

"LONE STAR"

By

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EXT. TEXAS SCRUB -- DAY

Two men in shorts and Hawaiian shirts are poking around a sandy section in the middle of scrub flats. SERGEANT CLIFF POTTS is in the f.g., a plant-and-tree guidebook in hand, as SERGEANT "MIKEY" HOGAN works a metal detector over a large, sandy bank in the b.g. Both are Army career men with a morning off to pursue their hobbies.

CLIFF

We got ocotillo, devil's walking stick--what's this stuff--it's that whattayoucallit--horse-crippler.

Mikey bends to scoop something out of the sand, putting it in a canvas bag slung on his hip.

MIKEY

This place is a gold mine.

CLIFF

Lead mine.

MIKEY sees that Cliff is talking, pulls his headset off.

MIKEY

What?

CLIFF

It's a lead mine.

MIKEY

Right.

CLIFF

I don't know why I'm talking to you, you've got that thing on your head.

MIKEY

You finding lots of cactus and shit?

CLIFF

It's not just cactus. There's the nopals, the yuccas--

MIKEY

(Puts headset on)
Looks like a lot of cactus to me.

CLIFF

(Grumbles)

Man knows a hundred-fifty varieties of beer, he can't tell a poinsettia from a prickly pear.

MIKEY

(Troubled)

Cliff--

CLIFF

You live in a place, you should know something about it. Explore--

MIKEY

Cliff--

CU MIKEY

MIKEY in the f.g. now, looking down at something as he pulls his headset off again--

MIKEY

Cliff, you gotta look at this--

Cliff wearily turns and approaches from the b.g.

CLIFF

Don't tell me--Spanish treasure, right? Pieces of eight from the Coronado expedition--

He stops by Mikey and looks down, his expression changing

CLIFF

Jesus--

GROUND -- CU BONES

Sticking out from the sand bank are the SKELETAL BONES of a MAN'S HAND. There is a ring on one finger.

MIKEY (O.S.)

Was Coronado in the Masons?

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

A distant cloud of DUST appears on the horizon MUSIC underscores that we are in Texas, and we SUPERIMPOSE the OPENING CREDITS as the dust takes form around an APPROACHING CAR. The car comes close enough to see it has a County Sheriff's insignia on the side.

INT. CAR

We see SAM DEEDS, the Sheriff, driving. Sam is 40, quietly competent to the point of seeming a bit moody. He sees

something up ahead.

MUSIC, CREDITS END as Sam pulls off the road and we see the sergeants standing in the scrub.

EXT. SCRUB -- DAY -- BONES

The hand and forearm down to the elbow of the skeleton are visible now.

WIDER

Cliff stands looking at the arm with Sam. MIKEY is a few yards behind them, playing with his metal detector. Beyond him we see the Sheriff's car parked.

SAM

I was driving back from Apache Wells when they got me on the radio.

CLIFF

This was a rifle range way back when. But we figured it isn't Army land anymore, it's your jurisdiction.

SAM

(Nods)

I've got the forensics fella coming down from the Rangers. No way to know how old the body is without some lab work.

CLIFF

That ring--

SAM

Masons been around a long while.

Mikey has come up to them, still sweeping with the metal detector.

SAM

Treasure hunter?

CLIFF

(Apologetic)

Old bullets. He uhm-- makes art with them.

Sam just nods. Mikey frowns, goes down on one knee and scratches something out of the dirt at their feet--

CLIFF

The Sheriff says we shouldn't touch anything,

MIKEY

(To Sam)
He can't hear with that rig on--
Mikey!

Mikey comes up with something, holds it before them. An encrusted piece of metal--

MIKEY
What've we got here?

Sam takes the thing, lays it back down where Mikey found it.

SAM
S'posed to leave everything right
where we found it. They're real
particular about that.

MIKEY
The scene of the crime.

SAM
No telling yet if there's been a
crime.

Sam frowns down at the piece of metal as he rubs the face of it.

CU METAL

Sam's thumb wipes across the face of the encrusted metal. It is roughly star-shaped.

SAM (O.S.)
But this country's seen a good number
of disagreements over the years.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM -- DAY -- TEXAS MAP

We look at a beautiful old pull-down map of Texas.

PILAR (O.S.)
We do the best we can here--

A teacher in her late 30s, PILAR CRUZ, steps in front of the map and we FOLLOW her across the room, carrying a poster

PILAR
--but hey, public education these
days is a bit of a battleground.

Posters hung on the walls beyond her show luminaries from Texas history-- Sam Houston, Stephen Austin, Juan Seguin. A new parent, CELIE PAYNE, stands in the middle of the otherwise empty classroom.

CELIE
He went to school on base when we

were in Okinawa. It's all--you know--
kids in the same boat--Army brats.

PILAR

His record shows that he's a good
student.

CELIE

I'm more worried about the social
thing. Are there like--gangs, or...?

PILAR starts to put the poster up. CELIE moves to hold it in
place for her.

PILAR

We haven't had any serious violence,
if that's what you mean. We've got a
pretty lively mix though--you walk
into the cafeteria and the Anglo
kids are in one section, the Mexican
kids in another and the Black kids
have a table in the back--thanks--

CELIE

So Blacks are--

PILAR

They're the smallest group except
for a couple Kickapoo kids. Look,
you're obviously a concerned parent.
Chet has no history of getting into
trouble--I'm happy to have him in my
class.

She steps back to see if the poster, an old photo of Geronimo,
looks straight. Another teacher, MOLLY sticks her head in
the door--

MOLLY

(Uncomfortable)
Pilar, is uhm--is Amado okay?

PILAR

Okay? He's not here?

MOLLY

No. Is he sick?

PILAR

(Mutters)
He's going to wish he was dead.

EXT. STREET -- DAY -- CU VAQUERO PICTURE

On the door of a deluxe pickup truck is an airbrushed picture
of a Pancho Villa-looking vaquero with bandoliers crossing
his chest and a gun blazing in each hand. We hear LOUD MUSIC--

AMADO (O.S.)

Luis! Give me that Phillips-head
back--

WIDER

A small group of teenage Chicano BOYS hang around the truck in the bed, on the hood, leaning against it. A BOOMBOX placed on top of the cab blasts RANCHA MUSIC out at the neighborhood. Somebody's legs are hanging out the open passenger-side door. The kids suddenly look as a Sheriff's Department car slides into the f.g. A Deputy Sheriff, TRAVIS, gets out.

KIDS

Trying to look tough and unworried as we TRACK across the street toward them. Travis's hand reaches out from behind the camera to flick the MUSIC OFF.

INT. PICKUP

AMADO CRUZ, Pilar's 15-year-old son, lies on the front seat installing a compact disc player into the dash slot. He reaches up to the dash, can't find what he wants.

AMADO

Somebody hand me the CD player--
damelo pendejos--

He looks up and we TILT to see Travis leaning in the window, examining the new radio

TRAVIS

They come a long way from those old
8-track jobs, haven't they?

AMADO

Something wrong?

TRAVIS

(Waves radio)
This is stolen property. Alla you
fellas are coming down to the station.

INT. CAFE SANTA BARBARA -- AFTERNOON -- ENRIQUE

Sweat beads the forehead of a thin, tired-looking recent immigrant, ENRIQUE, as he delivers platters of chile rellenos to a booth. MEXICAN MUSIC plays on a jukebox in the b.g. We HOLD on the booth, where HOLLIS POGUE, in his 60s entertains two GOOD OLD BOYS--

HOLLIS

So Buddy walks up to the porch and
there's old Fishbait McHenry, cleanin'
the dirt out his toenails with a

pocketknife--he was the most hygienic
of all the McHenrys--

The breakfast companions are laughing already--

HOLLIS

"Fishbait," says Buddy, in that quiet way of his, "What you know about them tires that went missing from markets?" Fishbait thinks for a minute, then he lifts up a loose board from the porch floor and calls down into it, "C'mon out, Pooter, they caught us!"

FENTON

(Laughing)

Buddy Deeds. He had a way.

HOLLIS

He known who it was onnacouna the tire tracks in the dirt from the back of the garage to where they loaded up. "Old Fishbait," he says, "never lifted a thing in this world if there was a way he could roll it."

More laughter--

FENTON

Won't be another like him. That boy of his doesn't come near it. You ask me, he's all hat and no cattle

SAM (O.S.)

Fellas--

We WIDEN to see Sam standing by their booth. No telling how long he's been listening, Fenton is embarrassed.

HOLLIS

Sam! I was just telling a few about your old man.

FENTON

He was a unique individual.

SAM

Yeah, he was that.

We sense a little strain when Sam has to talk about his father--

HOLLIS

Big day coming up--I wish we'd have thought of it while he was still living. But he went so unexpected.

FENTON

Better late than never. Korean War
hero, Sheriff for near thirty years--
Buddy Deeds Memorial P--

SAM

I heard there was a bit of a fuss.

HOLLIS

Oh, you know, the usual troublemakers.
Danny Padilla from the Sentinel,
that crowd.

FENTON

Every other damn thing in the country
is called after Martin Luther King,
they can't let our side have one
measly park?

HOLLIS

King wasn't Mexican, Fenton--

FENTON

Bad enough all the street names are
in Spanish--

SAM

They were here first.

FENTON

Then name it after Big Chief
Shitinabucket! Whoever that Tonkawa
fella was. He had the Mexes beat by
centuries.

HOLLIS

There was a faction pulling for that
boy who was killed in the Gulf War--
Ruben--

SAM

--Santiago.

HOLLIS

Right. But nobody here ever noticed
him till they read his name on the
national news--

FENTON

They just wanted it to be one of
theirs--

HOLLIS

That's not the whole story. The
Mexicans that know, that remember,
understand what Buddy was for their

people. Hell, it was Mercedes over there who swung the deciding vote for him.

Sam looks to the register where Pilar's mother, MERCEDES CRUZ, whacks rolls of change apart on the counter. She seems to be avoiding looking toward him.

SAM

That so?

HOLLIS

She put it even at three to three, so as the Mayor I get to cast the tiebreaker. The older generation won't have any problem with it. They remember how Buddy come to be Sheriff, that it was all 'cause he took their part.

FENTON

Tell that one, Hollis--

HOLLIS

Hell, everybody heard that story a million times.

SAM

I'd like to hear it. Your version of it.

Something about the way Sam says it puts Hollis on guard.

FENTON

Go ahead, Hollis.

CU HOLLIS

Hollis is hooked into it now--

HOLLIS

The two of us were the only deputies back then me and Buddy--it's what-- '58--

FENTON (O.S.)

'57, I believe--

HOLLIS

And the Sheriff at the time was Big Charley Wade. Charley was one of your old-fashioned bribe-or-bullets kind of Sheriffs, he took a healthy bite out of whatever moved through this county.

He looks down at the table--

HOLLIS

It was in here one night, back when
Jimmy Herrera run the place. Started
right here in this booth.

We PAN down to the table, The food has changed. The tortillas
are in a straw basket instead of plastic. The jukebox changes
to ANOTHER SONG and the LIGHT DIMS slightly. A hand with a
big Masonic ring on one finger appears to lift a tortilla--
underneath it lie three ten-dollar bills. The hand lifts
them up and we TILT to see the face of SHERIFF CHARLEY WADE,
a big, mean redneck with shrewd eyes. It is 1957--

WADE

(Grins)

This beaner fare doesn't agree with
me, but the price sure is right.

WIDER

Wade sits across from his young deputies, YOUNG HOLLIS (30s)
and BUDDY DEEDS (20s). A chicken-fried steak sits untouched
in front of Buddy. Hollis has the anxious look of an errand
boy, while Buddy is self-contained and quietly forceful for
his age.

BUDDY

What's that for?

WADE

Jimmy got a kitchen full of wetbacks,
most of 'em relatives. People breed
like chickens.

BUDDY

So?

WADE

I roust some muchacho on the street,
doesn't have his papers, all he got
to say is "Yo trabajo para Jimmy
Herrera."

Wade folds the money and stuffs it in his pocket--

WADE

You got to keep the wheels greased,
son. Sheriff does his job right,
everybody makes out. Now this is
gonna be one of your pickups, Buddy.
First of the month, just like the
rent. Get the car, Hollis.

Wade and Hollis slide out of the booth to stand.

BUDDY

I'm not doing it.

Hollis stops a few feet away, shocked. Wade just stares down at Buddy.

WADE

Come again?

Buddy looks Wade in the eye, seemingly unafraid.

BUDDY

It's your deal. You sweated it out of him, you pick it up.

WADE

There's gonna be some left over for you, Buddy. I take care of my boys.

BUDDY

That's not the point.

WADE

You feeling bad for Jimmy? Have him tell you the size of the mordida they took out of his hide when he run a place on the other side. Those old boys in Ciudad Leon--

BUDDY

I'm not picking it up.

WADE

You do whatever I say you do or else you put it on the trail, son.

The CUSTOMERS are all watching now, nervous. Buddy thinks for a moment, not taking his eyes off Wade.

BUDDY

How 'bout this--how 'bout you put that shield on this table and vanish before you end up dead or in jail?

Wade rests his hand on his pistol. It is dead silent but for the MUSIC on the box.

BUDDY

You ever shoot anybody was looking you in the eye?

WADE

Who said anything about shootin' anybody?

Buddy has his gun out under the table. He slowly brings it up and lays it flat on the table, not taking his hand off it or his eyes off Wade.

BUDDY

Whole different story; isn't it?

WADE

You're fired. You're outta the department.

BUDDY

There's not a soul in this county isn't sick to death of your bullshit, Charley. You made yourself scarce, you could make a lot of people happy.

WADE

You little pissant--

BUDDY

Now or later, Charley. You won't have any trouble finding me.

Wade feels the people around him waiting for a reaction. He leans close to Buddy to croak in a hoarse whisper.

WADE

You're a dead man.

He turns and nearly bumps into Hollis. He gives the Deputy a shove.

WADE

Get the goddamn car. We're going to Roderick's.

CU BUDDY

He watches till the screen door shuts behind them, then holsters his gun and begins to saw at the steak as if nothing had happened. He calls softly--

BUDDY

Muchacho--mas cerveza por favor.

He looks up at somebody and we PAN till we see Sam, still standing over the booth, listening. We are back in 1995--

HOLLIS (O.S.)

"Mas cerveza por favor."

FENTON (O.S.)

That Buddy was a cool breeze.

We PULL BACK to see Hollis and his buddies at the table, eating their lunches as they listen.

FENTON

Charley Wade were known to have put

a good number of people in the ground,
and your daddy gets eyeball to eyeball
with him.

HOLLIS

We made our collection at Roderick's
place and that was the last anybody
seen hide nor hair of him. He went
missing the next day, along with ten
thousand dollars in county funds
from the safe at the jail.

SAM

Never heard from him again?

HOLLIS

Not a peep. Buddy run the man out of
town.

FENTON

Buddy Deeds said a thing, he damn
well backed it up. Won't be another
like him.

SAM

So he arrested all of Jimmy Herrera's
people and sent 'em back to the other
side?

Hollis sees what Sam is getting at, grins--

HOLLIS

Oh--he come to an accommodation.
Money doesn't always need to change
hands to keep the wheels turning.

SAM

Right.

HOLLIS

Look, I know you had some problems
with your father, and he and Muriel--
well--

FENTON

Your mother was a saint.

HOLLIS

--but Buddy Deeds was my salvation.

Sam nods, speaks softly--

SAM

Won't be another like him.

EXT. ARMY INSTALLATION -- DAY -- CU DEL PAYNE

COLONEL DELMORE PAYNE (DEL), a very direct, by-the-book Black officer, addresses them. Artillery pieces angle toward the sky behind him--

DEL

--it's an honor for me to assume command of this unit, and I look forward to working with all of you.

OFFICERS Cliff and Mikey, in uniform now, flank SERGEANT PRISCILLA WORTH, a Black woman in her early 40s, as they stand in formation--

DEL (O.S.)

I'm sure you're all aware of the Army's decision to close this installation under the Reduction in Force plan. That does not mean, however--

REVERSE

We look over the shoulders of assembled OFFICERS and NCOs toward Del.

DEL

--that we've been sent here to mark time until we are absorbed by another unit.

CU DEL

DEL

You may have heard rumors that I run a very tight operation. These rumors are not exaggerated.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON -- BUDDY PHOTO

We are looking through a magnifying glass at an old photo. Buddy's face is slightly distorted by the glass.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Sam? I got Danny Padilla from the paper for you--

Sam sits at his desk in the Sheriff's office, looking down at the photo--

SAM

Tell him I'll catch him later.

