

NINE MEN FROM NOW: DRAFT SCRIPT, NEVER PRODUCED

Written by

Schrader, Paul, 1946-

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CHARACTERS

Ben Stride

Edward Craig

Cotton

Chunel

Inez Conso-Martinez

Juan-Juan Ernesto

Luis

Anna

Karl

1 INT MEXICALI BACKROOM DAY

Ben Stride plays seven-card stud with two twentiesh men, one MEXICAN, one AMERICAN, in a grease-stained backroom. Selena sings through a door opening to the barroom beyond.

Stride turns over his seventh card; the American laughs, pulls in the pot. A silent waitress enters with three Coronas, removes the empties.

STRIDE

Gracias.

The waitress exits.

AMERICAN

Gracias to you, Mr.. . .?

STRIDE

Stride.

MEXICAN

Muchas gracias.

STRIDE

(deals)

You know how luck is, on the move: look one place, she shows up somewhere else.

AMERICAN

Where you from?

STRIDE

San Diego.

AMERICAN

Hmm.

STRIDE

Been in the news a lot lately.
That was some deal, huh?

MEXICAN

What?

STRIDE

The kidnapping. "International Incident." Why do you suppose they did that? Narco gangs in Chiapas or Baja or wherever, that's one thing, but coming across the border and taking a bigshot electronics executive-- why you think they do something like that?

AMERICAN

My guess: money.

MEXICAN

(laughs)

Good guess.

The American wins again. They continue playing, the game becoming less important as the conversation continues.

STRIDE

Didn't they worry about getting caught?

AMERICAN

(laughs)

Once they're across the border?

The Mexican shoots his partner a look.

STRIDE

Still. . .

AMERICAN

What they gonna do, call up the UN, send in the guys in blue baseball caps?

MEXICAN

(to American)

Vato, you gonna talk or play cards?

The American calls. Stride keeps egging:

STRIDE

But, Jesus, a bystander injured,
a woman killed--that's a fuck-up.

MEXICAN

You think?

STRIDE

(to American)

Where you from?

AMERICAN

LA, you know, around there.

STRIDE

Born there?

(American nods)

Hear it used to be nice once.

AMERICAN

I'll call.

STRIDE

Then you musta heard, I mean nine
guys with automatic weapons
outside a big high-rise, blasting
away, bodyguards killed.

AMERICAN

Nine? The TV said eight.

STRIDE

(looking at him)

Nine.

The Mexican looks at his partner, reaches down feels
around, as if checking for a hidden gun.

MEXICAN

Look, senor. . .

STRIDE

Ben.

MEXICAN

We appreciate the drinks. . .

STRIDE

(innocent)

I'm just passing the time,
playing cards.

MEXICAN

Then play cards. I raise.

The Mexican and American exchange anxious looks. Stride

drops his hands under the table, appears to be working on something.

STRIDE

Still, ambassadors meeting, press conferences, not something that happens every day.

MEXICAN

You want me to send the bargirl out for some tampons, is that your problem?

Stride brings his left hand onto the table, puts \$50 in the pot.

STRIDE

I raise.

MEXICAN

Call.

AMERICAN

(folds cards)

I'm out.

Stride and the Mexican turn over their final cards: the Mexican's full house beats Stride's two pair.

MEXICAN

(collects pot)

That was a stupid bet.

The American shuffles, prepares to deal:

AMERICAN

Say, did they ever catch any of those guys?

STRIDE

Yeah. Two of them.

Stride lifts a Sig-Sauer 9mm automatic pistol fitted with a silencer from beneath the table, FIRES, hitting the Mexican, then the American square in the forehead. They JERK backward.

CUT TO:

2 CREDITS

Title punctuates the screen: "Nine Men From Now."

Credit sequence recreates San Diego kidnapping two weeks before--a collage of live action, TV reports,

surveillance cameras, newspaper photos and headlines.

EDWARD CRAIG, 50, a well-cut executive, leaves a glass-and-steel high-rise with an associate and bodyguard. A second bodyguard/ driver opens the rear door of a Lincoln Towncar.

Craig says goodbye to the associate, gets in the car. The driver closes the door, walks around gets in front with the other bodyguard. Craig places a phone call as the Lincoln pulls away.

A dark BMW drives in front of the Towncar. Turning a corner, a Land Rover pulls in behind.

Suddenly the BMW hits the brakes; the Land Rover rear-ends the Lincoln, pinning it. Out of the front and rear vehicles burst six men, yelling, waving automatic weapons.

Instant bedlam. Bullets spray the Lincoln windshield, instantly killing the driver/bodyguard. Onlookers scream, cower, flee; one clutches his leg.

Edward Craig, phone still in hand, is ripped from the back seat. The bodyguard pulls a handgun; kidnappers return fire wildly. The bodyguard falls, hit multiple times.

It all happens quite fast. Craig is hustled into the Land Rover; the kidnappers pile inside their respective vehicles-- the Land Rover and BMW screech away. In a last burst of automatic weapons fire, a bystander, a professionally dressed American woman, is hit a half block away. Nearby stands a heavysset middle-aged Mexican man with a briefcase and sunglasses.

Nine times during the credits the image freeze-frames and zooms into the face of one of the kidnappers. Two of them, a young Mexican and American, the drivers of the BMW and Land Rover, are already dead, killed in the backroom of a Mexicali bar.

The other kidnappers range 22-35, mostly Mexican or Mexican-American, although one, about 22, is clearly Germanic. The last shown is the obese, middle-aged Mexican "businessman."

CUT TO:

3 INT MEXICALI BACKROOM AFTERNOON

Ben Stride stands in the dingy room, removes the silencer from his gun, tucks the pistol into a shoulder holster, the silencer into a pocket, collects the money off the

table.

He bends over the dead Mexican and American, removes their wallets, IDs and additional cash--some of it blood-stained. Finding a small bag of cocaine, he places it on the table, straightens his coat and walks out.

CUT TO:

4 EXT MEXICALI BAR AFTERNOON

Hat low on his forehead, Stride walks out the bar, tipping the waitress \$100 as he goes out.

CUT TO:

5 EXT MEXICALI MOTEL DUSK

Stride's 4x4 Jeep Cherokee parked in front of a decrepit motel. Sign advertises rooms for "\$20US/HBO libre."

CUT TO:

6 INT MOTEL ROOM DUSK

Stride sitting on the edge of the bed, examines the IDs of the newly dead kidnapping drivers.

One, Troy Romeo, is from Orange County; the listed address of the other, Juan Ruflo, is in Chihuahua, Mexico. Among predictable cards and paper scraps, Ben finds a snapshot of Juan with an attractive young woman outside a fancy hacienda.

Stride sets the IDs on the bedstand, removes his hat, his clip-on tie, swings his feet onto the bed and rests.

CUT TO:

7 EXT MEXICALI DAY

A smog-choked border town.

Stride's dark blue Cherokee 4x4 is parked down from the block from a "Viajes" travel office.

CUT TO:

8 INT TRAVEL OFFICE DAY

An earnest TRAVEL AGENT hands Stride a folded map:

TRAVEL AGENT

There you are.

Stride looks at the yellowed topographical map of Chihuahua state.

TRAVEL AGENT

You going there?

(no answer)

On your own?

(no answer)

In your own car?

(no answer)

Senor. . .

STRIDE

Stride.

TRAVEL AGENT

It's none of my business, but I hope you're not going there. Actually, it is my business. To promote tourism. To make happy tourists who want to tell their friends and come again. You shouldn't go alone to this area. There are reliable tours, I personally know a private guide, several. This is no place to go-- not now, not for an American. No man's land. Drug country. You understand?

