himself... then sits up, cranks the wheel and heads south.

EXT. MOTEL 8 - LAS CRUCES, NM - DAY

The parking lot is eerily empty. Looted cars sit with doors
open. Karen, nauseous with stress, tries Hank again. No
service. Henry waits by the street, still hopeful.

The RADIO crackles from inside the car --

NEWSMAN (V.O.)

Survivors say it was impossible to
breathe inside the debris cloud that
consumed Tucson and is now sweeping
across New Mexico.

Karen looks up to the stairwell on the second floor of the
motel where Grace scans the horizon in vain.

KAREN

We can't wait much longer.

GRACE

I'm not leaving without him.

Off Karen, fearing an impossible decision...

INT. CORRIDOR - MEXICAN FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Amanda, Susie, Zain, and an AIDE stride down an imposing
hallway toward an ornate door.

AMANDA
Whatever data they have, we don't
deny it, we lean into the fact we're
in uncharted waters and projections
are speculative.

It's clear she's nervous. Her cell BUZZES, and she answers.

AMANDA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Amanda Knowles.

JOSH (V.O.)
Mom? Can you hear me?

The voice of JOSH KNOWLES (24), terrified, stops Amanda in
her tracks. She motions the others to continue without her.

AMANDA
Josh? Where are you?

JOSH
Austin.

AMANDA
Texas? Thought you were in New Yor--

JOSH
I came to see Luke a few days ago.
Mom, they're evacuating the city,
trucks taking people east.

AMANDA
No. Head south. You have a car?

JOSH
Yeah. But no cell service. I'm
calling from a land line.

AMANDA
Leave now! Get to the border in
Laredo and give them your name at
bridge two. I'll send someone to
get you... and Luke. Stay safe.

JOSH
Okay... thanks.

AMANDA
I love you.

But the line CLICKS dead, leaving her to wonder if he even
heard her.

INT. CHAMBER - MEXICAN FEDERAL BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Amanda enters to find Susie, Zain and the Aide sitting across
from GEN. ROMERO (Mexican Secretary of Defense), PRESIDENT
JORGE BENITEZ... and Manuel.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
Ambassador, you know General Romero,
Secretary of Defense. And Secretary
of the Interior, Manuel Pacheco.

AMANDA
Of course. Gentlemen.

She and Manuel lock eyes for the slightest of moments.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
Your deputy chief was just showing
us your scientists' projections.

He points to a FLAT SCREEN where a MAP of North America
appears: it's similar to the graphic POTUS showed her, only
the DARK MASS is trimmer and doesn't stretch as far east.

SUSIE
The ash plume will span the
continent within a week, but air
should only be toxic along the path
of the jet stream. Of course, the
further north, or south, you go, the
less lethal it becomes.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
How many Americans you asking us to
absorb? We can't take all of them.

AMANDA
Temporary refuge for a few million
of our citizens is all we ask.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
My sources say twenty.

GEN. ROMERO
And we can't sustain half that many.

MANUEL
Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

She glances at Manuel in gratitude.

AMANDA
Exactly. One bridge at a time.
First things we need are security,
humanitarian aid, an expedited
border crossing system --

GEN. ROMERO
*We already have millions of Mexicans
flooding south from Chihuahua and
Sonora. We should close the border
and take care of our people first.*

MANUEL
*Leaving Americans to die on our
doorstep won't play well globally.*

GEN. ROMERO
They've done it to us for years.

AMANDA
General, most of us have loved ones
fleeing for their lives right now.
Be nice if you could respect that.

Romero puffs his chest to push back, but Pres. Benitez stops him with a tempered hand.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
Once the volcano stops, how long
before your refugees can go home?

AMANDA
Most likely scenario? Jet stream
blows the ashes out to sea within a
month or two.

GEN. ROMERO
Our scientists say the debris will
poison the soil, contaminate ground
water. Nothing will grow for years.

COL. ZAIN
Our crops may take a hit, but our
military sure as hell won't.

GEN. ROMERO
Are you threatening us?

COL. ZAIN
Just stating a fact.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
I think I've heard enough.

AMANDA
President Benitez, please... This is
already the deadliest disaster in
modern times. Our country is
struggling... but the United States
will rise to the challenge, as we
always do. In the meantime, we ask
humbly for Mexico to lend us a hand.

A beat.

PRESIDENT BENITEZ
Okay. We'll send what resources we
can to the border, which will remain
open to Americans for the moment.

Amanda nods in gratitude, knowing her son's life is at stake.

EXT. MOTEL 8 - LAS CRUCES, NM - DUSK

Karen, Grace and Henry watch a MURDER OF CROWS stamp their wings against the sky; southbound in panic.

The air is hazy, and the low sun ignites the sky with an unnatural hue. Henry COUGHS a little, a slight wheeze. Karen shoots a worried glance his way -- *You all right?*

HENRY
Can I have my inhaler?

KAREN
Of course, sweetie. But just one puff. You been doing so great.

As Karen goes to get it, she fires a hard look at Grace --

KAREN (CONT'D)
That's it. We're leaving.

GRACE
He's barely wheezing. He's fine.

KAREN
We can't risk it, he's only got ten puffs. Need to keep heading south.

GRACE
Dad said to meet here. I'm not leaving without him!

HENRY
Mom!

Henry points to the northwest where a CLOUD OF ASH ROILS toward them like a deadly sand storm!

KAREN
In the car. Now!

GRACE
But Mom --

KAREN
Just do it!

She hands Henry his inhaler and shuttles him into the car as he huffs his medicine. Karen and Grace jump in after and --

INT. CHEVY CRUZE - CONTINUOUS

Karen FLOORS IT out of the parking lot and they FLY DOWN the street, Henry desperately puffing on his inhaler. The SKY GOES DARK behind them as the ASH CLOUD BLOTS OUT THE SUN!