CU PHOTOGRAPH

An old photo of the 1957 Sheriff's Department officers on the courthouse steps. Wade, Hollis, Buddy, a few others, all in uniform.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

He says he needs to talk to you before
the ceremony, Sam.

Sam puts a magnifying glass over the photo and bends close
to look.

SAM

Tell him to try me tomorrow.

EXTREME CU PHOTO -- BADGE

MAGNIFIED POV of the badge on Wade's chest swims into view.
A metal star. We hear the secretary getting rid of the caller.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

He thinks you're trying to duck
him.

CU SAM

Looking at the photo, troubled--

SAM

(Mutters)
He's right.

EXT. BIG O'S ROADHOUSE -- NIGHT -- NEON SIGN

We start on a BLINKING SIGN--BIG O'S, then PAN to see a full
parking lot outside the low, neon-lit roadhouse. R&B MUSIC
blasts from inside.

EXT. DOORWAY -- CHET

CHET, a Black kid around 15, stands nervously at the door
building up his courage. He takes a deep breath, plunges
in.

INT. BIG O'S

We TRACK with Chet, very nervous, as he makes his way through
the crowded roadhouse. The customers are all Black, many
from the nearby Army post, SHOUTING and LAUGHING over the
loud MUSIC. Chet, edgy, is looking for somebody. He sees...

CHET'S POV -- OTIS

Seen through the crush is OTIS "BIG O" PAYNE, a large man in
his early 60s, laughing as he stands behind the bar.

CHET

He nervously puts his hand under his jacket. A gun? He pushes
forward to get a better view.

CHET'S POV -- OTIS

Moving in on him. Otis looks over, sees the boy, frowns--

CHET

Reaching under his jacket, he pulls out--a photograph. He looks at it--suddenly there is a SCREAM from behind, then GUNSHOTS, patrons diving for the floor.

Chet whirls around and we WHIP PAN to see a young man, SHADOW, emptying his pistol into RICHIE, a young soldier, as a young woman, ATHENA, screams and tries to pull the gun away. With the last shot, Shadow turns and heads for the door, but is tackled and swarmed by angry men, SHOUTING.

We PAN to Athena, kneeling over the bleeding, twitching body of Richie--

CHET

Chet backs up, horrified. A large hand grasps him on the shoulder from behind. He turns to see Otis standing over him, strangely calm amid the chaos

OTIS

You weren't in here tonight, were you?

CHET

No sir.

OTIS

(Points)

Go out through the back.

Chet hurries away. Otis watches him for a moment, then turns to the mess in his club.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- NIGHT -- CU ANGLO MOTHER

An angry woman stands from her auditorium chair--

ANGLO MOTHER

You're just tearin' everything down!
Tearin' down our heritage, tearin'
down the memory of people that fought
and died for this land.

CHICANO FATHER (O.S.)

We fought and died for this land,
too!

We WHIP PAN to see another standing parent--

CHICANO FATHER

We fought the U.S. Army, the Texas

Rangers--

ANGLO FATHER (O.S.)

Yeah, but you lost, buddy!

We WHIP PAN to a man in the rear--

ANGLO FATHER

Winners get the bragging rights,
that's how it goes.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

People--people--

WIDER

We are in the High School auditorium, a hot-and-heavy teachers-and-parents meeting in progress. Pilar sits at the end of a long table facing the agitated parents, taking some heat. DANNY PADILLA, a young, long-haired reporter, sits in the front taking notes, enjoying the show.

PRINCIPAL

I think it would be best not to put
things in terms of winners and losers--

ANGLO MOTHER

(Points at Pilar)

Well, the way she's teachin' it has
got everything switched around. I
was on the textbook committee, and
her version is not--

PRINCIPAL

We think of the textbook as kind of
a guide, not an absolute--

ANGLO MOTHER

--it is not what we set as the
standard! Now you people can believe
what you want, but when it comes to
teaching our children--

CHICANO MOTHER

They're our children, too!

ANGLO FATHER

The men who founded this state have
a right to have their story--

DANNY

The men who founded this state broke
from Mexico because they needed
slavery to be legal to make a fortune
in the cotton business!

PILAR

I think that's a bit of an
oversimplification--

ANGLO FATHER

Are you reporting this meeting or
runnin' it, Danny?

DANNY

Just adding a little historical
perspective--

REAR OF AUDITORIUM

PALOMA CRUZ, Pilar's teenage daughter, peeks into the room,
then moves down the side toward the stage.

ANGLO FATHER

You may call it history, but I call
it propaganda. I'm sure they got
their own account of the Alamo on
the other side, but we're not on the
other side, so we're not about to
have it taught in our schools!

PILAR

There's no reason to be so threatened
by this--

Pilar is trying to stay calm despite her anger.

PILAR

I've only been trying to get across
some of the complexity of our
situation down here--cultures coming
together in both negative and positive
ways.

ANGLO MOTHER (O.S.)

If you mean like music and food and
all, I have no problem with that.

REVERSE

We shoot past Pilar toward the parents in their seats. PALOMA
steps up to whisper to her.

ANGLO MOTHER

--but when you start changing who
did what to who.

TEACHER

We're not changing anything, we're
presenting a more complete picture.

ANGLO MOTHER

And that's what's got to stop!

Pilar looks troubled by what she's heard. She shoots a look toward the others at the table, then slips away with Paloma--

TEACHER

There's enough ignorance in the world without us encouraging it in the classroom--

ANGLO MOTHER

Now who are you calling ignorant?

PRINCIPAL

Folks, I know this is a very emotional issue for some of you, but we do have other business to attend to--

CHICANO FATHER

We're not going to get some resolution on this?

CU PRINCIPAL

Weary--

PRINCIPAL

Would you people like to form another committee?

GROANS from the parents--

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- NIGHT -- SHADOW

Shadow, face bruised, hands cuffed behind him, is pushed in through the door to be booked.

SHADOW

I hope the sucker does die, man!
Mess with me, that's what you get!

Sam steps in behind him and meets his Chief Deputy RAY HERNANDEZ, coming from the other direction.

RAY

Hospital says the other kid is in bad shape--

SAM

(Glances ahead)
The shooter local?

RAY

(Shakes his head)
Down from Houston. I think he knew the girl before.

SAM

Okay--we'll take a statement from

all the GIs before they go back to post. You can get the story from Otis over at the club.

RAY

Any poop on the John Doe you found out there today?

SAM

Nothin' much. The Rangers put Ben Wetzel on it. Catch you later.

As Ray steps out, Pilar looking distraught, walks into the station, passing right by Sam without seeing him.

CU SAM

Wonders what she's doing there--

SAM'S POV -- PILAR

She stands by an unoccupied reception desk, very upset, unable to attract anyone's attention because of the activity around the shooting. She looks tired and a bit scared under the harsh overhead light.

SAM (O.S.)

Pilar.

PILAR AND SAM

Pilar looks around. Sam is standing by her. We can tell there is some history between these two.

SAM

Something wrong?

PILAR

They've got my Amado.

SAM

Got him here?

PILAR

Somebody called--something about an electronics store.

SAM

I'll see what's going on.

He starts away, stops, comes back--

SAM

I was--I was real sorry about Nando. He was a good fella. We haven't talked since.

PILAR

We haven't talked since high school.

SAM

Yeah. I'll go check on your boy.

Pilar watches Sam go--

REAR OF OFFICE

Travis sits typing away at a word processor as Athena, in tears, gives testimony.

ATHENA

--so Richie just didn't say nothin'
'cause he didn't want to get into
it, see, and the next thing I know
there's shots and Richie is down. It
happened so fast--

SAM (O.S.)

Excuse me--

We WIDEN to see Sam standing over the desk--

SAM

We got some boys you run in earlier
today?

TRAVIS

Yeah. I pulled the bunch that hangs
at Pico Bernal's place. We finally
caught them with something.

SAM

You got a juvenile with 'ern--Amado
Cruz?

Travis looks at his booking sheets--

TRAVIS

Yeah--let's see--the other ones say
he wasn't in on the theft, he just
knows how to hook things up. We've
been trying to contact a parent.

INT. JAIL HALLWAY

Sam walks with Amado, who is trying to look defiant--

SAM

They tell me you're good at fixing
things.

Nothin--

SAM

Your father was a hell of a mechanic.

Still nothing--

SAM

You know, if you figure minimum wage on the time most thieves spend in jail, they could have bought most everything they stole.

AMADO

I didn't steal anything.

SAM

I didn't say you did. My name is Sam, by the way.

Amado just gives him a look--

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sam and AMADO step out into the office, where Pilar stands waiting.

SAM

He's all yours.

PILAR

Are you okay?

AMADO

I don't know what the big deal is.

PILAR

You'll find out when I get you home. Thanks, Sam.

SAM

No problem.

Pilar yanks AMADO outside by his arm. She turns to shoot a look back at Sam, then steps out through the glass door.

CU SAM

Watching her go--

SAM

Any time.

FADE OUT:

EXT. OBSTACLE COURSE -- MORNING -- PIT

We shoot up from a pit in the ground. WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP! Three men leap over, landing on the far side and running away from us.

MEN

Del Payne runs with Cliff and Mikey on a pathway along a security fence, the two sergeants struggling to keep up, occasionally vaulting or scaling some mild obstacle.

MIKEY

There's not that much down here, Colonel. Big O's is the only place in the county that our African American soldiers are uhm--that they feel comfortable in.

DEL

Have we had trouble there before?

CLIFF

Since I've been stationed here? A fistfight now and then--

MIKEY

We had a kid pass out in the men's room. The town isn't much.

DEL

They didn't come for a vacation.

CLIFF

Yes sir.

MIKEY

You know how it is, Colonel--first time away from home, dealing with new people--I remember my first hitch--

DEL

Substance abuse?

MIKEY

Well, yeah, but I went through the Program. I haven't had a drink since--

DEL

I meant on the post. In general. How are you dealing with it?

CLIFF

We throw a urine test at them once a month. Random numbers, maybe a hundred people at a time

DEL

Why don't we make it once a week for a while?

CLIFF

No problem, sir.

Del notices how hard they are breathing--

DEL

I sprint the last quarter mile. You gentlemen don't have to keep up if you don't care to.

MIKEY

Appreciate it, sir.

Del accelerates and we HOLD with the sergeants, slowing to a near-walk.

MIKEY

Guy cracks walnuts with his asshole.

CLIFF

(Grins)

You get the feeling he doesn't want to be here?

INT. FORENSICS LAB -- VARIOUS SHOTS

We hear Hank Williams' gospel song "I'll Have a New Body (I'll Have a New Life)" as we see the gathered bones of the skeleton tagged and photographed and measured, impressions made of the dental work in the skull, photographs of the excavation of the body at various stages marked with red grease pencil, the piece of metal laid in a de-tarnishing dish, the ring put under a microscope.

CU METAL

MUSIC CONTINUES as we TIGHTEN on the piece of metal, a pair of tongs pulling it from the de-tarnishing solution. It is a star-shaped badge, bearing the words "SHERIFF--RIO COUNTY."

INT. COUNTRY AND WESTERN BAR -- AFTERNOON

C&W MUSIC playing, the regulars starting to show up. Sam makes his way to a table where BEN WETZEL, a Texas Ranger, sits with a file of forensic reports.

BEN

Sam the Man.

SAM

Hey, Ben. Thanks for coming down.

They shake, Sam sits.

BEN

How's business?

SAM

Business is booming. Got your drugs,
got your illegals--had a shooting
the other night at Big O's--Soldier
got ventilated.

BEN

I hear they're closing that post
down.

SAM

September '97, that's all she wrote.

BEN

Gonna pull a lot of jobs out of this
county.

SAM

Yeah, we'll have folks swimming over
to Mexico to work in the sweatshops.

Sam looks at the folder of reports.

SAM

That the word on our boy?

BEN

Yeah, this is Skinny.

SAM

Skinny?

BEN

We find a body, it's either Skinny
or Stinky, depending on how much
meat there is on the bones.

SAM

Nice job.

BEN

(Opens folder)
Male, 40 to 50 years old, five-foot-
eleven, chewed tobacco--then we get
into the dental records--

SAM

Charley Wade.

BEN

(Nods)
That badge--

SAM

--it didn't come out of a cereal
box.

BEN

Yeah.

SAM

You know the popular version of how he left town.

BEN

Everybody on the border knows that story.

SAM

You got a cause of death?

BEN

Skull was intact, no soft tissue left--not much to go on.

SAM

So he could have gone out to the base, hopped the fence, dug down into the dirt on the old rifle range and had a heart attack.

Ben smiles, closes the folder--

BEN

You uhm--you remember what old Buddy carried for a side arm?

SAM

Colt Peacemaker.

BEN

A .45--

SAM

He swore by it.

(Ben frowns)

What?

BEN

Just wondering.

SAM

So is Buddy on your short list?

BEN

If it was some poor mojado, swam across at night, got lost in the scrub and starved out there, we wouldn't go any further. But this is a formerly prominent citizen.

SAM

You got to investigate. No question about it.

BEN

What I will do is keep names out of it till we got some answers or hit a dead end. You know how the press is with a murder story--even if it's forty years old.

SAM

Yeah, it's a pretty cold trail.

They sit in awkward silence for a moment. Ben feels bad about it.

BEN

I remember Charley Wade come to my father's hardware store once when I was a little boy. I'd heard stories how he shot this one, how he shot that one--man winked at me and I peed in my pants.

(Shakes his head)

Winked at me.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Pilar stands at the blackboard by her outline of 19th century Texas history.

PILAR

Okay, we have the fight against the Spanish with bloody conflict for dozens of years till they're finally defeated in 1821 and Mexican independence is declared. Anglo settlers are invited--

CU DRAWING

Somebody making a skillful pencil drawing on the corner of a sheet of lined notebook paper. A bald, muscular shotputter after releasing the shot, his hand large in the f.g.

PILAR (O.S.)

--to colonize the area and by the time they begin the movement against Santa Anna they outnumber the Mexicans here by four to one. The war between Mexico--

CHET

Drawing intently. He takes the notebook and lays his thumb over the corner.

PILAR (O.S.)

and the Anglo forces ends in 1836 with the formation of the Texas

Republic. Texas joins the United States as a state where slavery is legal in 1845--

NOTEBOOK

Chet "flips" the corner of the notebook and the series of drawings he's made form a brief cartoon of the shot-putter blowing his cheeks out and heaving the shot right past us. Extremely well-drawn--

PILAR (O.S.)

after the so-called Mexican war and then secedes to join the Confederacy in 1861. The Confederacy is beaten, and the Reformation period here is marked by range wars and race wars--

PILAR

Looking out at the class--

PILAR

--and all this paralleled by constant battles between both the Mexican and Anglo settlers and the various Indian nations in the area. What are we seeing here? Chet?

CHET

Startled, he hides the notebook under his hands --

CHET

Uhm--everybody is killing everybody else?

EXT. LAKE -- DAY -- CU FISHING LURE

A nasty-looking thing. Only a bass would want to eat this. Hollis leans in to peer at the thing dangling before his face.

WIDER

Hollis sits in the swivel chair of a bass boat tied to a dock at the lake, going through his box of lures. Sam appears on the dock and steps down.

SAM

I always wondered what you Mayors do when you're not cutting ribbons.

HOLLIS

Sam! Hey podner! You caught me playing hooky--

SAM

(Looks across lake)
Floating around out here, playin'
hell with them bass--play a little
cards, play a little golf, drink
some beer--

HOLLIS

Sounds great. Where do I sign up?

SAM

I haven't been out here for a while.

HOLLIS

You go by your old house?

SAM

No.

HOLLIS

Just as well. The new people just
painted it some God-awful color--

SAM

We found a body out by the Army base
yesterday. Been there for a long
time.

Hollis squints at a rubber lure, rejects it--

HOLLIS

Was it Davy Crockett or Jim Bowie?

SAM

(Smiles)
You recall if Charley Wade was a
Mason?

HOLLIS

Charley? I believe he was. Used to
go for lodge meetings over to Laredo.
What's he got to do with your body?

SAM

All it was wearing was a big old
Masonic ring and a Rio County Sheriffs
badge.

Hollis reacts. Sam puts a foot on the gunwale of the boat.

SAM

You don't remember anything else
from that last night you saw him, do
you?

HOLLIS

I told the story enough times--hell,

we were just in the car, he was stewing about the fight with Buddy while we drove over to Roderick Bledsoe's--

SAM

Bledso

HOLLIS

He owned the colored roadhouse before Big O--

SAM

He still living?

HOLLIS

No. I think his widow's still in their place in Darktown, though.