STRIDE

Yeah.

TRAVEL AGENT

In the Sierra Madres, there is no law, not in your sense.

STRIDE

How much is the map?

TRAVEL AGENT

15 pesos.

Stride reaches into his pocket, passes him the cash.

STRIDE

Gracias.

He exits.

CUT TO:

9 EXT CHIHUAHUA HOTEL LATE AFTERNOON

"Chihuahua" signs identify a grim industrial town of 500,000 in the foothills of Sierra Madre Occidental. There are few English signs: no reason--gringos come here only for business.

Stride steps out of the Reforma, a transient hotel, looks up and down the street, walks to his dirt-speckled 4x4, unlocks it, drives off.

Down the street: army troops in black uniforms ride in open trucks, weapons in full view.

CUT TO:

10 EXT RUFLO HOUSE DAY

His Cherokee parked in front, Stride walks a dirt path to a fenced stucco house, rings the doorbell. No answer. He knocks.

A fiftiesh woman, SENORA RUFLO, opens the door.

SENORA RUFLO

Si?

STRIDE

Senora Ruflo?

(she nods)

Necesito hablar con tu hijo,
Juan. Tengo un paquete para el.

SENORA RUFLO

No esta aqui.

They continue in subtitled Spanish.

STRIDE

Is this is address?

SENORA RUFLO

Si.

STRIDE

Do you know where I can find him?

SENORA RUFLO

No.

STRIDE

It's very important that I find
Juan, Senora Ruflo. This package
I have for him is very important.

Stride takes out the snapshot of Juan and the attractive girl, shows it to her:

STRIDE

He told me to show you this. It means you can trust me.

SENORA RUFLO

(looking at photo)

Inez.

STRIDE

Inez?

SENORA RUFLO

Inez Conso-Martinez.

STRIDE

If you could tell me where I could find Juan, I will give him this package.

(taps pocket)

Senora Ruflo, initially wary, grows suspicious:

SENORA RUFLO

Who are you?

STRIDE

A friend of Juan's. From Mexicali.

Realizing something's not right, Senora Ruflo slams the door saying:

SENORA RUFLO

I don't know anything.

She bolts the door. There's nothing for Stride to do. He puts the snapshot back in his pocket.

CUT TO:

11 EST PRIVATE INVESTIGATION OFFICE DAY

Lettering on a Chihuahua window reads: "Investigatore Privado." Stride speaks to a diminutive P.I. seated at a cluttered desk:

STRIDE

Hablas usted Ingles?

P.I.

Si.

STRIDE

Good. I need some help finding someone. How much would that be?

P.I.

Depends on the time. You're American?

(Stride nods)

Fifty US an hour.

Stride counts fifty dollars out, gives it to him.

P.I.

(kisses money)

The yankee dollar. Want a receipt?

(Stride shakes head

"no")

Who is it?

Ben hands the Private Investigator the photo of Juan and Inez.

STRIDE

Her name is Inez Conso-Martinez. She's from this area. Has a boyfriend here. From her looks, I'd put her at 28-32 years. It's a rather unique name.

P.I.

Mexican citizen?

STRIDE

Don't know.

P.I.

Let's find out.

The P.I. turns to his computer, activates a search program. The computer sends him voting data: Inez's name comes up.

P.I.

Here we are. Inez Conso-Martinez, voted in last year's elections, good for her. Voted in Creel, that's about three hundred kilometers up the mountains. No address listed, but that's not unusual.

(tentative beat)

I'll go up there, look around.

STRIDE

No, that's fine. I can take care

of it. Appreciate it, amigo.

The P.I.'s disappointed: he was hoping for some easy money. Stride looks out the window, watches army soldiers sitting in the sun. A military jeep passes.

P.I.
They're making a show of force.
Because of the American.

STRIDE
What will happen?

P.I.
Lots of big talk.
(beat)
To the hostage, you mean? They'll pay.

(Stride nods)
Watch yourself up there. That's a dangerous road, and not because it's narrow. Just because they wear Federales uniforms doesn't mean they're Federales, and just because they're Federales doesn't mean they work for the good guys.

CUT TO:

12 EXT REFORMA DAY

Stride, returning from the P.I.'s office, enters the two-story hotel off Plaza Armes.

CUT TO:

13 INT HALLWAY DAY

Coming up the stairs, walking down the hall, Stride is surprised to see the door to his room open. Cautious, he calls out:

STRIDE
Hola?

He enters the spartan room.

CUT TO:

14 INT STRIDE'S ROOM DAY

Inside two men wait, one on a plastic chair, the other stands. On the chair: COTTON, jeans, LaCoste shirt, late-

twenties American with the air of a career criminal--part hustler, part aging street punk.

His partner, CHUNEL, 30, a Tarahumara Indian, stands, his arm in the open window.

COTTON
Hello, Sheriff.

Stride, assessing the situation, relaxes.

STRIDE
Cotton.

COTTON
This is Chunel, a friend of mine.
He don't talk much. Chunel,
Sheriff Stride.
(to Stride)
Have a seat.

Stride and Chunel nod.

STRIDE
(to Cotton)
Where you been keeping yourself?

COTTON
(to Chunel)
Mr. Stride used to be Sheriff in
El Cajon, that's outside San
Diego. He sent me away twice,
burglary, armed robbery--

STRIDE
Attempted murder.

COTTON
That's what you said. Would have
been that way too if the D.A.
wasn't smart enough to see
through it, plead me out.
(to Chunel)
The Sheriff had a hard-on for me--
-"a bad element."

STRIDE
(sits on bed)
What happened? You did two
hitches in the crossbar hotel,
got out, started a new life?

COTTON
Not exactly. . .

STRIDE

I heard.

COTTON

Those damn surveillance cameras. They hide 'em now, you don't even know they're there. ID'd me at a liquor store--stupid or what? So now they got this three strikes thing and a warrant out so I came down here. I've been driftin' around, doin' a little this, a little that, a little drugs, a little credit cards--it's a living.

STRIDE

People can change.

COTTON

I never heard of anybody getting younger--I tell you, Sheriff, this ain't gettin' easier.

STRIDE

So?

COTTON

So?

STRIDE

So what brings you here?

COTTON

You do. I keep my ear to the ground, you know, trying to keep up.

STRIDE

Some of the hardest working people I know are crooks. Work like plantation slaves. If they were legit, they'd be rich and retired.

COTTON

I keep my ear to the ground, I hear things. I heard about these two boys killed in Mexicali. They found their car, a BMW. Stupid assholes, not even smart enough to ditch the car. A car last seen, I believe, in San Diego in a hail of gunfire. I hear there was a gringo around there--abouts, reminded me of you. Started

asking around, heard you'd come up this way.

STRIDE

Your point?

COTTON

A hard-ass like you, if you're looking for these kidnappers, traveling alone, you might even find them.

STRIDE

Where do you fit into this?

COTTON

The Federales and Policia aren't going to find the hostage, that's for sure. Juan-Juan Ernesto, he's the drug kingpin hereabouts--a big fella, you could skin him, clothe your whole family--Juan-Juan hires cops. He's got your American executive up in the mountains somewhere. There's gonna be money involved, a lot of money. The original asking price was \$50 million.

STRIDE

You think they'll pay?

COTTON

They'll pay, not as much and not right away, but they'll pay. Juan-Juan has already sent back part of Craig's ear--that's the way they do things here.

STRIDE

Excuse me, I missed something: how do you fit into this?