Grace closes her eyes, racked with regret, as she abandons hope of meeting her father here. They're on their own now...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. U.S. BORDER WITH MEXICO - DAY

From high above we see an endless line of cars, ignoring FEMA tents and Red Cross Trucks to creep across the border, unimpeded by anything other than the crush of traffic.

I/E. RENTAL CAR - DRIVING SOUTH INTO MEXICO - DAWN

A ROAD SIGN reads -- "BIENVENIDOS A MÉXICO" -- as Stuart inches south. He's out of the ash cloud, but the morning air is murky and the sky behind looms ominous.

RADIO SCIENTIST (V.O.)
With the amount of silica in the ash
it'll be at least a year before air
travel resumes in North America.

WHOOM--WHOOM--WHOOM... A convoy of MEXICAN MILITARY TRUCKS packed with FEDERALE AGENTS races by on the southbound shoulder, kicking a tail of dust over a WOMAN (30s) stranded next to a broken down minivan on the side of the road.

Stuart watches her wave desperately for help, completely ignored by the passing traffic. He looks at the wine bag on the seat next to him... and pulls up behind the minivan.

The woman approaches the passenger side as Stuart unlocks the doors and grabs the wine bag to make room.

STUART
Need a ride?

Suddenly, he hears the driver's door open and he's YANKED from his seat!

His POV WHIPS UP AND BACK as his head THUMPS the ground and his wine bag tumbles over him! He looks up to see a TALL MAN looming over him with a TIRE IRON!

TALL MAN
Stay down!

Behind the man, the woman leads FOUR KIDS from the mini-van to Stuart's car. Stuart puts a hand to his head and sees the blood on his fingers. It's his first brush with real-world violence and it rattles. The tall man sees it and relents.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
Sorry... I -- I got a family.

He turns, jumps in Stuart's rental and FISHTAILS AWAY!
Stuart watches hapless from his spot on the ground.

INT. CHEVY CRUZE - DRIVING SOUTH IN MEXICO - MORNING

Karen battles traffic; eyes heavy with exhaustion. Nothing but desert for miles. Grace asleep, a blanket falling off her lap. Karen pulls it back up.

Henry stirs in the back, rubs the sleep from his eyes. Karen clocks him in the rearview. She smiles, desperate to make her baby feel some semblance of safety.

KAREN
Mornin, Beans.

HENRY
Where are we?

KAREN
Somewhere in Mexico.

BING! The LOW FUEL ALERT wakes Grace.

GRACE
Ohmygod, how long you let me sleep?

KAREN
You needed the rest.

GRACE
So do you. Want me to take over?

Suddenly, the car SPUTTERS and LURCHES.

KAREN
Think we're both done driving.

HENRY
What's happening?

Karen takes a breath, fighting to stay calm for her kids.

GRACE
Outta gas, bud. But we're alright.
Just gotta keep our heads up.

HENRY
So what do we do now?

KAREN
Well... we hitchhike.

HENRY
Seriously?

Karen nods as the car rolls to a stop on the shoulder. Henry flicks his thumb and looks at it -- could be kinda cool.

KAREN
Grab only your absolute essentials.

EXT. CHEVY CRUZE - ROADSIDE - MEXICO - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Karen shoulders a pack, grabs two gallons of water, then sees Henry clutch his Punt-Pass-Kick Trophy. She shakes her head.

KAREN
I know how hard you worked for that thing, Beans, but...

GRACE
If he wants to carry it, he should get to choose for himself.

KAREN
A trophy can't hydrate, medicate or feed us. You don't get to choose what essential means... I'm sorry.

She turns toward the road and flags PASSING CARS for help. Most are packed tight, and in the few with space, the DRIVERS avoid eye-contact. She sticks her thumb out, starts walking.

KAREN (CONT'D)
We need to keep heading south.

Grace holds Henry's hand, trailing behind, heart breaking for him. Suddenly, she stops.

GRACE
Hold up, I forgot something.

She hustles back to the car and digs around inside...

KAREN
C'mon, Grace. Gotta keep moving!

Grace emerges hoisting a lighter, and Karen keeps walking.

GRACE
Fire! How's that for *essential*?

OFF KAREN'S LOOK -- *What's Grace been lighting with it?*

EXT. HIGHWAY - MEXICO (NORTH AND WEST OF THE MONROES) - DAY

Fords and Hondas, Beemers and beaters jockey for the fastest lane. PUSH through the chaos to the side of the road where --

Stuart sits by his wine case, shirt over his mouth, retreated inside himself. He hasn't moved since the carjacking, but as the air grows thicker he's starting to COUGH a bit.

The SQUEAL of BRAKES lifts his head to see a SEMI pull over and a burly TEAMSTER (60s) hop out --

TEAMSTER
C'mon, son!

A beat, then Stuart stands with his bag and walks stiffly to the semi, as the Teamster lifts the trailer door, revealing --

DOZENS of worn-and-weathered AMERICANS huddled inside. An olive-skinned WOMAN (50s), with cracked glasses, scooches over to make room.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - AMANDA'S OFFICE - MEXICO CITY - DAY

Amanda addresses Susie, Col. Zain, and a DOZEN AMERICAN STAFFERS. Everyone looks haggard.

AMANDA

By now, we all have loved ones we can't get in touch with. We don't know if they're safe, or even alive. I know how frustrating it is... because my own son is one of them.

A wave of emotions hits her and she takes a beat. She notes Staffers welling up. Holding hands. Susie offers her a tissue, and Amanda accepts gratefully but doesn't use it.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Our work here can make a difference in the lives of millions, and there are some important developments. So we need to dig deep and keep going.