(Shakes his head)

You think it's Charley Wade, huh?

SAM

Forensics people are sure of it. You have any idea who might have put him there?

Hollis makes a great show of considering--

SAM

Besides my father, I mean.

HOLLIS

There's no call for that, Sam. Fella made himself a pile of enemies over the years.

SAM

And Buddy was one of them.

HOLLIS

We got that dedication tomorrow. This is a hell of a time to be draggin' up old business.

SAM

People have worked this whole big thing up around my father. If it's built on a crime, they deserve to know. Now I understand why you might want to believe he couldn't do it.

HOLLIS

And I understand why you might want to think he could.

This is a low blow, but accurate enough to shake Sam.

SAM

Thanks for your time, Hollis.

Hollis holds up a double handful of lures--dozens of rubber and plastic worms and shiners and frogs and spinners--

HOLLIS

Look at all this, would you? My tackle, the boat, all to catch a little old fish just minding its business on the bottom of the lake.

He gives Sam a look--

HOLLIS

Hardly seems worth the effort--does it, Sam? Sam walks away--

INT. CLASSROOM -- ARMY BASE -- DAY -- CU ATHENA

Athena stands at attention, trying to keep her composure--

CLIFF (O.S.)

So you knew this young man before?

ATHENA

From back in Houston. We both come up on Fifth Street.

PRISCILLA (O.S.)

Did you know he was going to be there last night?

ATHENA

If I had I wouldn't have gone in.

PRISCILLA (O.S.)

And you and Private Graves--

ATHENA

We were just dancing--

WIDER

Cliff leans against a desk, a blackboard covered with radar diagrams behind him. Priscilla sits nearby, both of them focused on Athena.

PRISCILLA

We're not running a dating service here.

ATHENA

I know that, Sergeant. We were just dancing. There was a bunch of us there. Shadow just come down looking for trouble.

CLIFF

It's not our job to get involved in your personal life, but when it interferes with the training here--

ATHENA

I'm sorry, Sergeant Major. There wasn't anything I could do. Shadow gets crazy--

A silence as the sergeant lets her stew for a moment. She works up her courage--

ATHENA

Sergeant Major? How is Richie doing? Private Graves?

CLIFF

He'll live.

PRISCILLA

He'll be transferred to a military hospital as soon as he's stabilized--

CLIFF

He'll probably be getting a medical discharge--

ATHENA

Out of the Army?

CLIFF

He's going to lose a lung. This is not good news for Athena--

ATHENA

Will this go on my record?

Cliff considers for a long moment--

CLIFF

If the incident happened the way you say it did, there hasn't been an infraction.

ATHENA

Thank you, Sergeant Major.

CLIFF

You're dismissed.

ATHENA

Thank you, Sergeant Major.

Athena steps out of the room. Cliff sits on the desk--

PRISCILLA

You spoil 'em, Cliff.

CLIFF

Hey--she's in a tough situation. I cut her some slack--

PRISCILLA

But I'm the one in charge of her sorry ass.

CLIFF

She's pulled herself out of a pretty rough neighborhood.

Crossing to the door--

PRISCILLA

And if she isn't careful she's gonna slide right back into it.

EXT. BLEDSOE HOUSE -- DAY -- ROCKER

We start on a CU of a rocker creaking back and forth on an old wooden porch. A WOMAN HUMS.

MINNIE

MINNIE BLEDSOE, in her 60s, sits on her porch in the old Black section of town, playing with a Gameboy. She has very thick glasses on. Sam walks up to her from his car--

SAM

Mrs. Bledsoe?

MINNIE

That's me.

SAM

I'm Sheriff Deeds--

MINNIE

Sheriff Deeds' dead, honey--you just Sheriff junior.

SAM

(Smiles)

Yeah, that's the story of my life.

MINNIE

You ever play one of these?

SAM

I've seen 'em.

MINNIE

Well, don't ever start up on 'em,

cause once you do you can't stop. I tell myself I'm gonna play just three little games after breakfast, and here I sit with half the day gone.

SAM

You mind if I ask a few questions about your husband? Roderick?

MINNIE

I won't say nothing bad about the man, but you can ask away.

SAM

He had the club out on the old trail road--

MINNIE

We run that twenty-odd years. Give it over to Otis Payne in 1967. April.

SAM

So you must remember Sheriff Wade.

MINNIE

Not if I can help it.

SAM

You had to deal with him in running the club.

MINNIE

Them days, you deal with Sheriff Wade or you didn't deal at all. First of the month, every month, he remind you of who you really workin' for.

SAM

He squeezed money out of you?

MINNIE

Wasn't legal to sell liquor in a glass back then unless you was a club, see. Roderick used to say, "Buy yourself a drink, you get a free membership." But Sheriff Wade, he could shut you down anytime.

SAM

And my father?

MINNIE

Sheriff Buddy was a different story. Long as Roderick throw his weight the right way on election day, make sure all the colored get out to vote-- we was called colored back then, if

you was polite--maybe throw a barbecue for the right people now and then, things was peaceful. That Sheriff Wade, though, he took an awful big bite.

SAM

People didn't complain?

MINNIE

Not if they was colored or Meskin. Not if they wanted to keep breathin'.

SAM

Do you remember the last time you saw him?

Minnie thinks, puts down the Gameboy--

MINNIE

I seen him in our place the last week before he gone missin'.

We TRACK in to a close-up of her. R&B MUSIC FADES UP slowly--

MINNIE

He used to come in whilst we was in full swing, make people nervous. Had him a smile like the Grim Reaper--

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROADHOUSE --

The joint is crowded, people drinking, talking, laughing, a few dancing, all trying to avoid locking eyes with Sheriff Wade, who sits with his legs stretched out at a table.

Young Hollis sits by him, smiling uncomfortably. Sax-wailing R&B blasts from the jukebox. YOUNG OTIS, a slick, confident character with straightened hair and a silk shirt on, in his early 20s, stops to talk with a MAN on his way to bring a tray with a couple beers and glasses over.

MINNIE (V.O.)

--just sit back with his hand on that big ol' gun and act the kingfish with everybody. Otis Payne had come to work for us by then, and that boy had him some attitude--

CU WADE

Watching Young Otis with narrowed eyes--

CU WADE'S POV -- OTIS

A man puts a slip of paper in Otis's pocket, pats his back. Otis winks to acknowledge the bet, turns, makes eyes at a PRETTY WOMAN sitting at the bar, who is eyeing him back. He lays the beers and glasses on the table, starts away.

WADE

Pour it.

OTIS TURNS, CUPS HIS HAND AROUND HIS EAR-

WADE

Pour it.

Expressionless, he starts to pour the beer into Wade's glass. The Sheriff looks up into his face--

WADE

I know you?

YOUNG OTIS

Name's Otis.

WADE

Otis what?

YOUNG OTIS

Payne.

WADE

One of Cleroe Payne's boys?

YOUNG OTIS

Uh-huh.

WADE

I sent your Daddy to the farm once.

YOUNG OTIS

I know that.

WADE

Why you think that was?

Otis feels people watching. He doesn't want to lose face--

YOUNG OTIS

Some crop needed pickin' and the man was shorthanded.

A very insolent answer for the time and place--

WADE

As I remember it was because he had a sassy mouth on him. Must run in the family--You wouldn't be runnin' numbers out of this club, now, would you, son?

YOUNG OTIS

Runnin' numbers illegal.

WADE

Runnin' numbers without I know about
it is both illegal and unhealthy.
You remember that.

The beer is poured. Otis starts away--

WADE

Whoah, son. You're not finished.
Pour his.

YOUNG HOLLIS

I prefer it in the bottle--

WADE

Shut up, Hollis. Pour.

Otis meets Wade's look now, pours the other beer--

WADE

How come you don't took familiar?

YOUNG OTIS

Been away. Up to Houston.

WADE

Houston, huh? I hear they let you
boys run wild up there.

No response. Wade deliberately pushes the glass away so beer
splashes on the table and drips into Hollis's lap--

WADE

Aw--look what you done now. Better
get something to wipe it up, son.

Half the people in the room are watching now, the other half
moving away to relative safety. Otis tries to keep a lid on
his temper, looks around the room--

YOUNG OTIS

You spilt it, you wipe it up.

Wade stands, steely-eyed, and looks at Otis nose to nose--

WADE

I told you to do something. Are you
gonna hop to it, or are we gonna
have a problem?

Otis is starting to shake, but holds his ground--

WADE

Don't want to turn tail in front of
your people. I understand.

He starts to turn away then WHAP! brings the butt of his
pistol up under Otis's chin, knocking him to the floor. A
woman SCREAMS and Otis, enraged, grabs the chair he has fallen
over, starts to get up--but Wade has the pistol levelled at
his face--

WADE

Come on, Houston, give it a try!
Come to Poppa--

RODERICK is out on the floor now, hands held out in a gesture
of peace, as YOUNG MINNIE watches from behind the bar,
petrified--

RODERICK

Don't mind him, Sheriff. Boy's just
a bit slow, is all. He don't mean
nothin' by it--

WADE

That the problem, son? You Slow?

RODERICK

Otis, apologize to the Sheriff--

Otis eases the chair down but doesn't say anything--

RODERICK

You got him too scared to peep,
Sheriff. Maybe if you put that gun
up--

WADE

You telling me what to do, Roderick?

RODERICK

No, Sheriff, I'm just--

Wade looks around, widens his eyes in mock surprise--

WADE

What's this I see? Is that whiskey
in them glasses on the Bar? Roderick,
I'm gonna have to cite you for a
violation of state law--

RODERICK

This is a club, Sheriff--you been in
here--

WADE

And people better clear out of here!
Now!

A few people start for the exit. Wade swivels and BLAM sends a bullet past Minnie that shatters a crystal decanter behind the bar. People run for the door. Wade squats down to look Otis in the face--

CU WADE

WADE

You learn how to act your place,
son. This idn't Houston.

He stands and we FOLLOW him toward the bar--

OTIS (V.O.)

'Course I was young and full of beans
then--

The camera passes Wade and instead of Minnie there stands Otis, PRESENT DAY, reminiscing. We are back in '95--

OTIS

I didn't understand the spot I was
putting Roderick in.

SAM

And that was the last time you saw
him?

We SHIFT to see Sam sitting where Wade was headed--

OTIS

Oh--I think he came in one more time
with Hollis and--naw, your Daddy
wasn't with them. Made their monthly
pickup. Roderick wasn't in so I just
kept my mouth good and shut and handed
over that envelope.

SAM

That was the night he disappeared?

OTIS

(Shakes his head)
Could of been. That was white people's
business.

SAM

And when my father was Sheriff?

OTIS

What about it?

SAM

What was your deal with him?

Otis smiles, chooses his words carefully--

OTIS

Buddy was more a part of the big picture--county political machine, chamber of commerce, zoning board if I kept those people happy, he was pretty much on my side.

(Smiles)

Whenever somebody thought--they start up another bar for the black folks, they'd be--how should I put this? They'd be officially discouraged.

SAM

He ever accept cash for a favor?

Otis smiles, looks away to ponder his response--

OTIS

I don't recall a prisoner ever died in your father's custody. I don't recall a man in this town--Black, White, Mexican--who'd hesitate a minute before they'd call on Buddy Deeds to solve a problem. More than that I wouldn't like to say.

INT. CAR -- LATE AFTERNOON

Pilar drives Amado and her daughter Paloma home--

AMADO

If you had your way I wouldn't have any friends.

PILAR

Oh, come on, Amado--

AMADO

Just 'cause I'm not like Little Miss Honor Roll here--

PILAR

Leave your sister out of it.

AMADO

You and all of the teachers in this dump--your story's over, so you don't want anybody else to have fun.

We see on PILAR's face that he has scored--

PALOMA

You jerk--

AMADO

I'm not talking to you. You don't have any friends.

PILAR eases the car down San Jacinto street, seeing something on the street and she's tuning her kids' conversation out--

PALOMA

Who'd want to be friends with that bunch of pachuco wannabes?

AMADO

I don't pretend I came over on the Mayflower--

PALOMA

And those stupid girls who hang out with them--

AMADO

Just shut up.

PILAR'S POV -- SAM

Sam walks on the sidewalk parallel to them, talking with three other MEN--

PALOMA (O.S.)

Joanie Orozco's telling the whole school she's like desperately in love with Santo Guerra.

AMADO (O.S.)

So?

PALOMA (O.S.)

It's pathetic. You can't be desperately in love when you're 14 years old.

INT. PILAR'S CAR

Pilar is still looking fixedly out the window--

PALOMA

Not if you have half a brain in your head.

PILAR

Of course you can.

PALOMA

What?

PILAR

It doesn't have anything to do with being smart.

EXT. SAN JACINTO STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON

Danny Padilla is arguing with H.L. BRIGGS, a construction company big shot, and JORGE GUERRA, a Council member in his 40s and Sam, as they walk down the sidewalk of the main street--

JORGE

What I'm saying is, I don't see the point. You had your chance when the dedication committee was meeting--

DANNY

I've got new information--

H.L.

It's ancient goddamn history, Danny--

DANNY

1963, they dam up the north branch to make Lake Pescadero. A whole little town disappears--

H.L.

Squatter town--

DANNY

People had been living in Perdido for over a hundred years. Mexicans and Chicanos are deported, evicted, moved forcibly out of their houses by our local hero, Buddy Deeds, and his department--

JORGE

There was a bill from the state legislature--

DANNY

Families were split apart, a whole community was destroyed--

H.L.

They were trespassing, Danny--

DANNY

--and who ends up with lakefront property bought for a fraction of the market price? Buddy Deeds, Sheriff of Rio County, and his Chief Deputy, Hollis Pogue.

They all look at Sam, who has been listening patiently the whole while. They've reached his office.

SAM

You finished?

DANNY

Look, I'm not after you, Sam. I

just think people in town ought to
know the full story on Buddy Deeds.

SAM

(Nods)

That makes two of us.

Sam steps into his office, leaving H.L. shaking his head--

H.L.

You best be thankful that's the son
and not the father. Buddy woulda
kicked your ass from here to sundown.

INT. HALLWAY -- DEL'S HOUSE -- LATE AFTERNOON

We TRACK down a hallway as Celie walks toward us, calling
ahead. Chet stands in the middle of the hall behind her.

CELIE (O.S.)

I don't see what the big deal is. Go
back over, talk to the man, and bury
the hatchet, Del--

CELIE passes us and Del crosses back in the other direction
from behind the camera, carrying boxes of their belongings.
We continue our SLOW TRACK forward--

DEL

Otis Payne was never embarrassed
about a thing in his life.

CHET

Dad--

CELIE (O.S.)

You were 8 years old when he left--

DEL

He didn't leave, he moved three houses
down with one of my mother's best
friends.

CHET

Dad--?

DEL

"Hey, Delmore, where's your Daddy?"

Del disappears into the bedroom at the end of the hall--

DEL (O.S.)

Everybody else's business. And
everybody loved Big O--

DEL comes back out, empty-handed--

DEL

Big O was always there with a smile
or a loan or a free drink.

CHET

Dad, can I talk to you about track?

CELIE (O.S.)

People change.

DEL

Not that much.

CHET

Dad, I talked to the track coach--

DEL

I thought we already had this out?
Next year, if your grades are high
enough--

CHET

I have a B average.

DEL

How many B-average students do you
think they take at West Point?

CELIE (O.S.)

We're going to have to see him.

DEL

No, we don't.

Del steps away past us, leaving Chet, defeated--

INT. CAFE -- NIGHT -- ENRIQUE

We start on Enrique, talking surreptitiously on the pay phone
on the way to the kitchen.

ENRIQUE

Sabado por la noche--Is, es el mas
seguro--a cruzar por la manana y
pues tendremos que esperar--[Friday
night--Yes, that's the safest--I'll
cross in the morning and then we'll
have to wait--]

Mercedes bustles by, snapping her fingers--

MERCEDES

Off the phone, by we've got people
waiting. Andale!

We FOLLOW Mercedes back into the kitchen, where she moves
through, kibbitzing the operation--

WAITRESS

Mercedes stops by a young girl prepping a pork loin to be cooked. She isn't wearing gloves.

MERCEDES

Donde estan sus guantes? Tonta! Quiere matar a mis clientes? [Where are your gloves? Stupid! You want to kill my customers?]

She continues past, shaking her head, bringing us to Pilar, who is trying to stay out of the way--

MERCEDES

These ones coming up are getting stupider every year.

PILAR

Maybe you're just getting less patient.

MERCEDES

If they're going to survive here, they have to know how to work, Elalco! Adelante! Los clientes esperan!