COTTON

As I was saying, a man like you, you might actually be able to find these kidnappers and if you do, you're going to find that money--because that money's gonna come, I know that. And after you find the kidnappers. . .

(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

the only thing standing between
me and all that money--will be
you.

(beat)

So I said to Chune1, maybe we
should hook up with the Sheriff,
see what his thinking is.

STRIDE

Cotton, I appreciate the
sentiment. I'll have to decline.

COTTON

I suspected that, you taking that
attitude.

(to Chune1)

Didn't I? Let's go. Vamanos.

(stands)

See you around, Sheriff.

Cotton stops to form his hand into a pistol, points it at
Stride with malicious intent:

COTTON

Pow!

Cotton and Chune1 exit.

CUT TO:

15 EXT HIGHWAY DAY

The "highway" south, a two-lane pock-marked coil of
asphalt, winds up the Sierra Madre mountains. Ahead, the
landscape evolves from brown to green: the countryside
ahead grows wilder and more spectacular--verdant canyons,
sheer rock face, waterfalls.

Looking to his left, down in the valley he sees a distant
well-ordered farming community: Nueva Ideal.

Stride's Cherokee four-wheeler manages, at best, 40 km/hr
between pot holes and sharp turns. Signs pointing to
small villages are written in both Mexican and
Tarahumara, e.g. "Quirare/Kirare." Indians and mules walk
alongside the road carrying market goods and supplies. In
the valley beyond, smoke rises from a farmer's fire.

Turning a bend, Stride sees a roadblock ahead: four
SOLDIERS stand around a beat-up truck. Stride turns down
the radio, prepares to stop.

The "soldiers," ages 16-20, wearing mix-and-match

uniforms, strut about carrying AK-47 automatic rifles-- it's anybody's guess who they represent or what their intentions are.

The FIRST SOLDIER walks over to Stride's truck:

FIRST SOLDIER
Detengate. Fuera. Identification.

Ben steps out, hands over his driver's license. The others check the Cherokee out. One points out the California plates.

Stride and the Soldier speak in subtitled Spanish:

FIRST OFFICER
What are you doing here?

STRIDE
Tourist.

FIRST SOLDIER
You don't look like a tourist.
(to others)
Marijuana smuggler, maybe.

The First Soldier motions the Second and Third to search the vehicle. The Fourth holds his gun on Stride.

Realizing the tenuousness of his situation, Stride searches his pockets as if looking for identification:

STRIDE
I represent a tourist agency. I want to see Copper Canyon. I hear it's one of the most beautiful places in all Mexico.

The First Soldier notices Stride's empty holster, lifts his automatic, speaks sharply to the Fourth Soldier: the Soldier places the end of the barrel AGAINST STRIDE'S HEAD. He awaits instructions to fire. Time freezes.

FIRST SOLDIER
There's a train.

Stride--moving ever so carefully--removes a fifty dollar bill from his pocket, \$50 from the card game in Mexicali. Noticing a faded blood spot on the bill, he passes it to the First Soldier:

STRIDE
I wanted to see more of the country.

The First Soldier, not bothering to disguise his true

agenda, takes the fifty dollar bill, holds it to the sunlight. He pockets the \$50, tells the Second and Third soldiers to back off, nods to Stride:

FIRST SOLDIER

Vaya con Dios.

STRIDE

Dios.

The Sheriff gets back in the driver's seat, closes the door. The First Soldier gestures as if smoking a marijuana joint, laughs as Stride starts up the Cherokee. Ben drives around the truck, continues on his way.

CUT TO:

16 EXT ROADSIDE NIGHT

The Cherokee is parked in a stand of oak trees thirty yards off the road.

Stride lies sleeping face up on the front seat, Sig-Sauer flat against his stomach.

CUT TO:

17 EXT CREEL AFTERNOON

Stride's Cherokee drives into Creel, population 2,000. It's a frontier town: half Old West, half new Mexico--dirt streets, log and adobe buildings, Coca-Cola machines. A caballero in jeans, cowboy hat, gun belt and holster stands talking to another one--who takes the call when his cell phone rings. A shiny Mercedes 4x4 edges past pedestrians, carts, horses and Lonely Planet backpackers.

Stride parks the truck, removes his shoulder bag, locks the door. He turns to a "pension" across from the Super Mercado, the seeming hub of activity. He enters the pension.

CUT TO:

18 EXT PENSION AFTERNOON

Stride sets his bag down, speaks to the LONG-HAIRED YOUNG CLERK:

STRIDE

I'd like a room.

LONG-HAIRED CLERK

We don't have rooms. Beds. Thirty pesos. In advance. We can lock your stuff up down here.

Stride nods, fishes out 30 pesos.

STRIDE

Does it face the street?

LONG-HAIRED CLERK

It can.

STRIDE

I'll take that.

LONG-HAIRED CLERK

We have free hiking maps of the area.

STRIDE

Do you do laundry?

LONG-HAIRED CLERK

There's a machine out back.

STRIDE

Good.

LONG-HAIRED CLERK

Sign here.

CUT TO:

19 INT BOARDING ROOM NIGHT

Stride sits on one of a dozen bunks in a communal room overlooking the street. He watches pedestrians, cars, people, coming in and out of the market.

He pulls out the photo of Juan and Inez, looks at it. Noise from the street catches his ear: people laughing, drinking. Spanish rap music comes from a night club down the main drag.

FADE OUT:

20 INT BOARDING ROOM DAY

FADE IN: The next morning. Stride, seated on his bunk, sipping coffee, looking out the window.

Then, there she is: INEZ CONSO-MARTINEZ, 30, wearing slacks and a shirt, entering the Mercado.

Ben stands, picks up his shoulder bag, heads downstairs.

CUT TO:

21 EXT PENSION DAY

Stride stands outside, watching. Inez exits with a plastic bag of groceries, walks to a five year-old Cadillac Seville, gets in, drives off.

Stride watches a second, walks to his Cherokee, unlocks the door, gets in.

CUT TO:

22 EXT CREEL OUTSKIRTS DAY

Stride, having lost sight of the Seville, cruises the rough dirt roads outside town. Life is hard here: tin shacks, makeshift homes interspersed suddenly with grand villas--the product of an underground economy.

Drifting further from town, Stride spies the Cadillac Seville parked in front of a small stucco house. Not another house in sight.

He parks in front, goes to the door. A dog flees from his path.

CUT TO:

23 EXT INEZ'S HOUSE DAY

Ben knocks. Inez answers, cracking open the door. Dire Straits plays from inside: "Twistin by the Pool."

STRIDE

Inez Conso-Martinez?

INEZ

Si.

STRIDE

My name is Ben Stride.

INEZ

Yes?

He looks inside: fancy lingerie hangs on the walls.
Underthings laid out on shelves.

STRIDE

I was told, ah, this was where to
come to buy American style
lingerie.

INEZ

And linens.

STRIDE

Mind if I have a look?

INEZ

Come in.

He steps inside.

CUT TO:

24 INT INEZ'S LIVING ROOM DAY

Stride appraises the Frederick's of Hollywood lingerie on
hangers against the wall:

STRIDE

Very nice.

He lifts a red bustier, looks at the label.

STRIDE

Very nice.

INEZ

Muy sexy.

STRIDE

How much?

INEZ

Sixty pesos.

STRIDE

Oh. Well, I'll take this and. .
.ah, let's see what else. Do you
know Juan Ruflo?

INEZ

Who?

STRIDE

Juan Ruflo. Sorta short, good
looking fellow. He mentioned this

place.

INEZ

Ah, Juan. A little.

STRIDE

I have something for him. I've been trying to find him.