(then)

Air quality at the border has deteriorated, and the Mexican Federales have abandoned their posts. Millions of Americans are flooding south, so the Mexican Government is asking us to set up registration centers to get a record of who's entering the country.

COL. ZAIN

To which we said "no way," I hope.

AMANDA

They agree to let our people in, we agree to help document them. It's simple diplomacy.

COL. ZAIN

It's helping them gather data they can use to round up Americans and stick 'em in detention camps. Hell, we've done it. Why trust them?

AMANDA

I don't trust everyone, I trust Manuel Pacheco. If he says his President will offer safe harbor, I believe him.

COL. ZAIN

Seems like an opportune time for the Secretary of the Interior to exploit that trust.

AMANDA

Do you have reason to question Mr.
Pacheco's credibility?

COL. ZAIN

I do, actually. An inside source
just told me the Federales are
laying razor wire across the middle
of Mexico to keep Americans out...
Mr. Pacheco didn't tell you?

Off Amanda, steaming inside...

EXT. HIGHWAY - MEXICO - DAY

A blood-orange sun punches through the turbid sky. Karen
stands with Henry and Grace on the roadside; an endless line
of scared and desperate DRIVERS ignoring them as they pass.

Karen has the WALGREENS BAG out and she's fitting a HEPA MASK
over Henry's face as he COUGHS AND WHEEZES.

HENRY

This thing makes it worse.

KAREN

We gotta keep the ashes out of your
lungs, sweetie.

The air grows thicker by the minute.

HENRY

Can I have my inhaler again?

KAREN

You just had a puff. Give it time.
Keep the mask on and breathe slow.

Suddenly, Grace SHOVES them out of the way as a car drives
off the shoulder and almost hits them! They hurry out of the
way as more vehicles veer onto the dirt, racing south... and
then the SUN GOES DARK.

On the horizon, they see what the cars are racing away from --
A BILLOWING WALL OF ASH ROILS TOWARD THEM!

Karen scoops up Henry, grabs Grace's hand, and they RUN like
mad! Sheer TERROR as the toxic cloud races up behind them
until --- WHOOOOOM! -- Darkness washes over them; ashes
WHIRLING thick and violent from all sides.

They stop running. Henry's face is pale, he can't breathe!
Karen pulls his mask aside and fits his inhaler to his mouth.
She PUFFS the medicine, but he can't take it in. She
squeezes another PUFF and puts the mask back over his face.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Slowly. Slowly.

Henry manages a labored breath as Karen pulls Grace closer and they huddle tight -- the wind HOWLING all around them!

HENRY
Are we gonna die, Mommy?

KAREN
'Course not, baby.

But her eyes belie her words. She kisses Henry then Grace, and bows her head in prayer --

KAREN (CONT'D)
Please God, if you can hear me,
spare my babies. Take me, just me.

A VOICE IN THE DARKNESS (O.S.)
Hey!

Karen looks up to see A MEXICAN MAN with gentle eyes leaning from a WHITE BUS. This is TOMÁS (30). HALLELUJAH.

TOMÁS
Get in, quick!

INT. WHITE BUS - MEXICO - CONTINUOUS

Tomás helps Henry onto the bus, Karen and Grace behind them, coughing and wiping the soot from their faces. Tomás jumps in the driver's seat, and the bus lurches forward. Karen struggles to get out words.

KAREN
Thank you. We were -- Oh, God!
And then I -- I started praying and
you just... there you were.

TOMÁS
Lord must not be ready for you yet.

GRACE
Thank you so much.

TOMÁS
Should still be room in the back.

He nods past TWENTY FELLOW REFUGEES toward some empty seats, an even split of Mexicans and Americans.

Karen smiles, bursting with gratitude, and leads her children down the aisle, as Henry finally takes a good breath.

Only now do we notice the CRUCIFIX hanging from the rearview and the PORTRAIT OF JESUS painted above the windshield.

INT. MANUEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Manuel steps from his desk to greet Juan-Carlos, entering in full MEXICAN FEDERALE REGALIA.

MANUEL

Not the choice I would have made for you, but I have to admit, you wear the badge well.

JUAN-CARLOS

Thank you, papa. I came to say goodbye. Headed north.

MANUEL

You tell your mother yet, or you asking me to do your dirty work?

JUAN-CARLOS

If anything, I'm doing your dirty work. Keeping the Americans out.

MANUEL

The line of control's a humanitarian strategy, not a military one.

JUAN-CARLOS

Is it? How long have they looked down on us? Locked our women and children in cages at their border?

MANUEL

And what does it say about us if we do the same in return?

As he lets this land, Amanda blows in. Heated.

AMANDA

We need to talk.

JUAN-CARLOS

Embajadora.

Amanda ignores him, stays locked on Manuel.

AMANDA

"Line of Control"?! You kidding me?

JUAN-CARLOS

Reap what you sow, Señora...

Amanda gives him a hard look. Juan-Carlos shrugs it off and sees himself out. Manuel takes a beat...

MANUEL

I'm sorry for my son's disrespect.

AMANDA

More concerned with yours right now.

Manuel crosses to close his door and turns to Amanda.

MANUEL

Wasn't my idea, but the hardliners convinced the President, and --

AMANDA

And you didn't think to tell me?

MANUEL

The ink's still drying on the executive order, I was going to --

AMANDA

A call. Text? Anything.

MANUEL

You didn't give me a heads up before you downplayed this crisis to my president. You really believe your people can return home in a month?

AMANDA

I was following orders.

MANUEL

So was I. Eighteen million Mexicans have abandoned the Northern States and are turning to my government for food and shelter. We're over capacity. If we don't impose order, Mexico will collapse under the weight of all your immigrants.

AMANDA

And by order you mean a barbed-wire wall.