PILAR

Well, you hire illegals--

MERCEDES

(Indignant)

Nobody is illegal in my cafe! They've got green cards, they've got relatives who were born here--if they only had a little common sense I'd be very happy.

PILAR

If you spent a little more time training them--

MERCEDES

Did you come here to tell me how to run my business?

PILAR

No. I was wondering if you'd like to take a trip down south with us. Maybe see where you grew up--

MERCEDES

Why would I want to go there?

PILAR

Oh, come on--you must be curious how

it's changed. Amado is into this big Tejano roots thing and I've never been further than Ciudad Leon--

MERCEDES

You want to see Mexicans, open your eyes and look around you. We're up to our ears in them.

Pilar gives up on the trip. She watches her mother poking at the plates of chips and salsa ready to go out--

PILAR

Mami, how old were you when my father--

MERCEDES

He was killed.

PILAR

Right. When he was killed.

MERCEDES

A little older than Paloma is now.

PILAR

How come you never got married again?

Mercedes just glares at her--

PILAR

There must have been somebody.

MERCEDES

(Mutters)

I was too busy.

PILAR

Nobody's too busy.

MERCEDES

Maybe now. It was different back then. I had this place, I was doing all the shopping, all the cooking. What do I need some chulo with grease under his nails to drink up the profit?

PILAR

(Pissed off)

Thank you.

MERCEDES

I don't mean Fernando.

PILAR

Mami, the first time I brought him home, those were your exact words--

"some chulo with grease under his nails."

MERCEDES

I never said that.

PILAR

You made it pretty damn clear you thought he was nobody.

MERCEDES

I felt that you could do better for yourself--

PILAR

What? Become a nun? You didn't want me going out with Anglos--

MERCEDES

I never said that. It was just that boy--

PILAR

"That boy"--Mami, say his name for chrissakes!

The employees are staring. Mercedes won't look at her daughter as she steps out of the kitchen, banging into Enrique on his way back in--

MERCEDES

You people are stealing my money--
Entiende? Robandome?

Mercedes is gone. The young girl, pulling plastic gloves on, looks to Pilar.

GIRL

Su madre? [Your mother?]

PILAR

Si.

The girl puts her hand on her heart in sympathy--

GIRL

Lo siento [My condolences.]

INT. COUNTRY AND WESTERN BAR -- NIGHT

A crowded room, C&W MUSIC plays on the box. Sam sits behind a bottle of beer as the bartender, CODY, in his early 50s philosophizes.

CODY

Now I'm just as liberal as the next guy--

SAM

If the next guy's a redneck.

CODY

--but I gotta say I think there's something to this cold climate business. I mean, you go to the beach--what do you do? Drink a few beers, wait for a fish to flop up on the sand. Can't build no civilization that way. You got a hard winter coming, though, you got to plan ahead, and that gives your cerebral cortex a workout.

SAM

Good deal you were born down here, then.

CODY

You joke about it, Sam, but we are in a state of crisis. The lines of demarcation has gotten fuzzy--to run a sucessfull civilization you got to have lines of demarcation between right and wrong, between this one and that one--your Daddy understood that. He was like the whatchacallit--the referee for this damn menudo we got down here. He understood how most people don't want their sugar and salt in the same jar.

SAM

You mixed drinks bad as you mix metaphors, you be out of a job.

CODY

Take that pair over in the corner--

Sam swivels to look where Cody points--

CODY

Place like this, twenty years ago, Buddy woulda been, on them two--

SAM'S POV -- CORNER BOOTH

Cliff and Priscilla talk across a table--

CODY (O.S.)

--warning. Not 'cause he had it in for the colored

SAM AND CODY

CODY

--but just as a kind of safety tip.

SAM

Yeah. I bet he would.

CODY

Old Sam stood for somethin', you know? The day that man died they broke the goddamn mold.

BOOTH -- CLIFF AND PRISCILLA

Things are obviously more than professional between these two--

PRISCILLA

So where does that put us?

CLIFF

Well--I don't see what's changed. No -
PDA's, no necking on the obstacle
course.

PRISCILLA

Seriously.

CLIFF

Seriously, I think we should get
married.

PRISCILLA

We been through this before--

CLIFF

We should just do it.

PRISCILLA

And if I get a shot at a promotion
somewhere--

CLIFF

You could take it--

PRISCILLA

It's up or out these days, Cliff.
Say I get transferred to a different
post--

CLIFF

I'd quit the Army for you, if it
came to that.

PRISCILLA

(Grins)

Man's gonna retire in two years and
he offer to quit. Big goddamn deal.

SAM (O.S.)

Excuse me--

They look up to see Sam standing over them--

CLIFF

Sheriff--hi--this is Sergeant--this is Priscilla Worth.

SAM

Pleased to meet you.

CLIFF

Sheriff Deeds was in on our archeological find yesterday.

PRISCILLA

It true they gonna build a shopping mall out there?

SAM

If certain people have their way, it's going to be a new jail.

PRISCILLA

Damn. Maybe we got in the wrong business. They closin' down military bases left and right, puttin' up jails like 7-11 stores.

SAM

Do either of you have any idea when they stopped using that site as a rifle range?

CLIFF

They stopped training infantry there in the late '50s. It was just a playground for the jackrabbits till they gave it to the county last year.

PRISCILLA

You know who it was they dug up?

SAM

Not for sure yet. But I kind of wish they hadn't.

EXT. CAFE -- NIGHT

Enrique steps out of the darkened cafe, followed by Mercedes, who locks up. Mercedes steps over to an expensive-looking car--

ENRIQUE

Es muy lindo, su coche--

MERCEDES

En ingles Enrique. This is the United States. We speak English.

ENRIQUE

Is very beautiful, your car.

MERCEDES

Good night, Enrique. She slides into the car--

ENRIQUE

Buenas noches, Senora Cruz. Enrique walks in the opposite direction--

FADE OUT

EXT. BIG O'S ROADHOUSE -- DAY -- CU DEL

Del, in uniform, approaches the front door of Big O's, not open for business yet. We TIGHTEN as he stops to read a handlettered sign next to it: "BLACK SEMINOLE EXHIBIT REAR ENTRANCE." He steps in--

INT. ROADHOUSE

Late-50s R&B plays on the JUKEBOX. Otis stands behind the counter hooking the beer taps up. Del steps in and sits on a stool at the far end of the bar, tense, looking around the place. When Otis sees him, he stops dead. They lock eyes for a moment, then Otis turns to call.

OTIS

Carolyn--knock that off for a minute.

CAROLYN

CAROLYN SYKES, an attractive woman maybe ten years younger than Otis, pulls the plug from the jukebox near where she's scrubbing bloodstains off the floor. She turns to look at the newcomer--

BAR

Del doesn't move to come closer--

DEL

Black Seminoles?

OTIS

(Shrugs)

Hobby of mine. Got some artifacts, couple pieces one of your men out at the base made. Free admission.

Del nods toward where Carolyn is mopping--

DEL

That where he was shot?

OTIS

That's where he fell.

DEL

You get much of that in here?

OTIS

It's a bar. People come together,
drink, fall in love, fall out of
love, air their grudges out--

DEL

Deal drugs in the bathroom--

OTIS

If I thought it would help I'd put
up a sign telling them not to. Right
under the one about the employees
washing their hands.

Carolyn has come over by Otis, lugging the bucket and mop--

OTIS

This here's Carolyn. Honey, this is
my son, Delmore.

DEL

Nice to meet you, Ma'am.

Carolyn nods, shoots a look to Otis--

CAROLYN

I'll be in back waiting for that
delivery.

They wait till she is gone to start again--

OTIS

So.

DEL

So tell me why I shouldn't make this
place off-limits.

OTIS

This is an official visit, then--

DEL

I assume a lot of your business is
from our people.

Otis pulls a tap back and it coughs before squirting beer.

OTIS

Your boys out there cooped up together, need somewhere they can let the steam out. If they're Black, there's not but one place in this town they feel welcome. Been that way since before you were born.

DEL

We have an enlisted man's club at the post.

OTIS

Well, you're the Man out there now, aren't you? It's your call.

DEL

That's right.

OTIS

(Smiles)

I been hearing rumors about this new commander coming for a couple weeks now. Boys say they heard he's a real hard case. Spit-and-polish man. Full-bird colonel name of Payne, they say-- Bet you never figured you end up back here.

DEL

The Army hands you a command, you go wherever it is.

OTIS

Right.

DEL

I hear things, too. People call you the Mayor of Darktown.

OTIS

(Shrugs)

Over the years, this is the one place that's always been there. I loan a little money out, settle some arguments. Got a cot in the back-people get afraid to go home they can spend the night. There's not enough of us to run anything in this town- the white people are mostly out on the lake now and the Mexicans hire each other. There's the Holiness Church and there's Big O's place.

DEL

And people make their choice--

OTIS

(Smiles)

A lot of 'em choose both. There's not like a borderline between the good people and the bad people--you're not either on one side or the other--

Del looks away, not wanting to believe this--

OTIS

(Softly)

I gonna meet that family of yours?

DEL

Why would you want to do that?

OTIS

Because I'm your father.

Del gives him a dark look and lets the statement hang between them. He gets up and heads for the door--

DEL

You'll get official notification when I make my decision. He is out the door--Otis pulls himself a beer as Carolyn steps back out--

CAROLYN

So that's him--

OTIS

Yeah--that's him. Got two, three thousand people under him out there, you count the civilians.

CAROLYN

That must be a laugh a minute.

EXT. SAN JACINTO STREET -- DAY

Sam walks down the main street of town. A CROWD is gathering at the other end for the ceremony--

H.L. (O.S.)

Sheriff!

We WIDEN as H.L. and Jorge catch up to him. H.L. slaps Sam on the back--

H.L.

Historic occasion, isn't it?

SAM

Seems like we have another one every week.

H.L.

Jorge and his Chamber of Commerce boys got to keep things hummin'--

JORGE

We're building up tourism, Sam--

SAM

People come here to catch bass and to get laid at the Boy's Town in Ciudad Leon--

JORGE

Sam--

SAM

You ought to put up a banner--
"Frontera, Texas: Gateway to Cut-Rate Pussy"--

H.L.

That kind of talk doesn't help, Sam.

SAM

Rather have that than the ten-foot-high catfish statue--

JORGE

I got Eddie Richter at the Sentinel to kill that story.

SAM

The Perdido thing?

JORGE

He agreed it wasn't exactly news--

SAM

Danny's gonna be out for blood the next time.

H.L.

Which is why we need to talk to you about the new jail--just so we're all on the same page.

SAM

We don't need a new jail.

H.L.

That's a matter of interpretation--

SAM

We're already renting cells to the Feds for their overflow--

JORGE

There was a mandate in the last election--

SAM

It wouldn't happen to be your construction company gonna get the bid on building this thing, would it, H.L. And Jorge, you wouldn't be thinking about a couple dozen new jobs to dangle in front of the voters--

H.L.

Dammit, Sam, the people are concerned about crime--

SAM

We need a drug rehab program, we need a new elementary school--

JORGE

There isn't money allocated for that. But a jail--

SAM

Look, I'm not gonna campaign against your deal here, but if anybody asks me, I got to tell them the truth. We-- don't--need--a new jail.

H.L.

When we backed you--

SAM

When you backed me you needed somebody named Deeds to bump the other fella out of office. Hey, folks--

Sam and the others smile as they reach the CROWD of townspeople, mostly small business owners and retired people. Photographers from the paper and a local TV news crew wait by a veiled Statue roped off in a little traffic island. Mercedes, dressed to kill, stands waiting next to Hollis with a huge pair of scissors in her hand.

CU MERCEDES

Slowly working the blades of the scissors, she looks coldly at Sam--

CU SAM

He nods to her as the crowd opens a path for him.

SAM

Let's get this thing over with.

INT. MIKEY'S WORKSHOP -- MORNING

We start on a two-foot-high statue of a cowboy made from old bullets and shell casings. We PAN past a few others, the poses lifted from Frederic Remington paintings, till we see Mikey, gluing together a work in progress, a Remington book propped open in front of him. Cliff sits at the worktable playing absently with the old bullets spilled out from MIKEY'S bag

MIKEY

Never thought I'd see the day a buddy of mine was dating a woman with three up and three down on her shoulder.

CLIFF

I think it's beyond what you'd call dating.

MIKEY

You going to get married?

CLIFF

(Shrugs)
Maybe.

MIKEY

You met her family? They gonna be cool about you being a white guy?

CLIFF

Priscilla says they think any woman over 30 who isn't married must be a lesbian. She figures they'll be so relieved I'm a man--

MIKEY

Always heartwarming to see a prejudice defeated by a deeper prejudice. But marriage, man--I did two tours in Southeast Asia and I was married for five years--I couldn't tell you which experience was worse.

Cliff picks up a slug--

CLIFF

Hey, Mikey--

MIKEY

I knew she was Japanese going into it, but she didn't tell me the ninja assassin part--

CLIFF

Mikey--

MIKEY

Her parents acted like I was gonna
blow my nose on their curtains--

CLIFF

Mikey--

MIKEY

If I stayed out past ten with the
guys she'd go into her Madame
Butterfly routine--

CLIFF

Mikey look at this--

MIKEY

What--it's a bullet. I'm lousy with
bullets here.

CLIFF

It's a .45.

MIKEY

Yeah?

CLIFF

This is the stuff we picked up the
other day, right? The rest of this
is all .30 caliber--

MIKEY

They were using M-1's, yeah--

CLIFF

What's it doing on a rifle range?

MIKEY holds the slug in front of his face--

MIKEY

We better call that Sheriff.

EXT. SAN JACINTO STREET -- DAY

Hollis is finishing his oration, having put the crowd in a
good mood.

HOLLIS

Sometime in the early '70s a reporter
from a national magazine was talking
to the governor of our Lone Star
state, and he asked him, "Governor,
what's your ideal of what a real
Texan ought to be?" Governor said,
"That's easy, son- you just go down
to Rio County and get a look at
Sheriff Buddy Deeds."

Applause--

SAM

Watching the crowd--

SAM'S POV

We PAN with his gaze across smiling faces, till he comes to Danny and a couple of Chicano friends, looking grim. We RACK FOCUS beyond them to see Pilar, watching the ceremony from a few yards back--

HOLLIS (O.S.)

Thank you. We've got one more person to hear from--

HOLLIS

HOLLIS

--and he's somebody who probably knew Buddy better than any of us, Sam--would you say a few words?

SAM

Not thrilled to be called on. He steps forward reluctantly to APPLAUSE--

SAM

You folks who remember my father knew him as Sheriff. But at home he was also judge, jury

He looks to Hollis--

SAM

--and executioner.

LAUGHTER. Sam holds Hollis's eyes for a moment before continuing--

SAM

This is a real honor you're doing him today, and if Buddy was around I'm sure his hat size would be gettin' bigger every minute.

PILAR

Watching--

SAM (O.S.)

I used to come to this park to hide from him. Now that you're putting his name on it--

SAM

SAM

I'll have to find someplace new to
duck out.

More LAUGHTER--

SAM

I do appreciate it, and wherever he
is, Buddy's puttin' the beer on ice
for the bunch of you. Thank you.

APPLAUSE--

Sam steps back and Mercedes steps forward with her scissors
without looking at him--

HOLLIS

And now my fellow Council member and
one of Frontera's most respected
businesswomen, Mrs. Mercedes Cruz,
will do the honors for us.

MERCEDES

She freezes, smiling, till the still photographers have gotten
their shots, then snips the cord to a pulley system that
lets the cloth drop--

STATUE

The cloth drops to reveal a bas-relief in brass set in a
block of smooth limestone. A decent likeness of Buddy in
uniform, his hand on the shoulder of a small Chicano-looking
boy who stands beside him, eyes raised worshipfully.

APPLAUSE from the gathering--

SAM

Watching, a bit removed, as Mercedes shakes hands with Jorge
and H.L. and Hollis for the cameras. He overhears a pair of
BYSTANDERS who are checking out the statue--

BYSTANDER 1 (O.S.)

It does look like old Buddy.

BYSTANDER 2 (O.S.)

Runnin that kid in for loiterin'--

The bystanders LAUGH--Sam steps away, intercepting Mercedes
as she steps away--

SAM

Nice to see you, Mrs. Cruz.

Mercedes just looks at him, keeps going. His gaze brings him to Pilar, standing on the sidewalk, watching.

SAM

Steps over from the dispersing crowd--

SAM

Field trip?

PILAR

Lunch hour. My next class isn't till nine-thirty.

SAM

Want to take a walk?