(looks at crotchless
panties)

Oh, wow.

(back to the subject at
hand)

Inez, this is serious. I need to find him, give him this.

(taps pocket)

I've got my orders, you know?

INEZ

(wary)

I haven't seen him in. . .oh,
quite a while.

She hears a truck pull up the road.

INEZ

You wait here. I'll make a phone
call.

Inez goes into a bedroom, closes the door. Stride notices
a phone on the sofa table.

He senses he's being set up. Stride walks to the corner,
positions himself: he has an unobstructed view of the
front door and window. He removes his pistol from his
shoulder holster.

He waits, Sig-Sauer 9mm tucked behind his thigh.

A truck door SLAMS. Soft footsteps approach the house.

CUT TO:

25 EXT INEZ'S HOUSE DAY

An exterior POV spots Stride's dark outline through the
front window.

CUT TO:

26 INT INEZ'S LIVING ROOM DAY

Stride waiting, breathing shallow.

The door slowly opens. KIDNAPPER #3, Mexican, 30, enters, shotgun in hand.

STRIDE

Nombre?

Kidnapper #3 looks at Stride.

STRIDE

Carlos?

Carlos moves to raise his shotgun. Before he can, Stride raises his automatic from behind his leg, SHOTS him in the chest. Carlos FALLS backward in the doorway.

Stride looks around: silence. Something's not right. . .

Suddenly, a RIFLE SHOT, followed by a pistol retort. Ben looks out the side window, sees another man, KIDNAPPER #4, dead on the ground outside, skull shattered, gun in hand. He was about to shoot Stride in the back.

Cotton walks inside, rifle at his side:

COTTON

Fuckin' pendejos.

(looks at Carlos)

I think he was going to kill you,
Sheriff. Recognize him?

STRIDE

Yeah.

COTTON

You owe me one.

They turn as they see a MEXICAN MAN--not one of the kidnappers--run down the dirt road, jump in a 4x4, drive off. Cotton goes to the front door, yells out:

COTTON

Bust 'im, Chunel!

CUT TO:

27 EXT INEZ'S HOUSE DAY

Chunel steps from behind a tree, aims his rifle, FIRES--nails the fleeing Man dead in the driver's seat. The truck spins out of control, CRASHES into a ditch.

Chunel looks at Cotton, heads for the house.

CUT TO:

28 INT INEZ'S LIVING ROOM DAY

Stride watching the truck:

STRIDE

Why you. . .?

COTTON

Not one of yours? Hey, you can't be too careful. My motto: better to ask forgiveness than permission.

Chunel joins them.

COTTON

What a mess. Where's the girl?

Cotton goes to the bedroom, opens the door, pulls out a frightened Inez Conso-Martinez by the arm.

INEZ

(looking at Stride)

Senor, I had nothing to do with this! I wasn't involved!

COTTON

You are now, honey-bunch.

(off Stride's look)

She's got three dead men on her property, three of Juan-Juan's dead men. I'm not gonna risk her picking up the phone, telling anybody I was here.

(to Inez)

I'm sorry about this, Miss. . .

STRIDE

Inez.

COTTON

But you've got to see it from my side.

(to Chunel)

Damn, Chunel, what a mess. We gotta clean up, move fast. We'll bury these bodies--I got a shovel in the truck, you got one Sheriff?

(Stride nods)

Bury these clowns, clean up, ditch the truck. Fuck. You ever bury anybody Sheriff?

STRIDE

No.

COTTON

Neither have I, but I'll bet my skinny ass it's fucking hard work.

INEZ

I wasn't involved!

COTTON

I thought I answered that question. You're coming with us.

(to Stride)

Right?

(Stride nods)

I passed this place on the way in, some loser's trailer--we'll take cover there, figure out what comes next. Get to it, Chunel.

(looks around)

Damn girl, you got some good lookin' lingerie here.

CUT TO:

29 EXT TRAILER NIGHT

Two trucks sit outside a weather-beaten added-on trailer in the middle of nowhere: Stride's Cherokee and Cotton's red extended cab V8 Ram pickup parked outside. A horse, presumably the trailer owner's, stands in a makeshift stall.

CUT TO:

30 INT TRAILER NIGHT

Stride, Cotton and Chunel drink from mismatched glasses on the counter. Inez fries tortillas at the stove. An elderly CAMPESINO walks past her into the bedroom.

Cotton calls to him in Spanish:

COTTON

Don't worry Old Man, we're only staying for the night. We'll leave something for you in the morning.

(to Inez in English)

What you cooking?

INEZ

Tortillas, rice and beans.

COTTON

Yeah, well I guess the Old Man didn't leave you much to work with.

(beat)

You married Inez?

INEZ

No.

COTTON

That seems a waste. You must be wondering what this is all about, huh? You've been pretty quiet.

INEZ

I've been wondering if I'm in any danger.

COTTON

From us? No mam. I suppose you
(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

heard about the kidnapping in San Diego. Edward Craig, computer executive, something to do with chips, richer than Satan--he was kidnapped a couple weeks back.

INEZ

I heard.

COTTON

When was that you heard--before or after?

INEZ

After.

COTTON

The Sheriff here is trying to find those men.

INEZ

(to Stride)

You're a Sheriff?

STRIDE

I was.

COTTON

Was. Not anymore he's not.

INEZ

Where was this?

COTTON

Town outside San Diego. Stride was Sheriff, what, about ten years? Yes mam. Law and Order man. He didn't cut criminals any slack. You got busted by Sheriff Stride you stayed busted. Problem was the Sheriff wasn't very good at playing politics --you know, posing for pictures, leaking to the press, kissing babies,
(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

that kind of stuff. Well, there were some allegations made against the Sheriff. Racism in his department, cozying up to Anglo businessmen--rumors, hearsay--this was at a time when the voting base was becoming. . . less white. Those demographics, they change. Well, the Sheriff, he doesn't bother to defend himself. Doesn't say a word. They had an election, they voted him out. Sheriff no more. Probably the best thing for that town.
(to Stride)
I hear crime actually went down after he left.

An awkward pause. Cotton reaches for the tequila bottle, offers Chudel and Stride a freshener. Inez changes the subject:

INEZ

Do you have a family, Mr. Stride?

Stride doesn't answer.

COTTON

Oh, didn't I tell you? That woman, the bystander that was killed in San Diego--that was the Sheriff's wife.

Beat. Inez mouths a silent reaction. This is Stride's quest. It's not about the hostage. Not about the ransom.

COTTON

You're an attractive woman, Inez.
Did I say that?

STRIDE

(reproving)
Cotton.

COTTON

You remind me of another woman I
heard about. This was back in. .
.El Cajon. A beautiful young
woman, not as beautiful as you,
of course. Well, this beautiful
young woman, she was married and
she met a young man, a cop, and
that policeman, he stole that
woman from her husband. Come to
think of it, you sort of remind
me of that cop, Sheriff.

Stride's had about as much of this as he can take. He
sets his glass down with a thud, stands up.

STRIDE

Cotton, it doesn't seem like
there isn't anybody who doesn't
remind you of somebody.

Stride walks out the creaky door, slams it behind him.
Cotton turns to Chunel:

COTTON

Did I say something?

Inez turns off the stove, heads for the door.

CUT TO:

31 EXT TRAILER NIGHT

Stride stands alone by the makeshift stall: incandescent
light glows from inside the trailer. Otherwise: silence,
the wind, the breathing of a horse, chirping birds of the
night.

Inez exits the trailer, walks toward Ben:

INEZ

Mr. Stride, I just wanted to say.
. .I'm sorry about your wife.