MANUEL

A Line of Control.

AMANDA

My son is going to get stuck behind that line. Just hope he doesn't die on the wrong side of your politics.

She turns and sees herself out, Manuel rattled in her wake.

INT. WHITE BUS - MEXICO - DAY

Henry naps on Grace's shoulder, exhausted, as she scrolls through family photos on her phone. She lingers on a shot of her father as Karen leans across the aisle.

KAREN

Should save your battery.

(off Grace's scowl)

We'll find him, Grace. Don't worry.

GRACE

What if we don't? What if yesterday was the last time I ever see him?

(then)

He probably showed up five minutes after we left.

KAREN
I couldn't risk the air getting
worse with Henry.

GRACE
Why are you the only one making
decisions for the whole family?

Karen takes in her frustration *really* not looking to fight.

KAREN
Okay, I respect the fact that you're
super smart, like college smart.
And quickly becoming an adult. But
I'm the mother. And that means I
get to make the decisions.

GRACE
Because...?

KAREN
Because I have more experience.

GRACE
With what, running from volcanoes?

KAREN
With separating emotions from logic.

Grace shakes her head and turns to the window, done with
this. Karen clocks Tomás watching them in the rearview. She
slides out of her seat and makes her way up the aisle to him.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Sorry to bug you, just wondering
where we're headed?

TOMÁS
South. To clean air. No plan
beyond that... How is the boy?

KAREN
Sleeping, thank heavens.

TOMÁS
Same with my family.

He nods at MARIA (30s), LUIS (5), and LUPE (3) sleeping.

KAREN
They're beautiful.

TOMÁS
I'm blessed. And your daughter?

KAREN
Hmm... wait 'til yours is nineteen.

TOMÁS

I grew up with ten brothers and sisters. Not much I haven't seen.

KAREN

Hats off to your mother. I struggle with only two.

TOMÁS

You're doing better than you think.

KAREN

I don't know... I found a bag of marijuana in Grace's jeans the other day. Now she's mad I looked through her stuff, mad I told her father. Who's missing now which, of course, she also blames me for.

We start to sense Tomás is the kind of guy everyone opens up to. It's his gift... and his burden.

TOMÁS

World's on fire, and you can't make peace with your own daughter.

KAREN

She just wants to grow up so fast.

TOMÁS

We all did. For me, with so many siblings, sometimes it felt like I didn't have a voice, you know? So, I started running with a tough crew. They made me feel important. Older. But my life was heading to a dangerous place... Then an earthquake hit my village. I lost my house and two of my sisters.

KAREN

Oh, I am so sorry.

TOMÁS

Worst thing to ever happen to me... and the one thing that saved my life. Because through it, I found God. Why did I have to suffer so deeply before I could let God's love into my heart? Only the Lord knows.

(then)

But mistakes are how we learn. Struggle is how we grow.

His words resonate with Karen as she takes them in...

KAREN

Guess we'll all be giants by the time this thing is over.

TOMÁS

We were spared for a reason. Give
Grace a chance to prove herself.
She might surprise you.

INT. SEMI-TRAILER - MEXICO - DAY

The trailer's full of refugees of every age and race, every class and creed. An American mosaic. ESTER, the olive-skinned woman with glasses at Stuart's side, sees him anxiously twisting his WEDDING BAND.

ESTER

I'm sure she's thinking of you, too.

Stuart nods, sniffles back emotion.

STUART

She didn't make it.

ESTER

Oh... I'm so sorry.

STUART

We live in Berkeley, I was away on
business. Never got to say goodbye.

He can't hold it back any more and lets the tears flow.
Ester reaches over and takes his hand, strokes it in her own.

STUART (CONT'D)

My daughter had a field trip. Whale
watching. I don't know if the boat
made it out of the bay. Maybe she's
safe, but...

She squeezes his hand and waits for eye contact --

ESTER

Children are stronger than we think.
Don't give up hope. Wherever she
is... she can feel it.

INT. WHITE BUS - MEXICO - DAY

Karen's finally asleep. Henry and Grace stare out the soot-caked window as the bus rolls to a stop. They're out of the ash cloud, but the air's still milky and grey.

TOMÁS

We're at some sort of checkpoint.
Be right back.

He disembarks as his wife, Maria, translates to Spanish.
Henry turns to Grace, eyes full of emotion.

HENRY

I'm kinda scared.

GRACE

You? You're the toughest kid I
know. Never once seen you back down
from a challenge. We'll be fine.

She pulls something from her pocket, takes Henry's hand and
slides the object into his palm. He looks down to find --
the PLAQUE pried off of his Punt-Pass-Kick trophy. Engraved
upon it -- HENRY MONROE, 2020 P.P.K. CHAMPION! Henry beams.

HENRY

You didn't go back just for the
lighter, did you?

Grace shrugs and kisses him on the head. ANGRY VOICES
outside wake Karen, as Tomás climbs back on board, forlorn.

TOMÁS

Police say only Mexican citizens go
further south. Everyone else needs
to get off.

GRACE

Aren't we already in Mexico? Why
stop us here?

TOMÁS

I'm not sure. Sorry I can't help.

His face looks pained as passengers GRUMBLE and gather their
things. The Monroes make their way with the other Americans
to the front; Mexican passengers watching them with sympathy.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)

I wish I could take you farther.

KAREN

You're the reason we're still alive.

Henry trades looks with a MEXICAN BOY about his age and
offers a tentative wave. The boy's eyes brim with sympathy
as he pulls a CANDY BAR from his pocket and holds it out to
Henry. The gesture takes Henry off guard, but he accepts the
offering and nods in gratitude as the boy smiles at him -- a
fleeting moment of connection.