EXT. RIVERSIDE -- DAY

Sam and PILAR walk together alongside the Rio--

SAM

Your mother still doesn't like me.

PILAR

I can't name anybody she does like these days.

SAM

I see she built a place up here by the river.

PILAR

A real palace. She rattles around alone in that thing--

SAM

She's done well for herself--on her own and all--

PILAR

So she tells me three times a week.

She looks at him--

PILAR

I thought you got through that pretty well.

SAM

They cooked the whole thing up without asking me.

PILAR

People liked him.

SAM

Most people did, yeah.

PILAR

I remember him watching me once.
When I was little--before you and I--

She shrugs.

PILAR

I was on the playground with all the other kids, but I thought he was only looking at me. I was afraid he was going to arrest me--he had those eyes, you know--

SAM

Yeah.

PILAR

Weird what you remember.

They walk in silence a moment--

SAM

Your boy, there--

PILAR

Amado.

SAM

Nice-looking kid.

PILAR

He hates me.

SAM

No--

PILAR

With Paloma, it's more like she pities and tolerates me- totally age-appropriate. But Amado--he's--he's never been book-smart. Had a hard time learning to read. Me being a teacher and caring about those things is like an embarrassment--like a betrayal.

SAM

Fernando did okay, and he dropped out--

PILAR

Fernando wasn't pissed off at everybody. He just wanted to fix their cars.

SAM

It might just be the age. I spent my first fifteen years trying to be just like Buddy and the next fifteen trying to give him a heart attack.

She looks at him--

PILAR

So why did you come back here, Sam?

SAM

Got divorced, I wasn't gonna work for my father-in-law anymore. The fellas down here said they'd back me--

PILAR

You don't want to be Sheriff.

SAM

I got to admit it's not what I thought it'd be. Back When Buddy had it-- hell, I'm just a jailer. Run a 60-room hotel with bars on the windows.

PILAR

It can happen so sudden, can't it? Being left out on your own.

SAM

You've got your mother, your kids--

PILAR

They've got me. Different thing.

They stop at a spot where you can climb down the bank--

SAM

Remember this?

Pilar looks at the spot. She isn't ready to deal with whatever memory it brings back--

PILAR

I should get back.

SAM

Pilar--

PILAR

Looks real bad if the teacher's late for class. It's really nice to talk with you, Sam.

She waves and walks away, feeling awkward. Sam watches for a minute, then turns and steps down to the bank, He looks at the water.

RIVER SURFACE

A little piece of tree bark is tossed onto the water and drifts away with the current. We TILT UP to see YOUNG PILAR tossing bark into the river as YOUNG SAM sits on the bank beside her. They are 14 and 15 years old--It is 1972--

YOUNG SAM

You going to tell her?

YOUNG PILAR

You going to tell him?

YOUNG SAM

He doesn't need to know all my business.

YOUNG PILAR

He's gonna find out.

YOUNG SAM

So? What's he gonna do, arrest us?

Young Pilar frowns, tosses more bark--

YOUNG PILAR

It's supposed to be some big sin, even if you love each other.

YOUNG SAM

You believe that?

CU YOUNG PILAR

She turns to look at him--

YOUNG PILAR

No.

We PAN with her gaze to see Sam, PRESENT DAY, sitting on the bank, lost in thought--

SAM

Me neither.

EXT. ARMY POST -- DAY

Athena walking between buildings, looking a bit out of it. Sergeant Worth cuts into her--

PRISCILLA

Private Johnson!

ATHENA

Sergeant?

PRISCILLA

Report to Dr. Innis at the clinic.

ATHENA

I'm feeling okay--

PRISCILLA

I'm very happy to hear that, Private. Now you go put some pee-pee in a cup for Dr. Innis and I'll be feeling okay, too.

ATHENA

(Reacts)

You're testing me?

PRISCILLA

You and one hundred nineteen other fortunate individuals. Put it in gear.

ATHENA

Yes, Sergeant.

Sergeant Worth watches Athena go, suspicious--

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Ray Hernandez and another DEPUTY guide Shadow back in from the courthouse in handcuffs--

RAY

Excellent performance, my friend. The judge was very impressed.

SHADOW

You don't need to cuff me.

RAY

You been talking so much trash today, you made us think you're a dangerous criminal. Be a good boy, now--

They guide him past Sam's desk--

SHADOW

You're the one who's a good boy. Man say "fetch" and you fetch--

RAY

Just doing my job.

SHADOW

White man just using you to keep the Black man down.

RAY

This isn't Houston, my friend. We pretty much running things now. Our good day has come.

SHADOW

You suckers haven't had a good day since the Alamo.

Ray smiles, pushes him out--

RAY

Andale, amigo,

We HOLD on Sam at his desk, TIGHTENING as he holds the .45 slug from the sergeants in front of his eyes--

SAM

Lupe? Get me the rangers up in Austin--

INT. MERCEDES' KITCHEN -- NIGHT -- CU GLASS

We hear old MEXICAN MUSIC. Ice cubes plunk into a glass.

WIDER, MERCEDES

Mercedes, exhausted from a day at the cafe, pours herself a Scotch and soda--

EXT. BACK PATIO -- NIGHT

The back LIGHT is flicked on and Mercedes steps out with her drink in hand, the MUSIC audible from inside. She sinks into a recliner. We TIGHTEN as she closes her eyes. Something RUSTLES out In the dark. Mercedes opens her eyes. There is WHISPERING. Mercedes sits up and suddenly two MEN run past the edge of the patio toward the front of the house. Mercedes sighs--

MERCEDES

Otra vez los mojados--[Wetbacks again--]

Mercedes searches to find a portable phone on the patio table, punches a number in--

MERCEDES

Hello? Border Patrol?

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Sam, out of uniform, stands behind his little house chucking fallen pecans out into the dark, thinking, listening to the night sounds.

CU SAM

Working something out in his head. He looks off into the

dark and we PAN with his gaze--A MAN steps toward us, barely visible in the darkness. It is Charley Wade--We're in Sam's REVERIE, in 1957--

WADE

Who is that? Come out here where I can see you!

BLAM! A GUNSHOT, and Wade falls to his knees--

WADE

You sonofabitch--

Wade falls on his face. A FLASHLIGHT BEAM flicks ON and plays over his body. We PAN back along the beam to see Buddy, holstering his Pistol. He hears something, swings the flashlight up.

SAM

We are back in 1995. Sam is blasted in the face with a **FLASHLIGHT BEAM--**

PATROLMAN (O.S.)

Hold it right there! Brazos arriba! Sam, squinting toward the light to see who it is, raises his hands over his head--

ZACK (O.S.)

Get that thing off 'im! He's one of ours--

SAM

Zack?

The FLASHLIGHT BEAM PANS AWAY and ZACK POLLARD, a Border Patrol agent, steps out of the dark to Sam--

ZACK

Hey Sam. Sorry 'bout that.

SAM

What's up?

ZACK

We had about a dozen wets come over just upriver. They ran into one of our posts--it was like a breakshot on a pool table, illegals runnin' every which way.

SAM

I haven't seen anybody come by.

ZACK

We'll get 'em--

(Looks around)
So you livin' out here now?

SAM

Yeah. It's quiet--

ZACK

I heard about that deal for your father--You must be real proud.

SAM

Sure.

ZACK

The stories people tell, he was a real colorful fella--

PATROLMAN (O.S.)

Zack! We got one!

ZACK

Well--back on the clock. You see any of our neighbors from the south, let 'em know I'm lookin' for 'em.

SAM

'Night--

Zack steps away. Sam shakes the pecans still in his band, goes back to chucking them--

EXT. COURTYARD -- DANCERS

Older CHICANO COUPLES dance to Mexican Music playing from speakers set up in the apartment complex courtyard. We TILT UP to see Enrique watching from his window--

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

MUSIC still blasting. Enrique steps away from the window, and sits on the bed of his drab furnished apartment. He goes back to tying knots in a length of clothesline splicing it to another. On the bed beside him are new flashlights and the batteries, still in their packaging. He begins to coil the rope--it is hundreds of feet long.

EXT. FRONT PORCH, PILAR'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Pilar sits on her front Porch, listening to the MUSIC in the distance. A woman singing a MEXICAN LOVE BALLAD. After a while we hear Paloma open the screen door behind her--

PALOMA (O.S.)

Mom?

PILAR

Yeah?

PALOMA (O.S.)

You gonna stay out here?

PILAR

For a while.

A silence. They listen to the RECORD--

PALOMA (O.S.)

What's she singing about?

PILAR

(Smiles)

What do you think?

FADE OUT

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- EARLY MORNING

Sam has been up since dawn, searching through piles of old department records. Papers cover his desk and the chairs he's dragged over next to it. He reads out loud himself from a report in front of him--

SAM

First bullet entered beneath the left eye, severing the optical nerve and exiting from top rear of skull causing tissue damage

DOCUMENTS -- VARIOUS SHOTS

As Sam reads, we see quick pops of various records-- Certificates of death. An old Sheriff's Department payroll. An autopsy report. Eviction notices.

SAM (O.S.)

--and severe cerebral hemorrhaging. Second bullet entered left cheek driving fragment of upper and lower molars into base of skull. Third bullet--

Real estate transfers. A map of the Proposed Lake Pescadero. Another autopsy report. A FAX COPY of the forensics dental report on Charley Wade. Another autopsy report--

CU SAM

Intent as he pores over the paperwork--

LEGAL PAD

We TILT DOWN to read various notes Sam has written--Reynaldo Garcia killed by Shf Wade--3/49 Hollis Kinney hired by Shf Dep.--9/51 Lucas Johnson k. by Shf Wade--7/53 Horace Gaines

k. by Shf Wade--1/54 Santiago Huerta k. by Shf Wade--4/54
Rifle range closed--9/56 Eladio Cruz k. by Shf Wade--12/56
Buddy Deeds hired by Shf Dep.--2/57 Shf Wade disappears--
3/57 \$10,000 cnty funds missing Buddy Deeds new Shf

We come to Sam's hand, writing, when it clears we can read
the last entry--

Mercedes Cruz hired as cook, Rio Co. jail--4/57 ?????

CU SAM

Trying to put it all together.

PETE ZAYAS, a skinny, older man in trustee's coveralls,
wanders in, emptying the trash baskets in the front office--

PETE

Morning, Sheriff.

SAM

Hey, Pete. How's it going?

PETE

Time marches on.

SAM

How much you got left?

PETE

Three months.

SAM

You stop growing that loco weed at
your place, you'd see a lot more
daylight.

PETE

It was for personal consumption.

SAM

You're going to smoke an acre and a
half of marijuana?

PETE

I got a bad stomach. It helps me
digest.

Pete dumps out the basket by Sam--

PETE

Your father never bothered me about
it. Leastways not till the drug people
got on his back in the late '60s.

SAM

I thought he busted you a couple

times.

PETE

Different charge. I had a still.
Made my own mescal.

Sam looks up at him.

PETE

That's how I ruined my stomach.

SAM

(Smiles)
I'm surprised he bothered with it.

PETE

He was afraid I was going to poison
somebody. Your father tried to do
good for people--

SAM

So I've heard--

PETE

And your mother was a saint. That
summer I built the patio at your
house? She made me lunch every day.

SAM

Well, you were working there--

PETE

It could have just been a box lunch
from the jail.

Sam looks up again, troubled.

SAM

You built our patio while you were
on the county?

PETE

Out in the fresh air, nice gringo
lady making you pies--who's gonna
sit back in a little jail cell all
day? Sheriff Buddy, man. Como el no
hay dos. And after that cabron Charley
Wade--

SAM

I've heard Wade was a bit tough on
the Mexicans--

PETE

He murdered Eladio Cruz. That tough
enough for you?

SAM

Murdered him?

PETE

Chucho Montoya saw it with his own eyes. Shot him in cold blood.

EXT. SAN JACINTO STREET -- MORNING

Ray Hernandez, heading in to work, comes upon Sam getting into his car--

RAY

You're out early.

SAM

Yeah.

RAY

Haven't seen much of you at the jail lately.

SAM

I been working on a few things.

RAY

Uh-huh.

SAM

I'm going over to the other side.

RAY

(Concerned)
The Republicans?

SAM

No--to Mexico. I've got to talk to somebody.

RAY

They got telephones.

SAM

Gotta be in person.

RAY

Oh.

An awkward silence. Sam sits into the driver's seat and Ray leans down to talk--

RAY

Sam? I--the Committee--you know Jorge and H.L. and all--they asked me--

SAM

They want you to stand for Sheriff

next election.

RAY

Yeah.

SAM

You'd do a good job.

RAY

How 'bout you?

SAM

Don't know if I'll still want it.

RAY

I didn't want to be going around
your back.

SAM

I appreciate you telling me.

Sam looks at his Chief Deputy--

SAM

You think we need a new jail?

RAY

Well, it's a complicated issue--

Sam smiles, turns the engine on--

SAM

Yeah, Ray, you'd be a hell of a
Sheriff.

EXT. SCHOOL -- MORNING

Pilar sits with Amado on the football field bleachers before
school starts--

PILAR

I'm only going to have you for two
more years. If you decide not to go
on to college--

AMADO

I can't take any more school.

PILAR

--you're going to be on your own.

AMADO

So?

PILAR

So I'm worried about you. I don't
want you to end up in jail like your

friends.

AMADO

They're not going to jail.

PILAR

Don't try to con me, Amado. You knew how they got all those things.

AMADO

Just some rich Anglo out on the lake. Don't even live here all year.

PILAR

That makes it okay?

AMADO

They stole our land--

PILAR

Save your breath. That line doesn't cut it with me.

A silence. Amado sulks.

PILAR

How do you think you're going to make a living?

AMADO

I can fix cars.

PILAR

You can fix old cars. Mr. Washburn told me that the cars they're making now are all computerized--

AMADO

You think I can't learn that?

PILAR

I think you can learn whatever you want to. I just don't see you doing it. If you want to settle for--

AMADO

I'm not settling for anything. I like cars, it's just not a move up the ladder to you, so you think it's a waste.

PILAR

That isn't true.

AMADO

Oh, come on--you and Grandma think anybody who works with their hands

is a peasant. When Dad--

PILAR

If you grew up to be anywhere near
as good a man as your father was, I
would be happy! I would be thrilled.

They look, at each other for a long moment.

AMADO

It's my life. If I want to fuck it
up, that's my business.

PILAR

(Nods)

I said pretty much the same thing to
my mother when I was your age.

AMADO

And what did she do?

PILAR

Two years at hard labor, Our Lady of
Perpetual Help.

AMADO

Catholic school, nasty.

Pilar is nearly in tears.

PILAR

Honey, I think you're smart and you're
good and I love you. So don't act
like an idiot, all right?

EXT. BORDER CROSSING -- DAY

We see Sam's car roll through the "express lane" as other
cars in both directions stop by the inspection booths. Sam
drives across the bridge over the Rio--

EXT. STREETS -- CIUDAD LEON -- VARIOUS SHOTS

Sam drives slowly through the sprawling, more populous town
on the other side. Lots of the streets are unpaved. We PAN
with the car till we HOLD on ANSELMA, a country girl of 15,
aimlessly walking the streets--

EXT. LLANTERIA (TIRE REPAIR SHOP) -- DAY

We watch a KID about Amado's age pulling a tire off its rim
to put a patch on it--

CHUCHO (O.S.)

Over here we don't throw everything
away like you gringos do.

CHUCHO AND SAM

CHUCHO MONTOYA, in his mid-50s, stands by Sam drinking a Coke as they watch the kid work.

CHUCHO

Recycling, right? We invented that.
The government doesn't have to tell
people to do it.

SAM

You own this place?

CHUCHO

This place, the one across the street,
four other ones around Ciudad Leon--
soy el Rey de las Llantas. King of
the Tires. Lots of your people rollin'
back over that bridge on my rubber.

SAM

(Nods)

You lived in the States for a while?

CHUCHO

Fifteen years in El Paso.

SAM

Made some money, came back here--

CHUCHO

Something like that.

SAM

You ever know a fella named Eladio
Cruz?

CHUCHO smiles, draws a line in the dirt with his heel--

CHUCHO

You the sheriff of Rio County, right?
Un jefe muy respetado. Step over
this line.

Sam obliges--

CHUCHO

Ay, que milagro! You're not the
Sheriff of nothing anymore- just
some tejano with a lot of questions
I don't have to answer.

Sam smiles, plays with the line with his toe--

CHUCHO

Bird flying south-you think he sees
that line? Rattlesnake, javalina--

whatever you got--halfway across
that line they don't start thinking
different. So why should a man?