STRIDE

(nods)
I apologize about the situation

we've put you in. Cotton couldn't very well leave you to drop a dime on him and call Juan-Juan--

INEZ

His mother loved him so much she named him twice.

STRIDE

(smiles)

What are you going to do?

INEZ

I've been thinking about that. Whatever I say, whatever story I come up with, it looks suspicious.

STRIDE

(agrees)

Your boyfriend worked for Ernesto?

INEZ

Yeah, but I wouldn't call him my boyfriend. Not the word I'd use. I tried to leave him, but you know how men like that are--you don't know what it's like with these guys and money.

(beat)

He's dead?

STRIDE

Yeah.

INEZ

I thought he might be. I won't be wearing black. The last time I saw him he sent me to the hospital for two days. How did you find me?

STRIDE

His mother.

INEZ

She's the one who would have called Ernesto. Always stood up for her son, no matter what--I wondered if she'd have done the same for a daughter.

STRIDE

You know Juan-Juan then?

INEZ

Oh yeah, but only through Juan.
Been to parties at his place.

STRIDE

What place is that?

INEZ

Casa Pacifico--up in the
mountains.

STRIDE

Let me make you an offer. I
realize you're in a tough spot.
You help me find these men, the
kidnappers, I'll--my wife had a
hundred thousand dollar life
insurance--you can have that,
plus I'll get you into the
States. Get you a green card.
Help you start over.

(no answer)

You want to think about it?

INEZ

It sounds dangerous.

Pregnant pause.

STRIDE

There's something Cotton inside
didn't tell you.

INEZ

What's that?

STRIDE

After they voted me out of
office, in El Cajon, the new
Sheriff offered me a job. I could
become a policeman again. My
pride wouldn't let me take the
job. My wife had to work to
support us. She took a job as a
secretary in San Diego.

(beat)

She was on her lunch break when
she was killed.

Inez digests this.

INEZ

I know it's none of my business,
I don't know if it will help, but
if you want to talk about it. . .

STRIDE

You're right, Inez, it won't help
and it's none of your business.

She hesitates, turns toward the trailer, looks back:

INEZ

Tomorrow I'll make a phone call
for you.

STRIDE

Thanks.

He watches her go. Cotton steps out of the trailer as
Inez enters. He grazes his body past hers, walks over to
Stride.

COTTON

My, my Sheriff, that is some
woman. Me, I had a woman like
that, I just might settle down.
That's all it takes to end your
wanderin' ways. What did she have
to say?

STRIDE

Nothing much. Condolences.

COTTON

Yeah, I was sorry to hear about
that. Your wife, I thought she
was a good woman.

STRIDE

Cotton, you got something on your
mind?

COTTON

I'm not an unfeeling person.

STRIDE

What is it?

COTTON

They're negotiating the ransom--
between twenty, twenty-five
million. That's what I hear.
That's the first line, that's the
last line of this particular
story: money. Cash money. I'd say
four, five days--fly it in.
Government knows who they're
dealing with: Juan-Juan, he may
be a waste of skin, but he ain't
dumb.

(they look at each

other)
 So my question is: I think it's
 time you let me in on your plan--
 that is, if you got one.

STRIDE
 I've been doing some thinking.

COTTON
 Care to share your thoughts?
 (no answer)
 They involve Inez in there?

Stride shrugs: he's not talking.

COTTON
 (looks at trailer)
 Damn good looking woman.
 (egging him)
 (MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

Of course, a man, if he had a
 woman like that, he'd have to be
 able to take care of her.

Cotton knows how to get to the Sheriff: Ben spins around,
 PUNCHES Cotton in the side of the face. Cotton, holding
 his cheek, FALLS backward to the ground.

Cotton pulls a five-shot revolver from an ankle holster;
 Stride responds with his 9mm--face off. Chunel, who has
 been watching from inside, emerges from the trailer
 holding his rifle. Inez steps out behind Chunel: the
 three men hold guns on each other.

INEZ
 What!

STRIDE
 (stern: to Cotton)
 I think we'd better go our own
 ways.

Cotton, angry, gets up:

COTTON
 Yeah, I think so.
 (to Chunel)
 Chunel, let's go.
 (to Stride: malevolent)
 Sheriff, you missed your chance.
 Next time: you get what's coming

to you.

(to Inez)

Have to take a rain check on the
rice and beans.

Cotton and Chunnel walk over to the Ram pickup, get in and
drive off, spitting dirt in their wake.

Stride turns to watch Inez watching the truck drive away.

CUT TO:

32 EXT COPPER CANYON CHECKPOINT DAY

Cotton's Ram pickup makes its way along a dirt road. In
the distance a train chugs over a concrete bridge leading
across a steep valley.

Cotton looks ahead: a log is propped across the two-track
road. The checkpoint is manned by two armed young men in
civilian clothes, gold necklaces, gold bracelets.

Cotton stops at the roadblock. The first young man, LUIS,
Kidnapper #6, walks over to the driver's door; ZECA,
Luis' acne-scarred partner, holds his gun on Cotton and
Chunnel. Cotton recognizes Luis:

COTTON

Luis.

LUIS

Senor Cotton. Que pasa?

COTTON

I got a message for Juan-Juan.

LUIS

No one told me.

COTTON

Right, you'd be the guy they'd
tell.

LUIS

What's the message?

COTTON

It's not that kind of message,
the kind I'd trust to you. It's
personal: something I know that
Juan-Juan wants to find out. He's
been asking.

LUIS

I ain't forgotten that deal you

shorted me on.

COTTON

Look, get on the phone, pendejo,
call the hacienda, tell 'em I'm
here for
(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

Juan-Juan--that is, unless you
want to be back in bib overalls
picking oranges.

Luis speaks to Zeca in Spanish, tells him to make a phone
call. Zeca takes out a cell phone, punches the numbers.
Luis admires the Dodge Ram:

LUIS

Nice truck.

COTTON

Top of the line. 285 horsepower.

Zeca, speaking on the phone, hangs up. He relays a
message in Spanish to Luis.

LUIS

(to Cotton)

It's okay. I have to go with you,
though. And take your guns.

COTTON

I gotta raise my hand to go to
the bathroom too?

LUIS

You're the one that's asking.

COTTON

(grudging)

Bueno.

Cotton motions to Chudel: give him your gun.

CUT TO:

33 EXT TRAILER DAY

Stride's Cherokee parked outside. By day: the ramshackle
trailer in an unexpectedly beautiful setting.

CUT TO:

34 INT TRAILER DAY

CLOSE-UP: b&w photo 8x10 blow-ups from the San Diego kidnapping, head shots shown during the credits. Inez reads off their names:

INEZ V. O.

Troy Romeo, Juan Ruflo, Carlos
Mendez, Carlos Tapa, J. J.
something, Luis Camino. . .
(about white youth)
. . .don't know him, Morales,
Juan-Juan Ernesto.

Nine men: four dead, five to go. B&W: Juan-Juan stands, briefcase in hand, behind the body of Stride's fallen wife. Stride's finger points to the out-of-focus face of Edward Craig:

STRIDE V. O.

Where they got him?

Inez and Stride look at the photos on the table. The Campesino, drinking coffee, watches from the kitchen.

INEZ

Who knows? Not at Juan-Juan's--
probably some cave or old silver
mine, the hills are full of them.

STRIDE

You think they'll attack?

INEZ

(shakes head)

The Government makes noise about
joint action, but it ain't gonna
happen. No way they'll risk
Craig's life. Up here, Juan-Juan
is the government.

STRIDE

Where's Ernesto?