And the Monroes step off the bus to find --

EXT. HIGHWAY - MEXICO - DAY

HORDES OF AMERICANS held back by ARMED MEXICAN FEDERALES and
COILS OF RAZOR WIRE that stretch as far as the eye can see.

A clamor of ANGRY SPANISH and DESPERATE ENGLISH assaults them
as they wade into a mass of American immigrants. People push
their way forward, tempers running hot. Karen pulls Henry
close, Grace just behind... this place is a powder keg.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. MEXICAN INTEROCEANIC HIGHWAY - MEXICO - DAY

Throngs of AMERICANS confront indifferent FEDERALE AGENTS at the edge of a razor wire barrier. WE FIND -- Juan-Carlos engaging a CLEAN CUT TEXAN holding a ROLEX in his face.

CLEAN CUT TEXAN
Thing's worth more than your house.

JUAN-CARLOS
Mexican citizens only, sir.

Juan-Carlos nods toward ANOTHER LINE where MEXICAN CITIZENS show Federales their IDs, and enter without hassle. The Texan pulls out a wad of bills.

CLEAN CUT TEXAN
How about cash? This is five grand.

JUAN-CARLOS
Sorry. Mexicans only.

KAREN (O.S.)
Excuse me?

Juan-Carlos looks past the Texan to find Karen with Grace and Henry huddled close behind. Nods for the Texan to move on.

CLEAN CUT TEXAN
I'll make some other Mexican rich.

He moves on, and Karen slides into his place.

KAREN
Hi, I know you have rules but my son has asthma. He needs clean air.

JUAN-CARLOS
Sorry, Mexicans only.

KAREN
I know, but surely there's an exception for medical conditions.

JUAN-CARLOS
No exceptions, *señora*.

Karen looks him in the eye... and sees she has no shot. She ushers Grace and Henry along, as Grace starts to well up. She pauses to turn back, but Karen grabs her arm to stop her. A loaded, silent exchange passes before Karen relents, taking Tomás's words to heart. She watches Grace make her way back to Juan-Carlos. Just the two of them now.

GRACE
Please... my brother's only twelve.
Sweetest kid ever. Smart. Kind.
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

Loves football. Our football, not soccer, no offense. And I was supposed to get medicine for him but... I forgot. So if he dies...

She tries, but can't fight back tears any longer. Juan-Carlos starts to soften, his heart finally pierced.

JUAN-CARLOS

I -- I wish I could, but --

GRACE

Just let them in. I'll stay. Help. Cook. Clean toilets. Anything.

A beat. Juan-Carlos confides a secret --

JUAN-CARLOS

There's a town a few kilometers east. *Esperanza*. You might find shelter. And they have a pharmacy.

Grace sees the good in him and knows this really is the best that he can offer. Maybe their paths will cross again...

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - MEXICO - DAY

The semi's parked by an abandoned factory on the outskirts of a small town, as the Teamster lifts the trailer door.

TEAMSTER

End of the line, folks.

Stuart hops off, helps Ester and some others down.

STUART

Can't take us any farther?

TEAMSTER

CB chatter says Federales put up a new border a click south and aren't lettin' Americans in. Total chaos. Also heard the Red Cross is settin' up a magnet center in town to help separated families reconnect. Worse spots to wait this thing out.

REY, Latino, (20s) with a law enforcement look.

REY

I'm not about to wait around here.

TEAMSTER

Well, you got enough cash, I hear Mexicans are sneaking people across in their trunks.

REY

Don't worry. I'll find us all a way over for free.

STUART

I'm going to wait here for the Red
Cross, best way to find my daughter.

REY

I'm sorry, but... your daughter's
gone, man. Need to worry about
saving yourself now.

Stuart looks him dead in the eye... then turns and starts
walking toward town, wine bag in hand.

EXT. STREET - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - DUSK

Karen, Grace, and Henry trudge past pastel-colored casitas.
A long day ago, this town was populated by 10,000 Mexicans,
99% of whom have fled south to better air, leaving their
dogs, chickens, and pigs to roam the streets.

CRACK! The Monroes turn to see a WHITE MAN KICK in a casita
door and usher his family inside. Karen spots an old MEXICAN
MAN watching scornfully from a church spire. She's uneasy, a
bad feeling about Esperanza.

KAREN

We need to go farther south.

GRACE

Past the barbed wire and soldiers?
I'm really not trying to be a smart-
ass, but... logic over emotion?

She heads for a public water fountain at the edge of the
plaza, pulls back her hair and leans down to drink when --

A MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Don't drink that!

JAMES (30s), stout and white in FULL CAMO with a SIDE ARM at
his waist, approaches...

JAMES

Water's got bacteria we're not used
to, like a blender in your stomach.
(then)
James Colfax, Oak Hill, Texas.

KAREN

I'm Karen, this is Grace and Henry.
Pueblo, Colorado. Thanks for the
warning.

JAMES

Got bottled water and food back at
my spot. Lemme help you folks out.

He nods for them to follow and starts off.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

James has the humble home outfitted like an army bunker. SURVIVAL GEAR hangs from ZIP TIES along the ceiling beams, cases of water and MRES line the wall, a cot in the corner.

Karen, Grace, and Henry guzzle water as James unpacks a duffel full of more gear --

JAMES
Got your first aid, flashlights,
batteries, water filters, Marlboros.
(re: a triangular soft
case)
Back-up peacekeeper.

KAREN
I'm impressed.
(re: her Jansport backpack)
And embarrassed by my survival kit.

JAMES
Don't be. I put a lot more into
being prepared than most folks.

GRACE
Preparation's half the battle.
That's what my Dad says, anyway.

The mention of him stills the air, and James notes it.

JAMES
What happened? He all right?

KAREN
We hope so. He was working an oil
field in Arizona. We were trying to
meet in Las Cruces, but...