SAM

Your government always been pretty
happy to have that line. The
question's just been where to draw
it

CU CHUCHO

CHUCHO

My government can go fuck itself,
and so can yours. I'm talking about
people here--men. Mi amigo Eladio
Cruz is giving some friends of his a
lift in his camion one day--

We PAN from CHUCHO to the FLAT TIRE on a battered old pickup
truck--

CHUCHO (V.O.)

--but because he's on one side of
this invisible line and not the other,
they got to hide in the back like
criminals--

Eladio CRUZ, young and good-looking, squats into the shot to
examine the tire, jack in hand. It Is 1956--

CHUCHO (V.O.)

And because over there he's just
another Mex bracero, any man with a
badge is his jefe--

CONJUNTO MUSIC comes from the truck RADIO. YOUNG CHUCHO steps
past Eladio--

ELADIO

Donde vas, Chucho, Tienes que quedar
escondido! [Shit, CHUCHO you got to
stay hidden!]

YOUNG CHUCHO

Voy a romper las rinones si no hago
pipi--[I'm gonna bust my kidneys if
I don't pee--]

We TRACK back with Young CHUCHO to see we are at the side of
a dirt road on the scrubby flatland near the border. Eladio's
battered pickup truck has wood-slat sides and a canvas top.
Eladio begins to undo the nuts on the flat tire as Young
CHUCHO climbs down into a dry creek bed to relieve himself--

YOUNG CHUCHO

Los demas son tan espantados que

preferan mojar sus pantalones. [The other guys are so scared they'd rather wet their pants.]

CHUCHO tightens as he sees something, ducks down--

YOUNG CHUCHO

Mira, Eladio [Look!]

We PAN to see the Sheriff's car approaching in a cloud of **DUST--**

ELADIO

(Calling from where he lies changing the tire)

Muchachos! Escondases! [Boys! Hide yourselves!]

INT. REAR OF TRUCK

Eight illegal WORKERS hear this and lie down, pulling a canvas tarp over themselves. We hear the CAR STOP behind them--

EXT. ARROYO -- CU CHUCHO

He makes the sign of the cross as he presses his back against the dirt of the arroyo--

ROAD

Sheriff Wade and Deputy Hollis get out of their car and start toward Eladio--

ELADIO

He stands, takes a deep breath--Wade steps up to him with his hard-eyed smile--

WADE

Hola, amgio. Problemas de llanta?
[Hey, friend. Tire problems?]

ELADIO

No hay de que. Tengo otra. [No problem, I've got another.]

WADE

What's in the back?

EXT. TRUCK

Young Hollis strolls around the truck as if he's considering buying it. He reaches in and flicks the RADIO OFF--

ELADIO

Not much, jefe. Some watermelons.

WADE

I heard somebody been haulin' wets
on this road.

ELADIO

I haven't seen anybody doing that.

WADE

This same person been bragging all
over the county how he don't have to
cut that big gringo Sheriff in on it--
he can run his own operation 'thout
any help. Como se llama, amigo?

ELADIO

Eladio Cruz.

WADE

You know this road got a bad
reputation, Eladio--

ARROYO -- CHUCHO

Young CHUCHO pecks over the edge to see what's happening.

ELADIO

Reputation?

WADE

Bandidos, Injuns--

CLOSER -- MEN

Hollis wanders over to stand by Wade--

WADE

There's many an unfortunate soul
been ambushed out on this stretch.
Hope you're carrying some protection.

ELADIO

Protection?

WADE

You carryin' a firearm, son? Don't
lie to me now.

ELADIO

Si--tengo escopeto--just a shotgun--

WADE

Just a shotgun, huh? Better let me
take a look at that.

ELADIO opens the truck door and digs under the seat. Wade
winks to Hollis, then turns and BLAM! shoots ELADIO through

the head. Hollis jumps back startled and horrified--

YOUNG HOLLIS

Oh no--oh Jesus--oh my Lord--

WADE

Little greaser sonofabitch been
running a goddamn bus service. Think
he can make a fool out of Charley
Wade! Get them wets outta the back,
Hollis, see what we've got--

CU CHUCHO

Squatting in a ball to make himself as small as possible,
eyes covered with his hands.

YOUNG HOLLIS (O.S.)

You killed him--

WADE (O.S.)

You got a talent for statin' the
obvious, son Muchachos! Venga
afuera! Brazos arribas! [Come on out!
Hands up!]

Young CHUCHO hears FOOTSTEPS approaching. We PAN as he looks--
a man's BOOTS appear at the top of the arroyo. We TILT UP to
see a Sheriff, BACKLIT, then CRANE to see it is Sam, back in
the PRESENT looking over the site, troubled. His car sits on
the empty road behind him. He frowns, turns to go--

EXT. PARK -- DAY -- PLAQUE

Somebody has spray-painted "PERDIDO!" over the plaque of
Buddy and the little boy--

HOLLIS (O.S.)

Hooligans--

WIDER

Hollis and a couple of MEN from the Public Work Department
look at the damage.

HOLLIS

It happens again, we build a fence
around it.

INT. CAFE -- DAY

Enrique steels himself, trying to cover his nerves. We CROSS
with him to a booth.

ZACK

Podemos ganar muchas batallas pero
la guerra ya es perdido--[We can win

a lot of battles but the war's already
been lost--]

Zack and another BORDER PATROLMAN look up at him--

CU ENRIQUE

Eyes glued to his notepad--

ENRIQUE

You wan' something to drink?

EXT. ROADSIDE STAND -- DAY -- CU CATTLE SKULL

A Georgia O'Keefe-looking cattle skull sits on a pedestal
against the Western sky--

WESLEY (O.S.)

The longhorns go for ten times the
price--

We WIDEN as the skull is lifted by WESLEY BIRDSONG, a Native
American man in his 70s who wears extremely thick glasses.
Sam tags along as the old man rearranges the display of Texas
curios laid out in front of his trailer. Empty scrubland
surrounds them.

WESLEY

--but longhorns are hard to come by
these days.

SAM

You sell much out here?

WESLEY

How am I gonna sell things if nobody
comes by? This stretch of road runs
between Nowheres and Nothin' Much.

SAM

Hell of a spot to put a business.

WESLEY

But you don't see much competition,
do you?

He winks at Sam, picks up a wooden radio carved to resemble
the Alamo--

WESLEY

These things used to sell like
hotcakes. Now, if it can't play those
discs, they won't look at it.

He puts the radio on, looks out at the emptiness around--

WESLEY

I like it here. Once I tried going onto that reservation to live. Couldn't take the politics. Damn Indian'll drive you crazy with that, Now your father--this wasn't what he had in mind at all. He come out of Korea, he had this Chevy with too much engine in it. He'd come roarin' up and down this road all hours of the day and night, looking for somebody to race.

He lifts a jar with a leathery brown thing in it--

WESLEY

Buffalo chips. Fella in Santa Fe told me he sells these as fast as the buffalo can squeeze 'em out.

SAM

So when did Buddy leave?

WESLEY

For Frontera? Hell, I can't remember dates no more. I do recall it was after an affair of the heart had gone sour on him. He almost took some poor fella's head off at the Legion in Arroyo Grande, and figured it was time to move on.

SAM

You think he killed anybody in Korea?

WESLEY

They don't hand those medals out for hidin' in your foxhole. Would you buy this?

SAM

No--

WESLEY

Me neither.

He searches for something among the curios--

WESLEY

If he hadn't found that Deputy job, I believe Buddy might've gone down the other path, got into some serious trouble. Settled him right down. That and your mother. 'Course he had that other one later.

SAM

Another woman?

WESLEY

Your mother wasn't one to get chased off her patch. Half the damn county knew and nobody thought the worse of her for seein' it through.

SAM

You know who it was?

WESLEY

The other one? Hell, at my age, every time you learn a new name you got to forget an old one. Your head's all crowded up--here it is--

Wesley stretches out a four-foot rattlesnake skin, rattles still attached--

WESLEY

This big fella was sleepin' in a crate at Cisco's junkyard right when I looked to see what was in it. Jumped up at my face--scared me so bad I killed him without thinkin'.

He shakes the rattles at Sam--

WESLEY

Gotta be careful where you're pokin'-- who knows what you'll find.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- DAY

PILAR talks with Molly as they near the administration office--

PILAR

I don't think you can take it personally--

MOLLY

I'd like to see them spend a day pulling 14-year-olds off of each other--I should get combat pay--

PILAR

I have new respect for some of my kids, meeting the parents they've been dealt--

Molly keeps going as Pilar ducks into the office--

PILAR

See you, Molly.

INT. OFFICE

PILAR crosses past the principal's secretary, MARISOL--

MARISOL

Steve called for you.

PILAR

Steve?

MARISOL

Steve. Board of Education Steve who likes you? He goes for us hot-blooded Mexican girls, I can tell.

PILAR

Spanish, please. My mother would have a heart attack.

MARISOL

Your mother's family is Spanish?

PILAR

Sure, they go back to Cortez. When he rode by, they were squatting in a hut cooking hamsters for dinner.

MARISOL

You got to be interested in somebody. All you do is work.

PILAR

All my mother does is work. That's how you get to be Spanish.

MARISOL

How 'bout the Sheriff?

PILAR

The Sheriff.

MARISOL

The old-high-school-heartthrob Sheriff. I thought you were crazy about each other. He's available, you're available--

PILAR

I'm unmarried. I'm not available.

MARISOL

You told me one time it was true love.

PILAR takes the pile of mimeos and mail from her slot and turns to go--

PILAR

(Mutters)

Nobody stays in love for twenty-three years.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE -- NIGHT

It is 1972. An early-'70s cheezy action picture (Filipino women-in-chains or biker flick is playing. We TILT DOWN to a man's BOOTS crunching across the gravel of the parking area. Now and then, the man turns a FLASHLIGHT BEAM on a license plate. The cars are all pre-'72, lots of pickups, and the patrons are almost all TEENAGERS. Some have turned their pickups around to sit on the tailgate and watch, while others have set lawn furniture out to sit on. We TILT UP slightly to see the glint of a Rio County Sheriff's badge pinned on the man's shirt. He meets a DEPUTY coming in the other direction. Both train their FLASHLIGHTS on the license of the car we see in the b.g. between them. We TILT and RACK to see that nobody is visible through the window--

BUDDY (O.S.)

Let's go.

We FOLLOW Buddy up to the driver's side of the car as the Deputy goes to the passenger side. We PAN with Buddy's hand down to the door handle--he grabs it, flings it open--the overhead LIGHT flicks ON and there lie YOUNG SAM and PILAR, teenagers, half their clothes off and just about to close the deal. PILAR SCREAMS and the Deputy throws the door open by their heads--

BUDDY

Goddammit!

Buddy grabs Sam's ankles and yanks him out of the car onto the ground as the Deputy awkwardly pulls PILAR, out the other side--

YOUNG SAM

What the hell are you doing? You fucking asshole!

BUDDY

How old is that girl? Goddammit, where's your goddam sense?

YOUNG PILAR (O.S.)

Let me go! Pendejo!

YOUNG HOLLIS (O.S.)

Come on now, Missy, get your clothes in order--

Sam is trying to kick and punch at his father, pausing in between to pull his pants up. People are BOOING and HONKING their HORNS all around--

YOUNG SAM

You got no fuckin' right! You stay
out of my fuckin' life!

BUDDY

Gimme the keys--gimme the goddamn
car keys, son--

YOUNG HOLLIS (O.S.)

What am I s'posed to do with her,
Buddy?

BUDDY

You drive her home and tell her mother
where we found her--

YOUNG PILAR (O.S.)

Sam!

The kids are dragged forward into the HEADLIGHTS that are
being turned on to see what the ruckus is. Both are crying,
struggling--

YOUNG SAM

You leave her the fuck alone!

BUDDY

You just shut that filthy mouth,
son. I'll deal with you when we get
home--

YOUNG PILAR

Please, don't tell my mother! She's
gonna kill me!

They step closer into the glaring HEADLIGHTS which WHITE OUT
the scene, then FADE.

EXT. RUINED DRIVE-IN -- DUSK

It is DUSK, PRESENT DAY. Our eyes readjust to see Sam,
standing by his car in the lot of the long-abandoned drive-
in. The ruined screen rises in the b.g.

CU SAM

Remembering. MUSIC BEGINS as he gets back into the car, pulls
away.

MARQUEE -- DUSK

MUSIC CONTINUES as the car cruises out past the old marquee,
a few letters still jumbled on it, several bullet holes around
them.

INT. CAR

MUSIC CONTINUES as Sam drives, thinking--

EXT. ROADS -- VARIOUS SHOTS -- DUSK/NIGHT

MUSIC CONTINUES as the car crosses the scrubland back toward town. DUSK turns to NIGHT--

EXT. PILAR'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

MUSIC CONTINUES as Sam cruises past Pilar's house. The car is not in the driveway: Paloma hangs out with a couple FRIENDS under the porch light, laughing--

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL -- NIGHT

MUSIC CONTINUES as Sam's car pulls into the high school lot. He looks up toward the school--

EXT. WINDOW, PILAR, -- SAM'S POV

MUSIC CONTINUES. We can see PILAR, through the lighted window of her classroom, preparing something on the blackboard--

INT. CAR

MUSIC ENDS as Sam leans back to wait--

EXT. PARKING LOT

PILAR digs in her bag for her car keys as she makes her way across the lot. She sees something, slows, reacting, then brings us to Sam in his car. He has parked head-to-foot next to hers. They look at each other for a long moment

PILAR

(Softly)

Follow me.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- NIGHT

Nothing stirring. Pilar's car appears, closely followed by Sam's. The cafe has closed for the night.

INT. CAFE -- NIGHT

Sam and Pilar sit on chairs next to each other, facing the window, talking softly. The STREETLIGHT shining through the letters in the front window makes patterns on their faces

PILAR

We thought we were something, didn't we?

SAM

Yeah.

PILAR

I look at my kids in school--tenth,

eleventh graders. That's who we were.
Children.

SAM

Yeah.

PILAR

I mean what did we know about
anything?

SAM

Nothing.

Pilar looks at him--

PILAR

When Nando died--it was so sudden--I
was kind of in shock for awhile.
Then I woke up and there was the
whole rest of my life and I didn't
have any idea what to do with it.

SAM

You know the other day, you asked
why I came back?

PILAR

Yeah?

SAM

I came back 'cause you were here.

PILAR nods. She gets up and we FOLLOW her across the dark
room to the jukebox. She looks at the selections--

PILAR

My mother hasn't changed the songs
since I was 10.

She puts in a quarter, punches some numbers. A Mexican BALLAD
comes on. She crosses back to Sam, holds her hand out. He
stands to greet her. They slow-dance in the empty cafe--

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT -- BEDROOM

Sam and Pilar finish making love. They lie beside each other,
shaking a little--

PILAR

Wow.

SAM

Yeah.

PILAR

How come it feels the same?

SAM

I don't know. It just feels good.
Always did.

PILAR

So what are we gonna do about this?

SAM

More, I hope.

PILAR smiles, looks around the room--

PILAR

How long have you lived here?

SAM

Two years.

PILAR

There's nothing on the walls. No
pictures--

SAM

Don't have kids. Other pictures--I
don't know--it's nothing I want to
look back on.

PILAR

Like your story is over.

SAM

I've felt that way, yeah.

Sbe puts her head on his chest--

PILAR

It isn't. Not by a long shot. He
holds her and they lie silently for
a moment--

SAM

Pilar--

PILAR

Yeah?

SAM

What was your father's name?

PILAR

Eladio. Eladio. Cruz.

FADE OUT:

EXT. PILAR'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Paloma sits on the top step of the porch, reading teen

magazines. PILAR steps out behind her, dressed casually, and squints at the day--

PALOMA

She finally got in--

PILAR

It's Saturday.

PALOMA

You got in late last night.

PILAR

Yeah. I had uhm--school business.

Paloma gives her a look, then holds a fashion page up for her to see--

PALOMA

Can I get this?

PILAR

Nobody really wears that stuff, Paloma.

PALOMA

I could name five girls at school who have one just like it--

PILAR

Enough with the clothes--

PALOMA

Just 'cause you went to Catholic school and wore a uniform.

PILAR

I only went for my last two years.

PALOMA

How come?

PILAR

Oh, my mother wanted to keep me away from away from boys.

PILAR steps out into the sun--

PALOMA

Did it work?

INT. CAFE -- MORNING

Hollis is sitting alone in a booth, working on some heuvos rancheros. Sam slides in across from him--

SAM

Morning, Hollis.