INEZ

On the road south about thirty
kilometers, you turn off, a
little Tarahumara village there.
They have a phone. I'll make that
call.

Stride nods, puts the photos back into an envelope. He takes out two twenties, puts them on the table, looks at the Campesino:

STRIDE

Muchas gracias, amigo. We'll be
on our way.

The Campesino may not understand what's going on, but he
understands forty dollars.

CAMPESINO
Gracias, gracias.

CUT TO:

35 EXT CASA PACIFICO DAY

Luis, having a good time at the wheel, guns the Ram
pickup toward the main gate. Cotton sits shotgun, Chunel
sits behind in the extended cab.

Casa Pacifico is built into a rock crevice, the entrance
obscured by trees. Camouflage-painted off-road vehicles
and a Mercedes sit in the courtyard. It is, on the
exterior, an unimposing structure.

An armed guard opens the gate for Luis.

CUT TO:

36 INT PACIFICO LIVING ROOM DAY

JUAN-JUAN ERNESTO, 45, aka Kidnapper #9, 300 pounds plus.
Dressed in a custom-made suit, Ernesto moves with a grace
peculiar to overweight men.

Ernesto stands with MORALES (Kidnapper #8), 30, and
JESUS, a BODYGUARD, in a room decorated circa Pacino's
Scarface. Luis, Cotton and Chunel face them. Celine Dion
plays over the sound system.

JUAN-JUAN
Want a drink?

COTTON
Water, I'm thirsty. No, make that
a cerveca. Good to see you, Juan-
Juan.

JUAN-JUAN
Read my lips.

Ernesto reaches up, pulls down his lower lip: there,
tattooed upside down, are the words "Fuck You." Juan-Juan
cracks up-- it amuses him to no end.

Jesus joins the ritual laughter.

COTTON

That's funny, Juan-Juan, it was funny the first time I saw it.

JUAN-JUAN

All right, smart guy, what's so important?

COTTON

I wanted to see you.

JUAN-JUAN

You're seeing me.

Ernesto makes as if to pull his lip down again, laughs.

COTTON

I got information you want.

JUAN-JUAN

Yeah?

COTTON

You hear of a man named Ben Stride, used to be a Sheriff, El Norte?

JUAN-JUAN

Should I?

COTTON

He killed five of your men.

MORALES

Maricon.

JUAN-JUAN

(suddenly interested)

What happened?

COTTON

I only know about the last three: one got shot in the chest, the other in the head, the third in the back. After that they sort of lost their will to live.

JUAN-JUAN

This is the American?

A HOUSEBOY brings Cotton and Chonel cold beers; Cotton nods in appreciation.

COTTON

Yeah.

JUAN-JUAN

I'll take care of him.

COTTON

You already sent three men. He's not the sort I'd send only three guys after--unless, maybe, you didn't like those men.

MORALES

(takes offense)

What are you saying?

COTTON

(conciliatory)

Nothing.

JUAN-JUAN

What's he want?

COTTON

The kidnapers. He's got his fuck you shoes on.

JUAN-JUAN

Kidnapers? What's that got to do with me?

COTTON

Ask him.

JUAN-JUAN

A lone cop sent to get the hostage?

COTTON

Not the hostage, the kidnapers. His wife was killed in the San Diego shoot-out.

MORALES

(to Juan-Juan)

The woman?

JUAN-JUAN

That was an accident. Hell, that coulda been me. Crazy fuckers blasting away.

(looks at Luis)

That bullet coulda hit me.

COTTON

Be sure to tell him that. He's got his mind set on revenge.

JUAN-JUAN

Revenge! I could write the book
on revenge, go back and realize
I'd left two chapters out.

Cotton pulls his lip down; Ernesto laughs.

JUAN-JUAN

That's right.

COTTON

I was hoping the information
might be of some value to you.

JUAN-JUAN

You want to see him?

COTTON

Who?

JUAN-JUAN

The hostage. Craig. A visit from
a fellow American might cheer him
up.

CUT TO:

37 EXT ROAD SOUTH OF CREEL DAY

Stride drives the Cherokee down the asphalt two-lane road; Inez sits beside him. Looking up the winding road, Ben spots a truck of UNIFORMED SOLDIERS blocking the way. He slows down.

Inez points to a hand-painted sign: Guaguachique.

INEZ
Turn here.

Stride turns the 4x4 into a rutted dirt path, accelerates around the turn.

CUT TO:

38 EXT GUAGUACHIQUE DAY

They pass weathered log shacks leading to a Tarahumara village situated on a sky-scraped mountain saddle. They pass goats, sheep, dogs and an Indian man carrying a peeled log the size of a telephone pole.

More Indians come into view, some in aboriginal garb: bare feet, white muslin kilts, loose shirts and scarlet headbands. Having taken to the mountains to escape the Spanish, the Tarahumara live a life unchanged by hundreds of years.

A cluster of shacks indicates the "town." There's a store on a rise away from the road: mercado/poste restante/comeda/ caseta de telefono all in one. A blue-and-white telephone symbol is posted beside the generator.

Stride parks the Cherokee, grabs his shoulder bag. Inez and Ben walk up the hill toward the store.

CUT TO:

39 EXT SILVER MINE DAY

Two camouflage 4x4s inch along a two track path overgrown with fir, pine and hemlock. Cotton and Chudel ride in the second vehicle with Morales and Juan-Juan.

Morales, at the wheel, speaks in Spanish on a walkie-talkie, ends the call saying: "Si, si, si." He turns to Juan-Juan, tells him it's okay to proceed.

Morales gives the horn a short honk; both vehicles continue.

Emerging from the overgrowth, the 4x4s pull into a clearing leading to an abandoned silver mine. Rocks are piled in front of the entrance.

Juan-Juan and Morales get out of the truck, pulling black ski masks over their faces. Jesus and the men in the lead vehicle also wear ski masks.

COTTON

Hey, where's my ski mask?

JUAN-JUAN

You don't need one.

One of his men pulls a boulder back, clearing the entrance to the silver mine. Juan-Juan motions Cotton inside.

COTTON

What about Chunei?

JUAN-JUAN

The Indian? What, you don't trust me? Sure, he can come.

They enter the mine.

CUT TO:

40 INT SILVER MINE DAY

The mine entrance has been transformed into a makeshift prison: Edward Craig, wearing a dirty gray jogging outfit, sits on a cot in an open-wood-slat pen, his leg shackled to the stockade. A freshly dressed bandage, wrapped around his head, covers his left ear. He wears a week's gray beard growth. Paperbacks stacked beside his cot.

Three GUARDS, also masked, stand when Juan-Juan enters. They've set up residence: cots, stove, supplies, toiletries, short wave radio, battery lamps.

Morales, Cotton and Chunei enter beside Juan-Juan. He speaks to the guards.

JUAN-JUAN

Hola, amigos. Como estas?

The FIRST GUARD, a slender young man in jeans and ski mask, answers in German-accented English:

FIRST GUARD

Better.

JUAN-JUAN
He's healing?

FIRST GUARD
Yeah.

JUAN-JUAN
(to Craig)
Anything I can do for you?

CRAIG
You could let me go. Please.

MORALES
The trouble isn't on our end. We
sent your people part of an ear,
now they want to know if you're
still alive.

JUAN-JUAN
What's wrong with these people?
Don't they have any experience?

CRAIG
Not in kidnapping. We make
microchips.
(about Cotton)
Who's this?

JUAN-JUAN
A fellow American, sort of a
representative. To make sure
you're all right.