JAMES
Oilmen are as tough as they come,
he'll find his way down.

Henry wheezes; motions for his inhaler. Karen pulls it out, checks the counter and hands it to him with a forlorn look. He PUFFS on it, but nothing comes out.

HENRY
Can I have a new one?

Karen and Grace exchange loaded glances.

KAREN
I didn't have a chance to pick them
up this week. I'm so sorry.

GRACE
No. It was my fault. You don't
have to cover for me.
(then)
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

The cop at the border said there's a pharmacy in town. I'll go find it.

KAREN

You're not walking these streets alone, Grace. I'll go.

HENRY

No, Mom. Please stay with me.

GRACE

I'll be fine. Let me fix this.

Karen wrestles with the choice, as James clocks the tension --

JAMES

I can go with her. Let you stay here with the boy. If it helps.

Karen hates splitting up... but Henry needs her here.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - AMANDA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Amanda loads files and maps into an open briefcase as Susie appears in the door.

SUSIE

Why does it look like you're packing for more than a night at home?

AMANDA

We have six-million Americans stuck at this ridiculous "Line of Control" with more coming. Technically, they're on Mexican soil so we have no authority, but Mexico is too focused on its own people to offer security or aid to ours. We need to know what the hell's going on up there.

SUSIE

So I'll put a team together.

Amanda shuts her briefcase and takes a breath.

AMANDA

Josh is up there. God knows where.

(then)

I haven't even asked about your family. How are they?

Susie takes a beat... and heads for the wet bar.

SUSIE

My sister in Reno is MIA, and my parents in Tucson. Estimated death toll just hit thirty-million, so... considering we've lost ten-percent of the U.S.

(MORE)

SUSIE (CONT'D)

population, I think it's safe to
call this the worst day ever.

She pours two vodkas and crosses to hand one to Amanda.

AMANDA

I shouldn't.

SUSIE

Think you've earned it... To the
end of the world as we know it.

Amanda stares at the drink... and takes it. They CLINK
glasses and drink. Relief washing over Amanda.

AMANDA

Just got word POTUS and his Cabinet
have relocated to Maine, which
apparently is soon to be the most
populous state in the country.

SUSIE

I feel bad for all the lobsters.

AMANDA

I don't know, bottom of the ocean
sounds mighty nice about now.

They smile at the gallows humor and take another drink.

SUSIE

Guess I'm glad you didn't get your
resignation in, this would have been
one helluva first day for me.

AMANDA

Not sure I've done any better than
you would've.

SUSIE

I know you're worried about Josh.
But if you go north, Zain will start
flexing. If he tells POTUS we need
to show some military might, things
could get a lot messier... You're
the one holding everything together
down here. This is where your son,
and everyone else up there, needs
you fighting for them.

MANUEL (O.S.)

Am I interrupting?

They turn to find Manuel in the doorway.

SUSIE

Nope. She's all yours.

Susie sees herself out as Manuel makes his way over, he notes
the glass in her hand.

MANUEL

Thought you weren't drinking at work any more.

AMANDA

It's been a long day.

MANUEL

I'm sorry about Josh. I'll do everything I can to locate him.

AMANDA

I appreciate that.

Her tone makes clear her walls are up.

MANUEL

So... Probably best to keep things strictly business now, I guess.

AMANDA

Already said our goodbyes anyway, right?

They share a weighted exchange before Manuel nods and turns to leave. Half-way to the door he stops and turns back.

MANUEL

You're the best ambassador my country has had in decades. We're lucky to have you during this.

And he leaves Amanda with a hurricane of emotions.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - SOMEWHERE IN MEXICO - NIGHT

Stuart sits on a bench, watching a RUSTY SWING sway in the breeze. Hapless. He unzips his wine case and pulls out "The Paragon." Fuck it. He take a wine key, pops the cork... and swills straight from the bottle, too shaken to appreciate it.

EXT. STREET - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

James chomps on a stick of jerky on the way to the pharmacy. He offers some to Grace, but she passes.

JAMES

Ya know, back home people made fun a me. I was that crazy dude with all the survival gear.

GRACE

Look who's laughing now, I guess.

JAMES

Exactly. I mean, figured it'd be a nuke from Russia, or terrorists, but I knew, I mean I knew something big was coming... You and your mamma are lucky you bumped into me.

He throws an uninvited arm around her and Grace stiffens.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'll take care of you.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

Henry lies on Karen's lap. Every breath harder to draw than the last. She strokes his hair doing her best to ease him.

KAREN
Daddy's gonna be so proud of you...
how strong you've been. I sure am.

She sees him squeezing something, and he opens his hand to show her the Punt, Pass & Kick plaque from his trophy.

HENRY
Grace.

He smiles and takes his first good breath, as Karen pulls him to her chest, blessed to have such wonderful children.

EXT. STREET - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

James leads Grace down a narrow street of abandoned houses. No pharmacy in sight... she's visibly nervous now.

JAMES
Blink of an eye and the world
changed. Only the strong survive.
Need to be smart about who you align
with, do yer best to make 'em happy.

GRACE
How much further?

JAMES
You seem smart to me.

He stops them and leans down to kiss her, but she turns away. She tries to push him off, but he pulls her tight --

JAMES (CONT'D)
We can be good for each other.

GRACE
HEL--

A thick hand over Grace's mouth silences her scream as he forces her into a dark doorway...

JAMES
You just need to be more grateful.

EXT. STREET - SOMEWHERE IN MEXICO - NIGHT

Stuart walks aimlessly down the street, swilling from the bottle of wine.

He watches a STRAY DOG sniff its way down the block, not a care in the world... Then a MUFFLED SCREAM turns his head toward the doorway where --

James pins Grace, hand pressed tight across her mouth.