HOLLIS

Sam! Quite a do the other day. It meant a lot to folks that you said something.

SAM

You thought any more about our murder?

HOLLIS

We have a murder?

SAM

Charley Wade.

HOLLIS

I wish I could tell you I remembered something new, but I can't.

SAM

I got an idea what happened.

HOLLIS

Do you?

SAM

I think somewhere between Roderick Bledsoe's club and his house, Wade ran into Buddy Deeds. I think Buddy put a bullet in him, waited for him to die, threw him in the trunk of the Sheriff's car and drove him out by the Army post, I think he buried him under four feet of sand and never looked back.

Hollis sits back to look Sam in the eye--

HOLLIS

You lived in the man's house what-- seventeen, eighteen years? And you didn't get to know him any better than that?

SAM

I got to go see somebody in San Antonio today. Your memory gets any better, I'll be back tonight.

Sam stands and walks away. We HOLD on Hollis, his appetite gone--

EXT. BIG O'S -- MORNING

Chet steps around to the side entrance--

INT. BLACK SEMINOLE EXHIBIT -- DAY -- CU STATUE

We start on a statue of a BUFFALO SOLDIER made from spent bullets and shell casings, then PAN to another, then WIDEN to see Chet as he pokes his head in, the BELL of the door ringing. He steps in cautiously, looking around the room. On the walls there are photo-blowups, some artifacts, handlettered information on cardboard. Chet stops to look up at a picture of a barechested Black man with a couple of feathers stuck in his headband

OTIS (O.S.)

That's John Horse.

Chet turns to see Otis standing back by, the door from the bar--

OTIS

Spanish in Florida called him Juan Caballo. John Horse.

CHET

(Looks at picture)
He a Black man or an Indian?

OTIS

(Steps in)
Both.

Otis crosses to the poker table, begins to clean up--

OTIS

He was part of the Seminole Nation, got pushed down into the Everglades in pioneer days. African people who run off from the slaveholders hooked up with them, married up, had children. When the Spanish give up Florida, the U.S.Army come down to move all them Indian peoples off to Oklahoma--

CHET

The Trail of Tears.

OTIS

(Smiles)
They teaching that now? Good. Only a couple of 'em held out--this man, John Horse, and his friend Wild Cat, and a fella name of Osceola. Army put all of them in prison and Osceola died, but them other two escaped and put together a fighting band and held out another ten, fifteen years. Beat Zach Taylor and a thousand troops at Lake Okeechobee.

CHET

So they stayed in Florida?

OTIS

They got tired of fighting, went to the Indian Territories for a while. But the slave-raiders were on 'em even there, and one night they packed up and nearly the whole band rode down to Mexico. Crossed at Eagle Pass.

They move on to some photos of very African-looking people dressed in beautiful Seminole clothing--

OTIS

Men worked for Santa Anna down there, waited out the Civil War. The land wasn't much to feed people on, so in 1870 they come north and put up at Fort Duncan and the men joined up what was called the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts. Best trackers either side of the border. Bandits, rustlers, Texas rednecks, Kiowa, Comanche--

CHET

They fought against the Indians?

OTIS

Same as they done in Mexico.

CHET

But they were Indians themselves.

OTIS

They were in the Army. Like your father.

CHET

(Surprised)
You know who I am?

OTIS

I got a pretty good guess.

CHET

That guy who got shot--

OTIS

You didn't go telling your father you were here?

CHET

Are you kidding? And face a court-martial?

OTIS

(Smiles)

He's a pretty tough old man, huh?

CHET

No sports if I don't keep a B average,
no TV on school nights, no PDA's--

OTIS

PDA?

CHET

Public Display of Affection. Every
time he moves up a rank, it's like
he's got to tighten the screws a
little more--

OTIS

Well--

CHET

I mean, just 'cause he didn't--you
know--

OTIS

Didn't have a father?

CHET

(Shrugs)

He's still pissed off about it.

OTIS

When you're his age you'll still be
pissed off about him.

Chet nods, looks around--

CHET

So how come you got into all this?

OTIS

These are our people. There were
Paynes in Florida, Oklahoma, Piedras
Negras--couple of 'em won the whatsit--
Congressional Medal Of Honor--

CHET

So I'm part-Indian?

OTIS

By blood you are. But blood only
means what you let it.

CHET

My father says the day you're born
you start from scratch, no breaks

and no excuses, and you got to pull yourself up on your own.

OTIS

(Sad)

Well, he's living proof of that, son. Living proof.

INT. DEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Athena stands at attention as Del sits at his desk, reviewing her record. He lets her stand for a long time before speaking--

DEL

Private Johnson, are you unhappy in the Army?

ATHENA

No, sir--

DEL

Then how would you explain the fact that out of one hundred twenty people we tested, you're the only one who came up positive for drugs?

ATHENA

I'm sorry, sir.

DEL

When you were given the opportunity to enlist, a kind of contract was agreed upon. I think the Army has honored its part of that agreement.

ATHENA

Yes, sir--

DEL

Do you believe in what we're doing here, Private Johnson?

ATHENA

I-I can do the job, sir.

DEL

You don't sound too enthusiastic.

ATHENA

I am, sir.

DEL

What exactly do you think your job is, Private?

ATHENA

Follow orders. Do whatever they say.

DEL

Who's "they"?

ATHENA

The--the officers.

DEL

And that's the job? Nothing about serving your country?

Athena is confused, hesitates to speak--

DEL

These aren't trick questions, Private. You'll be given an Article 15 and be going into the ADCAP Program one way or the other. What happens after that is up to you. I'm just trying to understand how somebody like you thinks.

Silence--

DEL

Well?

ATHENA

(Hesitant)

You really want to know, sir?

DEL

Please.

ATHENA

It's their country. This is one of the best deals they offer.

Del knows he asked for it, but doesn't like the answer--

DEL

How do you think I got to be a colonel?

ATHENA

Work hard, be good at your job. Sir. Do whatever they tell you.

DEL

Do whatever they tell you--

ATHENA

I mean, follow orders, sir.

DEL

With your attitude, Private, I'm surprised you want to stay in the

service.

ATHENA

I do, sir.

DEL

Because it's a job?

ATHENA

(Struggling)

Outside it's--it's such a mess--it's--

DEL

Chaos.

Athena is sure she's overstepped her rank--

DEL

Why do you think they let us in on the "deal"?

ATHENA

They got people to fight. Arabs, yellow people, whatever. Might as well use us.

DEL

Do you think you've been discriminated against on this post?

ATHENA

No, sir. Not at all.

DEL

Any serious problems with your sergeant or your fellow soldiers?

ATHENA

No, sir. They all been real straight with me.

Del stands, thinking, trying not to bullshit her--

DEL

It works like this, Private--every soldier in a war doesn't have to believe in what he's fighting for. Most of them fight just to back up the soldiers in their squad--you try not to get them killed, try not to get them extra duty, try not to embarrass yourself in front of them.

He is right in her face now--

DEL

Why don't you start with that?

ATHENA

Yes, sir.

DEL

You're dismissed, Private.

ATHENA

Thank you, sir.

Athena salutes, steps out. Del looks out the window, troubled by the encounter.

EXT. BORDER CONTROL

A battered car full of Mexican DAY WORKERS rolls toward the Mexican side checkpoint--

INT. CAR

Enrique sits squeezed between workers in the back. The driver never stops talking as the officer waves them through.

DRIVER (O.S.)

--Julia es demasiado flaca para mime gusto mas mujeres con algo en frente--
o muy altas como Cindy Crofor.
Quisiera montar esa caballa--[Julia's too skinny for me--I like women with something up front--or really tall like Cindy Crawford. I'd like to ride that horse--]

EXT. KINCAID HOUSE -- DAY

Sam's car is parked on the street in front of an expensive-looking house in a tree-lined neighborhood--

INT. LIVING ROOM

Sam's ex-wife, BUNNY KINCAID, shuffles across her living room in slippers, crossing to turn off a big-screen TV playing football highlights. Bunny wears shorts, a Houston Oilers sweatshirt and a Dallas Cowboys cap. The living room is like a sports museum-- signed footballs, team posters, a bookcase filled with tapes of Texas pro and college football games--

BUNNY

The Longhorns gonna kick some serious butt this Saturday, you just watch.
We got a kid at tailback from down your way--outta El Indio--

SAM (O.S.)

That's in Maverick County.

She brings us to Sam, sitting uncomfortably, beneath a full-

sized blowup of Tony Dorsett hurdling a tackler--

BUNNY

Oh. Right. And you're in--?

SAM

Rio. BUNNY Right. This kid, Hosea Brown? Does tire 40 in 3.4, soft hands, lateral movement--the whole package. Only a sophomore--

SAM

You still going to all the home games?

BUNNY

Well, Daddy's got his box at the stadium, of course, and I'll fly to the Cowboy away games when they're in the Conference. Then there's the high school on Friday' nights. West Side got a boy 6'6", 310, moves like a cat. High school, we're talkin'. Guess how much he can bench-press?

SAM

Bunny, you--uhm--you on that same medication?

BUNNY

Do I seem jumpy?

SAM

No, you look good. I was just wondering.

BUNNY

Last year was awful rough--Mama passing on and the whole business with O.J.--I mean it's not like it was Don Meredith or Roger Staubach or one of our own boys, but it really knocked me for a loop--

SAM

You look good--

BUNNY

--and that squeaker the Aggies dropped to Oklahoma-sonofabitch stepped in some lucky shit before he kicked that goal--

SAM

Yeah, well--

BUNNY

--they hadn't pulled me off that

woman I would have jerked a knot in her.

SAM

You were in a fight--

BUNNY

Daddy calls it an "altercation." How you doing, Sam? You look skinny.

SAM

Same weight I always was.

BUNNY

You look awful good in that uniform, though.

SAM

Best part of the job.

BUNNY

Daddy hired a pinhead to take your job. He says so himself. Says "Even my son-in-law was better than this pinhead I got now".

SAM

Bunny, is that stuff I left in the garage still there?

BUNNY

Least he never called me that. With me, it was always "high-strung." "My Bunny might have done something with her life, she wasn't so high-strung." Or "tightly wound," that was another one. You seeing anyone?

SAM

No. You?

BUNNY

Yeah. Sort of. Daddy rounds 'em up. You aren't talking about money, their beady little eyes go dead.

SAM

You didn't--uhm--you didn't have one of your fires, did you? The stuff I left in the garage--some of it was my father's--

BUNNY

You watch the draft this year? 'Course you didn't, idiot question. They try to make it dramatic, like there's some big surprise who picks who in

the first round? Only they been working it over with their experts and their computers for months. Doctor's reports, highlight reels, coaches' evaluations, psychological profiles--hell, I wouldn't be surprised if they collected stool samples on these boys, have 'em analyzed. All this stuff to pick a football player for your squad. Compared to that, what you know about the person you get married to don't amount to diddly, does it?

SAM

Suppose not.

BUNNY

You kind of bought yourself a pig in a poke, didn't you, Sam? All that time we were first seeing each other you didn't know I was tightly wound--

SAM

It wasn't just you, Bunny.

BUNNY

No, it wasn't, was it? You didn't exactly throw yourself into it heart and soul, did you?

She looks at him for an uncomfortably long moment--

BUNNY

Your shit's still in the garage if that's what you came for.

Sam nods, stands. Bunny is in tears--

BUNNY

350 pounds.

SAM

What?

BUNNY

This boy from West Side, plays tackle both ways. Bench-presses 350 pounds. You imagine having that much weight on top of you? Pushing down? Be hard to breathe. Hard to swallow.

SAM

I think they have another fella there to keep it off your chest. A spotter.

BUNNY

"I only got my little girl now," he says, "she's my lifeline." Then he tells me I can't be in the box anymore if I can't control myself. Sonofabitch don't even watch the damn game, just sits there drinking with his bidness friends, look up at the TV now and then. I do better to sit in the cheap seats with some real football people.

SAM

(Edging out)

You look good, Bunny. It's nice to see you.

BUNNY

(Smiles)

Thanks. I like it when you say that, Sam.

EXT. STREET -- CIUDAD LEON

Enrique looks nervously over his shoulder before stepping into a funky apartment building. We TILT up to the second floor balcony, where a LITTLE BOY is watching the street--

INT. APARTMENT

There are eight PEOPLE not including the little boy on the balcony. All are securing their possessions--rolling things in blankets, filling shopping bags and grain sacks. Enrique steps in--

ENRIQUE

Todos estamos? [Everybody here?]

Anselma reaches up from the floor to take his hand--

ANSELMA

Van a disparar a nosotros? [Are they going to shoot at us?]

ENRIQUE

Nadie nos veran. Seramos invisibles. Nobody's going to see us. We'll be invisible.]

INT. GARAGE -- KINCAID HOUSE -- DAY

A mess. We start on a campaign poster with Sam's face on it and the legend--"ONE GOOD DEEDS DESERVES ANOTHER--VOTE SAM DEEDS FOR COUNTY SHERIFF". We PAN to see Sam, who has been digging through piles of old junk, set down the box he was looking for--

CLOSER

Sam pulls out an old holster, a sheaf of real estate and insurance forms, a couple of old paperback Zane Grey westerns. He pulls out a cracked leather pouch, turns it over--letters fall out. He examines an envelope--no stamp or postmark--pulls a letter out, reads--

SAM

"Dearest Buddy--"

He puts the letter down for a moment, thinks. He needs to know. He picks the letter up again, reads.

INT. OTIS'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Carolyn crosses the living room to answer the RING at the front door. Del stands there--

CAROLYN

Hey, it's the General.

DEL

Colonel. Is uhm--is Otis in?

CAROLYN

Come on in--

DEL

If it's too late--

CAROLYN

Come on in.

Del enters the house as if walking into an AMBUSH--

INT. OTIS'S LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Carolyn sits back in the couch, drink in hand, checking Del out--

CAROLYN

Otis sittin' up with some people at the club. I don't think he'll be long.

CU DEL

Uncomfortable, sitting at the edge of an easy chair. He looks at a mounted magazine photo of Otis smiling as he pours hot sauce on a rack of ribs--

CAROLYN

His hot sauce recipe won a contest last year. They sellin' it far away as San Antonio. He got a lot of talent, your father.

Del squirm a bit at the word "father"--

DEL

You've been in this house for a while?

CAROLYN

I been here with him eight years now. He built it when he was with Leora.

DEL

I never met her.

CAROLYN

There was a bunch of 'em You never met. Me neither.

Del looks around the living room--

CAROLYN

Let me show you around--

INT. DEN -- PHOTOGRAPH

A blowup of a photo of a squad of Buffalo Soldiers is mounted on the wall--

CAROLYN (O.S.)

He got into all this cowboys and Indians stuff awhile back. Spend half his time pokin' around in the library way up to Austin.

CU DEL

He looks at something below --

DEL'S POV -- CLIPPINGS

We PAN slowly over laminated newspaper clippings mounted behind a picture of young Del in a track uniform, holding a vaulting pole. The clippings are about Del making honor rolls, winning a Silver Star in Vietnam, graduating from Officer Candidate School, being named head of this and that in the Army--

CAROLYN (O.S.)

Kind of like a shrine, isn't it?

DEL, CAROLYN

Carolyn stands behind, watching Del's face as he looks at the stuff--

DEL

Where'd he get all this?

CAROLYN

Your mother got a brother--Alphonse--

DEL

Uncle Al--

CAROLYN

Otis stood on good terms with the man. Whenever you do something makes the news, he sends it on. When they made you General, Otis just about drove away all our customers going on about it.

DEL

I'm a colonel.

CAROLYN

Yeah, I know--Man made me memorize the whole damn Army chain of command before he'd marry me. So this is a big deal, commander and all?

DEL

It's a small post and they're phasing it out in two years, but I moved up in rank and--well, a command is a command.

CAROLYN

Otis went on like you were that guy who won the Gulf War. Colin whatsit.

DEL

My mother said he never asked about--

CAROLYN

He never asked her.

It's a bit too much for Del--

DEL

Listen, I uh--tell him I came by.
Thanks--

We HOLD on Carolyn as he hurries out. She salutes--

CAROLYN

Catch you later, Colonel.

EXT. RIVER -- NIGHT

PEOPLE, crouching low, wade across the river toward us. When he gets close enough to us, we recognize Enrique, nervously leading a group of Mexican men, women and children to the U.S. side. They are spaced out in the dark, loosely holding the line Enrique made in one hand and holding their bundles high away from the water with the other. Enrique turns as he

hears a WOMAN'S CRY. The line goes slack, then NESTOR steps out of the darkness to join him--

ENRIQUE

Que Paso? [What happened?]