Craig pleads with Cotton:

CRAIG
Please reason with him. What does
he want? Money? I'll get him
money. He has to trust me. I'll
get one of my presidents to take
my place as hostage, get the
money myself. If he kills me,
he'll get nothing. The U.S.
government will never stop
looking for him. It'll be his
death warrant. Explain that to
him.

Cotton turns to the Indian:

COTTON
What do you think, Chune1?

CHUNEL
He's a talker.

Cotton turns to Craig:

COTTON

Stop whining. I know your fucking type: you destroy people long distance, go to the board meeting, go to the health spa, make jokes about it. You make me sick to be an American.

JUAN-JUAN

They want proof he's alive. We'll take another picture.

(to First Guard)

Get the camera.

(to Cotton)

Go on, get in the picture.

First Guard picks up a Polaroid camera.

COTTON

Huh?

JUAN-JUAN

(serious)

Get your picture taken--with the famous hostage.

COTTON

You ain't taking my picture.

JUAN-JUAN

(to Cotton: an order)

Go, gringo.

COTTON

You call me a gringo?

FIRST GUARD

(pulls a gun)

Go!

Cotton sets his feet in the ground, says to Ernesto:

COTTON

Look, Bubba, you can kill me, take me

(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

hostage, cut my ear off, but I ain't gonna be your fall guy. I ain't getting in a picture so I

can show up dead a month from
now. I came to help you.

FIRST GUARD

Go.

Chunel and Cotton, unarmed, prepare to fight. Juan-Juan
thinks a second, pulls down his lip, "Fuck You," laughs
and relents:

JUAN-JUAN

All right, Cotton.

(to Morales)

They want proof he's alive? We'll
Fedex a fingerprint.

Ernesto speaks in Spanish to the Second Guard who pulls
out a knife. The First Guard opens the stockade, THRUSTS
Craig's open palm to the ground, holds him in place. The
Second Guard bends over, places his knee on Craig's back,
positions the blade next to Craig's little finger.

COTTON

(to Craig)

Goodbye, Mr. Chips.

The knife blade torques downward. Craig SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

41 EXT GUAGUACHIQUÉ: CASETA DE TELEFONO DAY

Stride waits as Inez speaks on the phone:

INEZ

. . .gracias, Julie, I
understand-- don't worry, I
won't. I'll be careful.

(beat)

Goodbye.

Inez hangs up; Stride pays for the call. They step away:

INEZ

That was my friend Julie--Juan-
Juan's friend. He likes her. A
blond. From America.

They step outside.

CUT TO:

42 EXT GUAGUACHIQUÉ DAY

INEZ

Juan-Juan is at Casa Pacifico,
she says; but no visitors.
Everything there is shut down
now.

Stride about to speak, stops at what he sees: the
Federales they'd seen earlier have now tracked down
Stride's truck. Carrying assault M-16 rifles, they
inspect the Cherokee, speak to each other. The California
license plates fascinate them to no end.

Stride and Inez withdraw from view.

INEZ

Damn.

STRIDE

What do you think?

INEZ

That's fucked. You got money?

STRIDE

Yeah.

INEZ

They--whoever they are--they're
taking the truck, that's that. It
don't matter much, there's not
much farther you can drive. The
roads are all controlled here,
the bridges

(MORE)

INEZ

CONT'D

guarded. You want to get there,
you've got to go overland.

STRIDE

And you?

INEZ

I have no plans to be questioned
by those boys there. There's a
town you passed on the way here,
Nueva Ideal. It's actually just
over this mountain. You can buy
horses and supplies there. It's a
Mennonite village.

(off his look)

They came here from Canada in the
Twenties. The government exempted

them from the army if they'd farm the land. They keep to themselves, speak German. They don't bother nobody, nobody bothers them.

Inez starts walking toward the rise.

STRIDE
What're we doing?

INEZ
Walking. We should make it in four, five hours. How long since you rode a horse, Ben?

STRIDE
A while.

Stride follows Inez up an incline of hard soil and pine trees.

STRIDE
This Julie, your friend, is she attractive?

INEZ
Julie? God yes.

STRIDE
I mean, if she's attractive, what's she doing, you know, with someone like Juan-Juan who's so. . .obese?

INEZ
You know how fat men are. They love to eat.

CUT TO:

43 EXT CASA PACIFICO DAY

Speaking of whom: Juan-Juan, now unmasked, gets out of the camouflage 4x4 with Morales, Cotton and Chunel. Jesus follows.

JUAN-JUAN
You say this Sheriff, Sheriff. .
.

COTTON
Stride.

JUAN-JUAN

He put you in jail?

COTTON

Twice.

JUAN-JUAN

If someone did that to me, I'd have some ill feelings toward him.

COTTON

Yeah.

JUAN-JUAN

Feelings bad enough to cap him.

COTTON

Now we're getting down to it.

JUAN-JUAN

Think you can find him?

COTTON

Yeah.

JUAN-JUAN

I'll tell you what. You find the Sheriff, kill him, dump the body somewhere--I hear about it, I'll give you five thousand dollars.

COTTON

Five thousand? That's nothing.

JUAN-JUAN

It's payback.

COTTON

Right now we're talking about what you want, not what I want.

JUAN-JUAN

I pay the Federales one thousand. I could get 'em to kill you for that-- and throw the Indian in for free.

COTTON

(shakes head)

Twenty. And you don't have to pay anything up front. I'll trust you for it.

JUAN-JUAN

Ten and a thou up front.

COTTON

Fifteen's as low as I'll go.
Federales couldn't find a fish at
Sea World.

JUAN-JUAN

We got a deal. Can't be too
careful in a business like this.
One day reach up to scratch your
ear and discover your head's
gone. Have dinner, you and the
Indian, you can even stay
overnight if you want.

They enter the hacienda.

CUT TO:

44 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

The bodyguard stands as they enter.

COTTON

Drugs?

JUAN-JUAN

Not now. I'm trying to keep
everybody sober.

COTTON

When do you expect the payment?

JUAN-JUAN

We're still negotiating. This
finger thing should close it.

COTTON

Soon?

(no answer)

Can we have our guns back?

JUAN-JUAN

(smiles)

When you leave.

Juan-Juan and Morales, leaving Cotton and Chunel, enter
the video room.

CUT TO:

45 INT VIDEO ROOM DAY

Plush banquets and chairs face a video projection screen.
On the walls: cheesecake photos of TV stars. Luis listens

as Juan-Juan and Morales enter:

MORALES

You'd really pay fifteen thousand
to kill the American?

JUAN-JUAN

It's not that much.

(to Luis)

You track him, make sure he does.
Take Zeca.

LUIS

How much I get?

JUAN-JUAN

You work for me, cabron!

(relents)

Okay, five grand you kill Stride;
Cotton kills Stride first, five
grand you kill Cotton.

Luis nods "gracias," exits.

JUAN-JUAN

It's amazing isn't it?

MORALES

What?

JUAN-JUAN

What happens when you plant seeds
of distrust in a garden of
assholes.

CUT TO:

46 EXT NUEVA IDEAL DAY

A black horse-drawn carriage clip-clops down the main
(and only) street of the Altkoloner village, "Old Colony"
Mennonites. From a distance the town looks tidy and
prosperous: white frame and adobe buildings, everything
in its place; up close, its poverty is revealed. These
are difficult times.

Not an automobile in sight. In the oat fields beyond, a
gas-powered tractor with steel wheels works the crops.

Two horses wait at the town "store"--more a common house--
the village's one and only commercial establishment.
Shiny farm tools and feed supplies stand in front.