STUART

Hey!

But James doesn't hear, lost in his fervor.

STUART (CONT'D)

HEY!

Still nothing. He sees James tug at Grace's pants, and something clicks inside him -- he bolts toward the doorway, fist clinched tight around the wine bottle, and CRACKS the bottle over James's skull!

James STAGGERS and drops to his knees.

Stuart grabs Grace by the hand and they sprint away as James pulls himself up dazed and stumbling, but mad as hell...

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

THUMPING at the door turns Karen from comforting Henry as --

GRACE (O.S.)
Mom! Open up!

Karen hurries over, slides free the BARREL BOLT and flings the door open. Grace practically tackles her, squeezing her mother with desperate affection.

KAREN
What happened, baby? You okay?

STUART
She was being attacked.

Karen swings in front of Grace, sheltering her children.

GRACE
It's okay. He saved me from James.

KAREN
James? He came after you?

STUART
And he's right behind us.

Stuart keeps a lookout at the door while Grace collects their things and Karen heads for James's duffle bag.

KAREN
Henry, we're leaving. Stay calm.
Breathe slow. We'll be fine.

She digs through the bag, finds the soft case and pulls out a PISTOL. She checks the mag well and chamber -- no bullets!

STUART
I see him. He's coming!

Stuart ducks back in, slams the door and locks the BARREL BOLT. Grace rushes to the back door, but it's LOCKED -- and the deadbolt needs a key to open it! Karen keeps digging in the bag, frantically searching for ammo when --

CRACK! The front DOOR BENDS as James RAMS IT.

Stuart flings open curtains, but the windows have SECURITY BARS. CRACK! They hear James GRUNT, slamming into the door! Stuart pulls Henry and Grace behind a couch to shield them, as Karen finds an AMMO MAG and pops it in then --

BOOM! The door splinters, and James BULLS through. He reaches for the gun in his holster, but Karen's already training hers on him!

KAREN

Leave it, or I put a bullet in you.

James stiffens, hand inches from his gun. A hint of a smile.

JAMES

You don't want to shoot me. You even know how to use that thing?

BANG! Karen FIRES A ROUND just inches from James's feet.

KAREN

Think my oilman husband and I never went to the range? Next one goes in your groin, one after that in your head. Now take two fingers, put your piece on the floor and kick it over to me.

James's smile disappears as he takes out his pistol, lowers it to the floor and kicks it over to Karen.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Guy with my kids behind the couch?

STUART

Yeah?

KAREN

Grab a pack and load it with food. I don't usually take what's not mine but with James here I'll make an exception.

Stuart grabs an ARMY PACK and loads it up with FOOD POUCHES.

JAMES

Take it easy. We can talk this out.

KAREN

On the floor. Face down.

James lies down on his stomach, hands wide. Karen grabs the gun he slid over, tucks it in her waist and steps up to him.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Stay away from my family.

JAMES

You won't have any trouble from me.

KAREN

Good. 'Cuz next time, I kill you...

INT. U.S. EMBASSY - AMANDA'S OFFICE - MEXICO CITY - DAY

It's late. The room is quiet as Amanda works on her laptop. She pauses, drained. Her eyes drift to her PHONE on the desk, willing it to ring... then a photo beyond it.

IN THE PHOTO -- a younger, happier Amanda stands with her then-teenage-son, JOSH, smiling somewhere tropical.

She takes a breath, glances at the WET BAR... then rises and makes her way over to it. She pours a couple fingers of vodka and knocks it back in one gulp... looks at the bottle... and pours another dose. This may become a problem.

EXT. STREET - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

A GRUFF ANGLO MAN peers out a dim window, RIFLE at his side.

Grace angles Henry so he can't see the man as they follow Karen and Stuart down a moonlit street.

GRACE

Hey, we're okay. He didn't hurt me.

A few paces ahead, Karen, still shaken from the showdown with James, keeps her voice low as she walks with Stuart.

KAREN

Been shooting since I was nine, but that was the first time I ever pointed a gun at an actual person.

STUART

Good first time, I'd say... I'm Stuart, by the way.

KAREN

Oh, right. I'm Karen. This is Grace and Henry. Guys, Stuart.

She turns to include the children. Grace and Henry raise a hand in greeting.

HENRY

Mom, I'm hungry.

KAREN

We have to keep looking for a place. It's not safe out in the open.

GRACE

What about that?

She points to the side of a building where a low, tin roof shelters firewood from the rain. They head over to investigate. It's not much, but it's better than nothing.

KAREN

Might have to do for tonight.

STUART

I think we can make this cozy.

He winks at Henry and nods for him to help. They start to clear space as Grace distributes INSTANT MEAL POUCHES from the army pack. Henry looks his over, reads the back --

HENRY

We need hot water for these.

GRACE

Your wish is my command.

She whips out her lighter with a smile to Karen.

KAREN

The lighter was good thinking... but a fire will draw attention, and the smoke is bad for Henry.

STUART

I saw a bonfire in the plaza. I can go warm them up there.

KAREN

You don't have to do that.

STUART

Kinda feel like I do.

Karen pulls a PISTOL from her waist and offers it to him.

STUART (CONT'D)

Wouldn't even know how to use it.
I'll be fine. You guys hang tight.

He collects the meal pouches and grabs a bottle of water. Grace tosses him the lighter, and he heads off with the food. Henry rummages through the stolen army pack, taking inventory, while Grace and Karen find a moment to connect.

GRACE

That was, um... pretty bad-ass the way you protected us back there.

KAREN

Just bein' a mamma bear. So, with James... he didn't... I mean, before Stuart got there?

Grace knows what she means, shakes her head. A moment of pure relief for Karen, but the raw memory jars Grace. Her eyes well. Karen pulls her in for a hug. Tender. Honest.