NESTOR

Anselma cayo en las rocas. Creo que la pierna ha sido root--[Anselma felt on the rocks. I think her leg's broken--]

Two men struggle forward supporting Anselma, trying to hold her leg out straight in front of her. She is in a lot of pain--

NESTOR

No podemos alcanzar el camion llevando a ella. Hay lugar para esconderla? [We can't reach the truck if we're carrying her. Is there somewhere to hide her?]

Enrique thinks, trying not to panic, as the others come up around him--

ENRIQUE

Conozco solamente una persona con casa--[I only know one person with a house--]

ANSELMA

(In pain)
Esta lejos? [Is it far?]

EXT. PATIO -- NIGHT

Mercedes sits on her recliner, drink in hand. An old RECORD plays from inside. She is startled by the voice from the dark--

ENRIQUE (O.S.)

Senora Cruz?

MERCEDES

(Standing)
Quien es? [Who is it?]

ENRIQUE

Soy yo, Enrique! No tiene miedo--
[It's me, Enrique. Don't be afraid]

Enrique steps out into the light. His pants are wet and he's scared--

MERCEDES

What are you doing out there? Are

you crazy?

ENRIQUE

Hay pasado un accidente muy grave--
[There's been a bad accident--]

MERCEDES

In English, Enrique. We're in the
United States--

ENRIQUE

I have some friends who have had a
accident--

MERCEDES

You have somebody else out there?

ENRIQUE

We was by the river? And I hear my
friend callin' for help, and I look
and she has falling in the water--

MERCEDES

Don't tell me lies, Enrique. Que
paso?

ENRIQUE

We was crossin' the river--

Nestor appears in the light now, supporting Anselma, who
hops awkwardly to move forward--

MERCEDES

Enrique! Quienes son estos? How could
you bring them here?

ENRIQUE

They need help. Jaime, Anselma--
esta es mi jefa--

NESTOR

Senora--

MERCEDES

I'll call the Border Patrol, they'll
get her to the hospital.

ENRIQUE

No! No puede hacer esto--[You can't
do that--]

MERCEDES

You think you're doing these people
a favor? What are they going to do?
Either they get on welfare or they
become criminals--

ENRIQUE

No es la verdad--[That isn't true--]

NESTOR

Con permiso, Senora, la muchacha
tiene mucho dolor--[Please, Senora,
the girl is in a lot of pain--]

Mercedes grudgingly indicates the lounge chair--

MERCEDES

Sientase. [Sit.]

NESTOR

Es muy amable. [You're very kind.]

He and Enrique help Anselma into the chair. The Girl looks
up at Mercedes, frightened--

ANSELMA

Ayudanos, Senora, por favor no podemos
regresar--[Help us, Senora, please.
We can't go back]

Mercedes looks at ANSELMA disapprovingly. The girl can't be
more than 14--

MERCEDES

This girl is a friend of yours?

ENRIQUE

Es mi novia. [She's my girlfriend.]

MERCEDES

I thought you were married!

ENRIQUE

I am marry to the cousin of a friend--
but only to be able to live here.
This is the mother of my child--

MERCEDES

This girl has a child?

ENRIQUE

We have a daughter.

MERCEDES

(Scornful)
Tipico.

EXT. HOUSE -- NIGHT

Sam stands at the front door of a house on the lake, banging
on the door--

SAM

Hollis? You in there? Hollis?

EXT. RIVER -- NIGHT

Moonlight kicks off the surface of the water. We hear SPLASHING, the frightened VOICE of a young woman--

YOUNG MERCEDES (O.S.)

Donde esta? Estoy perdido--[Where are you? I'm lost--]

ELADIO (O.S., DISTANT)

Aqui! [Here!]

The girl flounders into the shot, wet and scared. Young Mercedes, a teenager not unlike ANSELMA is wading thigh-deep in the Rio, lost, scared--

YOUNG MERCEDES

No puedo ver la orilla! [I can't see the bank!]

ELADIO (O.S.)

Aqui! Venga por aqui! [Over here! Come this way!]

Mercedes struggles toward the voice and suddenly a young man becomes visible, standing in the water, holding his hand out for her, ELADIO--

YOUNG MERCEDES

Vi a Rosaria arastrado para el corriente--[I saw Rosaria taken away by the current--]

ELADIO

No te molestas. Tenemos a ella. [Don't worry. We've got her.]

He takes her arm, pulls her toward the far shore--

ELADIO

Como se llama? [What's your name?]

YOUNG MERCEDES

Mercedes Gonzales Ruiz.

ELADIO

(Smiles)
Me llama Eladio Cruz--Bienvenido a Tejas. [Welcome to Texas.]

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MERCEDES' HOUSE -- MERCEDES

Mercedes is lost in thought as she recalls. She steps into

the light by the carport. Enrique and Nestor are propping Anselma's leg up on pillows in the back of Mercedes' old station wagon--

MERCEDES

Rapidamente! Everybody in the world is going to see!

ENRIQUE

Donde vamos? [Where are we going?]

MERCEDES

A casa de Porfirio Zayas. He used to be a doctor on the other side. Gunshot wounds, fixing babies--if you can pay he can handle it.

ENRIQUE

Senora, anything it costs, I can work--

MERCEDES

Don't worry about it. He owes me some favors.

Enrique turns to ANSELMA still frightened in the rear of the station wagon--

ENRIQUE

Seas tranquila, mija.
(Nods to Mercedes)
Estamos en las manos de Senora Cruz.
[Just relax, honey. We're in the hands of Senora Cruz.]

Mercedes starts the car--

MERCEDES

In English, Enrique. In English--

INT. DEL'S HOUSE -- DINING ROOM

Del steps in. Chet sits at the table, drawing a cartoon in panels. Del looks over his shoulder for a moment--

CARTOON

A tank rolling over barbed wire, cannon and machine gun blasting away--

DEL (O.S.)

Homework?

DEL AND CHET

CHET

I finished that. I'm just messing

around.

DEL

Tanks, huh?

CHET

You got to be in the Army, you might
as well have something slick to drive.

DEL

So you're going into the Army?

Chet looks at him, not in a good mood, then goes back to his
drawing--

CHET

That's the general plan, isn't it?

Del watches for a long moment, thinking--

DEL

(Softly)

That's up to you.

Chet looks at his father again. All this is news to him--

DEL

The Army isn't for everybody.

Chet can't quite believe he is hearing this. Del crosses to
the refrigerator--

DEL

Not that I don't think you'd be good
at it, but--you know--I wouldn't be
disappointed if you decided to do
something else with your life.

CHET

You wouldn't?

DEL

No.

Chet nods, begins to play again, considering the
possibilities. Del is making an effort and he doesn't have
much practice--

DEL

How's your room shaping up?

CHET

Fine. I'm pretty much moved in.

DEL

Good.

An awkward silence--

CHET

(Tentative)

Are we going to ever see your father?

DEL

My father.

CHET

Yeah. He lives here, right?

DEL

He does.

Del pulls some food out, watching Chet as he draws--

DEL

Maybe we'll clean that thing out
back up, have a barbecue next weekend.
We could invite him and his wife
over.

CHET

Cool.

Chet flips the page of his sketchbook--

CHET

He makes his own sauce.

EXT. PARKING LOT, BIG O'S -- NIGHT

The neon's off, but there are a couple cars in the lot and a light within. Sam pulls into the lot, steps out, approaches the door--

INT. CLUB

The door opens. The place is empty now except for Otis, standing behind the bar, deep in conversation with Hollis, sitting on a stool. Both swivel to look around guiltily as they hear Sam step in--

REVERSE

Sam walks in slowly, crossing the floor to bring us back to the two men--

SAM

Fellas.

HOLLIS

Hey, Sam.

SAM

Open late.

OTIS

I'm not open. We were just talking.

SAM

Hollis probably told you we found Charley Wade.

OTIS

Yeah. How about that? People start digging holes in this county, there's no telling what'll come up.

He sits a few stools away from Hollis--

SAM

You two saw it, didn't you? You two saw it when Buddy killed him.

Hollis and Otis look at each other--

SAM

Imonna find out one way or the other.

HOLLIS

Your father had the finest sense of justice of any man I ever met--

SAM

Yeah, and my mother was a saint. For fifteen years the whole damn town knew he had another woman on the side. Stole ten thousand dollars to set her up in business. But hell, what's that? You got a problem? Buddy'll fix it. Facing some time in jail? Buddy'll knock half of it off-- if you do what he says, when he says. You got some business that's not exactly legal? Talk to Buddy--

HOLLIS

Buddy Deeds--

SAM

Buddy Deeds was a murderer.

He looks at the two older men for a long moment--

SAM

That night in the cafe--he didn't stay long after you left, did he, Hollis? Maybe he decided he'd gone too far with Wade, maybe he figured he better not wait for the Sheriff to get behind him. So he stepped out to see if he could catch up--and you

were here at the club that night,
weren't you, O?

Otis sighs, begins to speak softly--

OTIS

I was here.

CU OTIS

He turns to look toward the door as he reminisces, and we
PAN away with his gaze--

OTIS (O.S.)

I'd been running a game on the side
after hours craps, draw poker on the
weekends. Roderick didn't know about
it. More important, Charley Wade
didn't know about it, 'cause I didn't
want to cut him in. I suppose I'd
been drinking some, and I was pretty
full of myself in those days--but
hell, I just didn't expect the man
so early--

Sheriff Wade and Young Hollis step in the door and we are
back in 1957. BLUES HARMONICA FADES UP, wailing from the
jukebox. They stop and look at the place--

THEIR POV -- CLUB

MUSIC CONTINUES. The club is empty, dark. A LIGHT shines
from the back room.

INT. BACK ROOM

MUSIC CONTINUES. Smoke fills the air and Young Otis sits
back laughing, a large pile of money on the table in front
of him. The other four BLACK MEN at the table aren't doing
so well. One by one they all look up past the camera to the
door--

CU OTIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Young Otis doesn't see at first, engaged in
dealing the cards. Finally, he senses the presence, looks up--

WADE AND HOLLIS -- YOUNG O'S POV

MUSIC CONTINUES. Wade stands over the table in the f.g.,
Young Hollis hanging back in the doorway. Wade is smiling
his cold smile, cursing--

CU YOUNG OTIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Trying to look unimpressed--

EXTREME CU WADE'S EYES

Cold and unblinking. MUSIC CONTINUES--

EXTREME CU WADE'S MOUTH

Twisted in a snarl as he curses. MUSIC CONTINUES--

MEN, TABLE

MUSIC CONTINUES. We shoot past Wade's body as the other men step away from the table, grab their hats, and hurry out the side door. Young Otis is left sitting at the table. Wade starts walking toward him--

CU YOUNG OTIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. His eyes following as Wade comes to stand over him--

WADE, YOUNG OTIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Wade grabs the table and violently jerks it over onto Young Otis, cards and money flying--

YOUNG HOLLIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Watching squeamishly as Wade goes to work on young Otis, the overhead light swinging wildly--

INT. BARROOM

MUSIC CONTINUES. Young Otis is hurled out of the back room, face bruised and bleeding. Wade follows, then Young Hollis--

CLOSER

MUSIC CONTINUES.

CLOSER

Wade puts his gun next to Young Otis's ear, cursing at him. Young Otis gets to his feet, goes behind the bar--

BAR COUNTER

MUSIC CONTINUES. Young Otis slaps an envelope full of cash onto the counter--

WADE

MUSIC CONTINUES. He waves his pistol, indicating something behind Otis--

INT. BAR

MUSIC CONTINUES. We shoot past Wade at the counter as Otis

turns and reaches for a cigar box on the shelf behind--

CIGAR BOX

MUSIC CONTINUES. Lying open, an old pistol inside of it. Young Otis reaches--

CU YOUNG HOLLIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Frowning as he senses something wrong--

WADE

MUSIC CONTINUES. Wade levels his gun at Young Otis's back, then turns to wink at Hollis like he did before he shot Eladio--

WADE'S HAND

MUSIC CONTINUES. Finger closing around the trigger of the .45--

HOLLIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Mouth open in horror--

WADE

MUSIC CONTINUES. Eyes burning as he aims--

BUDDY

MUSIC CONTINUES. Stepping in the door, seeing, CALLS OUT--

YOUNG OTIS

MUSIC CONTINUES. Turning to see Buddy--

WADE

BLAM! THWAP! A bullet plows through his neck, knocking him back against the bar.

MUSIC CONTINUES. His gun falls from his hand--

YOUNG OTIS

Horrified, splattered with the Sheriff's blood. MUSIC CONTINUES--

BAR COUNTER

MUSIC CONTINUES. Twenty-dollar bills have spilled out of the envelope and are soaking up blood--

CU BUDDY

Calm and hard-eyed. MUSIC CONTINUES. As he steps forward, we

see his pistol is still in its holster. He reaches out and takes the .45 from Young Hollis's shaking hand, looks him in the eye till Hollis looks back, then looks toward Young Otis--

We PAN with his gaze to a CLOSE-UP of Otis, back in the PRESENT. The MUSIC FADES--

OTIS

Sheriff Charley had some real big friends in politics then, and if the truth come out it wasn't going to go easy on Hollis.

(He shrugs)

I don't know why I trusted Buddy with it--don't know why he trusted me. The first time I ever talked with him was right there, and then with a dead white man leakin' blood on the floor between us. He could charm the scales off a rattler, Buddy Deeds.

WIDER

This isn't what Sam was expecting. Hollis watches his face--

HOLLIS

The three of us cleaned up and took him to the post and put him under. Can't say I was much help.

SAM

And the ten thousand?

HOLLIS

Widow's benefits. He figured it would make the disappearance look better, and that Mexican gal was just scrapin' by after Charley killed her man. They didn't get hooked up till late--

OTIS

Time went on, people liked the story that we told better than anything the truth might have been.

Sam swivels around on his seat to look at the spot where Charley fell. He has a lot of information to deal with--

HOLLIS

What's the call, Sam?

Sam rolls it over in his mind before answering--

SAM

Don't think the Rangers are likely to find out any more than they

already have.

HOLLIS

Word gets out who that body was,
people are gonna think Buddy done
it.

Sam gets up--

SAM

Buddy's a goddamn legend. He can
handle it.

He heads for the door--

SAM

'Night, fellas.

Hollis and Otis watch him go--

FADE OUT:

EXT. DRIVE-IN, WIDE SHOT -- MORNING

We see Sam sitting on the hood of his car parked in the
deserted drive-in lot, staring up at the ruined screen.
Pilar's car rolls in, parks beside him--

CLOSER

Pilar gets out, kisses Sam, sits by him on the hood--

PILAR

When's the picture start?

Sam looks at her for a moment--

SAM

You gonna tell your mother we been
seeing each other?

PILAR

She'll figure it out sooner or later.
I don't have to ask permission
anymore, if that's what you mean.

SAM

You have any idea when your father
died? Eladio?

PILAR

(Shrugs)
Couple months before I was born--

SAM

Try a year and a half. He bands her
an old snapshot. PILAR looks at it--

CU PHOTO

Buddy and Young Mercedes on the lake. Buddy with his shirt off on one end of a sailboat, Mercedes in a bathing suit, both smiling for the camera--

SAM AND PILAR

Pilar hands the photo back to him, tries to be calm--

PILAR

I've never seen my mother in a bathing suit before. Didn't know she owned one.

SAM

Buddy bought the cafe for her with money he took from the county. Pilar looks away, struggling not to cry--

PILAR

They can't pull this on me. It isn't fair--I don't believe this--

SAM

He paid the hospital bill when you were born. Your mom always calls you "our beautiful daughter" in the letters she wrote to him.

PILAR

From the first time I saw you at school--all those years we were married to other people I always felt like we were connected.

SAM

I remember thinking you were the one part of my life Buddy didn't have a piece of--

A silence, both of them wondering what the next move should be--

PILAR

So that's it? You're not going to want to be with me anymore?

Sam knows what he feels but doesn't have the words--

PILAR

I'm not having any more children. After Amado, I had some complications-- I can't get pregnant again, if that's what the rule is about--

SAM

If I met you for the first time today,
I'd still want to be with you.

It is what Pilar needed to hear--

PILAR

We start from scratch--

SAM

Yeah--

PILAR

Everything that went before, all
that stuff, that history--the hell
with it, right?

PILAR takes Sam's hand, kisses him--

PILAR

Forget the Alamo.

WIDE SHOT, DRIVE-IN

Sam and Pilar sit by each other holding hands, looking at
the empty screen--

MUSIC, ROLL CREDITS

THE END