GRACE

I'm sorry for being a pain in your ass. I love you so much, Mom.

KAREN

I love you too, baby.

After a moment, she reaches over and tugs Henry's sleeve. He wedges between them and they hold each other with pure love.

I/E. PREACHER'S BUS - MEXICO - NIGHT

The bus sits outside a small house on a quaint block.

CHYRON: **ZACATECAS - 240 Miles South of the Line of Control.**

INSIDE THE BUS -- Tomás uses a wet rag to clean a seat. His wife, Maria, boards and joins him at the back of the bus...

TOMÁS
Kids go down?

MARIA
*I don't know how with the galletas
my Mom gave them, but yes. Finally.*

She hands him a cookie. He takes it but doesn't take a bite.

MARIA (CONT'D)
It's okay, amor. We're safe now.

TOMÁS
*I know... but so many aren't. Did
the Lord want me to rescue the ones
we saved on the road only to abandon
them at the border?*

MARIA
What more can you do for them?

TOMÁS
*They don't speak the language. Know
how things get done here... I think
the Lord wants me to help them.*

Maria takes a moment to process...

MARIA
*The children and I are safe here
with my mother. Do the Lord's
bidding, mi amor.*

He takes her hand and brings it to his lips.

TOMÁS
*I can't even count the ways I'm
blessed.*

EXT. TIN-ROOF SHELTER - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - NIGHT

Karen looks up to see Stuart returning empty-handed.

KAREN
*What happened? You get mugged, or
you eat all four meals yourself?*

STUART
Found us an upgrade.

INT. CASITA - ESPERANZA - MEXICO - MINUTES LATER

The DOOR OPENS to the main room of a small, humble home, as Stuart leads Karen, Grace and Henry inside. A kerosene lamp burns on the kitchen table; a couple candles on shelves.

STUART

Stove works. Even found that lamp.

HENRY

Does anyone still live here?

STUART

Food's gone and the closets are bare. So I think they cleared out.

Grace finds a photo of a MEXICAN FAMILY posing in the room in which they now stand -- THREE GENERATIONS, TEN PEOPLE.

GRACE

Big family for such a little house.

KAREN

They look happy, though.

Henry looks at the photo and turns to Stuart --

HENRY

Do you have a family?

STUART

I do. My daughter, India, she's eight. She was on a boat off the coast of California, so...

HENRY

Maybe I'll get to meet her.

STUART

I sure hope so...

GRACE

Wife?

STUART

Um, she was in Berkeley when the...

He can't bring himself to say it, and it's *heartbreaking* to see. He turns back to Henry and forces a smile.

STUART (CONT'D)

Still hungry?

HENRY

Definitely. But can we check out the rest of the house first?

KAREN

Just be respectful of their things.

Grace and Henry disappear down the hall, as Karen and Stuart head for the kitchen area. She clocks him suffering...

KAREN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry about your wife.

STUART
Doesn't feel real yet...

KAREN
Of course. And I'm sure your
daughter is out there... I like the
name. India. It's pretty.

STUART
Leah and I honeymooned there.

KAREN
Wow. Exotic... This is our first
time outside the U.S. Ever.

He hands her some bowls from the cupboard and she empties the
powdered meals into them. Both struggling not to spiral.

STUART
You know, I had a bottle of cabernet
that woulda paired beautifully with
dehydrated beef stroganoff, but --
had to cudgel a man with it, so...

KAREN
That's alright. I'm more of a beer
girl anyhow...

They share a look, realizing just how different they are, as
the sound of distant GUNSHOTS sets them both on edge.

STUART
Maybe we should take turns sleeping?

Karen nods. Makes sense.

KAREN
We're in someone else's home, in
someone else's country. We have no
idea who's in charge. It's gonna
turn into the wild west around here
unless Mexico starts letting people
further south, and who knows when
that will happen.

STUART
Even if they do, I need to find my
daughter before I go anywhere.

KAREN
And I need to find my husband.

The weight of it all hangs over them a moment.

STUART
Stick together and help each other?

Karen nods, grateful... Off this unusual new partnership --

INT. CASITA - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Grace peruses a WORKBENCH under a moonlit window. It's littered with shoe-making tools: an awl, rasp, pincers... she finds a newly-made sandal. Appreciates the craftsmanship.

Across the room, Henry's found a fish bowl on a dresser wedged between two sets of bunkbeds. He sprinkles food in the bowl, and watches a goldfish fin to the surface.

EXT. CASITA - BACK PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Grace steps out the backdoor onto a patio. Ash flakes drift slowly from the sky, as Henry sidles beside her.

HENRY

Actually kinda pretty. Like snow.

GRACE

You shouldn't be out here, bud.
Air's getting worse.

HENRY

I know... just one more minute.

GRACE

We'll find you meds tomorrow.
Whatever it takes.

Henry slides his hand into hers, and they stare up the ominous cloud above, glowing with ethereal beauty in the moonlight... as we FIND THE MOON --

The camera swings through space, changing our view, so we stare up now from some unknown location, far away.

EXT. SOMEWHERE AT SEA - NIGHT

The ash still falls like snow as we PAN DOWN, only now it falls over the open waters of the PACIFIC OCEAN.

A LIFE RAFT rocks gently in the swell. From our view, level with the water, we can't see if anyone is aboard until a FIGURE sits upright, extending a hand to feel the ash flakes landing in their palm. It's only as they turn to face the muted moonlight that we see the figure is a young child... Stuart's daughter, India.

We PULL BACK to see the boat drifting in an endless ocean and peek inside of it, where SIX CHILDREN and a TEACHER huddle close, asleep in their life vests on the floor of the boat.

India watches them rest a moment and looks to the horizon with quiet determination...

END PILOT