Stride and Inez step outside carrying camping and
traveling supplies. They are followed by ANNA, a

Mennonite woman in a somber long dress, shawl and straw sun hat; behind her stands a MIDDLE-AGED MENNONITE MAN in bib overalls and a straw hat.

STRIDE

Gracias.

INEZ

Danke.

The Man, pocketing the money, says nothing.

Two ruddy-faced women in dresses whisper to each other as they pass. A YOUNG MAN, leading a cow, watches them.

Stride's eyes fix on the Young Man, Germanic bone structure, pale skin--a face not unlike Kidnapper #7. FLASHCUT of b&w still frame from credit sequence: Kidnapper #7--a different white youth.

Inez, reading Ben's mind, tugs at his sleeve.

INEZ

Let's go.

Anna, aching to say something, seizes this opportunity. She speaks to Ben in a thick Low German accent:

ANNA

Senor, you say you are looking
for your son?

MENNONITE MAN

(reprimanding)

Anna.

Anna looks down; women speak only when spoken to in this community.

STRIDE

Yes, mam. Perhaps you could help
me?

Anna looks at the Man, remains silent.

MENNONITE MAN

Thank you for your business. God
be with you.

INEZ

(to Stride)

We need to be going.

(looks at sun)

We'll overnight by the ravine.
There's a backpacker's
campground.

He nods, starts to pack the horses.

CUT TO:

47 EXT CAMPSITE DUSK

A ring of stones circumscribes a dead campfire between a stream and the mountainside. Inez unpacks as Stride sets up a pup tent beside a thatched shelter. A hand-lettered sign in Spanish and English reads: "Take only photographs/Leave only footprints."

INEZ

Ben?

STRIDE

Yes?

INEZ

Does your offer still stand?

STRIDE

Which offer?

INEZ

The money, the green card.

STRIDE

What are you thinking?

INEZ

You'll never find Casa Pacifico
on your own. I'll take you as far
as I can.

Stride nods.

CUT TO:

48 EXT CASA PACIFICO DAWN

A guard, AK-47 in his arms, stands by the gate.

CUT TO:

49 INT MEDIA ROOM DAWN

Two of Juan-Juan's HENCHMEN argue over N-64 Mortal Combat as a third, passed out, sleeps behind. Remnants of a night of cocaine, beer, tacos and pizza lie about.

On screen: Sonya Blade shoots an energy blast from her palms; Reptile ducks, spews a burst of acid from his mouth.

HENCHMAN #1
Chinga!

HENCHMAN #2
"Reptile" quebra culo!

HENCHMAN #1
Quiero "Reptile."

HENCHMAN #2
No, soy "Reptile"--estas el culo
qui quiere "Sonya."

Cotton and Chudel, dressed, ready to leave, carrying
their weapons, step over and across the Henchmen.

COTTON
If this is sobriety, I am in
fucking Communist Russia.
(to Chudel)
How you feel?
(Chudel nods)
Got me some gas.

They step outside.

CUT TO:

50 EXT CASA PACIFICO DAWN

Cotton and Chudel put on their sunglasses, walk to the
Dodge Ram.

COTTON
The average gunfight takes place
between twenty and twenty-three
feet with an exchange of between
2.3 and 5.5 shots, you know that?
(no answer)
Read that, never forgot it.
(beat)
Let's find the Sheriff.

Luis, awake, sitting at a hacienda window, watches them.

CUT TO:

51 EXT COPPER CANYON AFTERNOON

The sun high in the western sky as Stride and Inez ride
horses loaded with supplies up a trail: a cloud's eye
vista of wooded mountains and coiling rock couloirs and
canyons.

Army helicopters fly overhead, circle, head west.

Ben winces as his horse stumbles, recovers. The horses carefully clump their way up the mountainside.

INEZ

You're going to be sore tonight.

STRIDE

How you doing?

INEZ

Fine. I grew up around horses. My uncle had a ranch. In the States.

STRIDE

Where?

INEZ

Arizona, near Winslow. I was going to move up there. Become a cowgirl,

(MORE)

INEZ

CONT'D

hang out at the mall, listen to rock n' roll.

STRIDE

What happened?

INEZ

My uncle died. Sort of. Turned out he was bankrupt. One morning he rode off.

He nods.

INEZ

You're going to be careful, aren't you?

STRIDE

I plan to.

They come to a stream; Stride reigns in his stallion.

INEZ

(points)

We can ford up there.

Stride sniffs, looks around:

STRIDE

What's that smell?

INEZ

Marijuana.

She leads the way downstream. Stride watches the way she sits in the saddle, the bounce of her dark hair against her back.

Turning, Inez wades into the stream, lashing her horse. Stride follows, splashing water in his wake.

CUT TO:

52 EXT GUAGUACHIQUE DAY

Cotton, Chunel at his side, revs his big fucking dual cab Dodge Ram into the Tarahumara village. Indians scatter.

Cotton and Chunel get out, guns at the ready, walk to the general store.

CUT TO:

53 INT CASETA DE TELEFONO DAY

Chunel interrogates the OWNER of the bare bones establishment in Tarahumara dialect. He's getting nowhere: the Owner remembers Stride and Inez, but has no idea where they are.

A frightened Tarahumara woman, the Owner's WIFE, watches wedged into a corner.

COTTON

What's the problem?

CHUNEL

They're old-fashioned.

COTTON

They're your people.

Cotton pulls out his pistol, puts the barrel to the Wife's face, looks at Chunel:

COTTON

He talks or I get Cortez on
Hiawatha's ass.

Cotton raises his pistol, FIRES a shot into the ceiling for effect. The wife interrupts Chunel, speaking in rapid Tarahumara. Chunel translates.

CHUNEL

She says the American and the woman were seen in the hills, on horseback.

COTTON
(spits)
Goddamn!

CUT TO:

54 EXT FLORA VISTA LATE AFTERNOON

Stride and Inez riding a high plateau; the vegetation is sparser, the air thinner, the sky closer.

Reigning in her horse, Inez turns a bend: before them, like a surreal mirage, sits a Western street, circa 1870.

It's an old movie set gone to ruin: barber shop, general store, brothel, stage line office, saloon. The glass windows are long broken, the railings covered with dust, wood slats stolen and vandalized. A collapsed sign reads "Flora Vista."

Disbelieving, Stride turns to Inez. She explains:

INEZ
They used to shoot movies here.
When they made Westerns. Some Mexican, some American. It never really took off--too far up country. They just stopped coming. Juan-Juan throws a party here every Christmas. I was there once. Everybody in Western clothes, playing old piano music over a sound system. It was fun. The guys'd get coked up and have target practice.
(mocks fast drawing a six-gun)
Pow, pow!

Stride calculates the failing light:

STRIDE
It's going to get cold tonight.
We should settle in.

INEZ
They knocked down the side of the hotel, the saloon's in good shape.
(beat)
There's always the brothel.

STRIDE
(ignores the innuendo)
The saloon sounds just fine. It
got a fireplace?

INEZ
(nods)
It works too.

CUT TO:

55 EXT SALOON NIGHT

A clear starry night. Firelight flickers through the saloon's swinging doors. The horses, wiped down and fed, lashed to the railing, snort from steamy nostrils.

CUT TO:

56 INT SALOON NIGHT

The yellowed mirror over the long bar reflects an imagined past. Chairs, tables and props lie where last used. Nude bar painting punctured with bullet holes.

Stride and Inez sit before the fire, cooking beans. Saddles hang over nearby chairs. Their packs lie beside bed rolls stretched out on the floor. A battery-powered fluorescent light stands on the bar.

Stride, crouching before the fire, grimaces in pain:

STRIDE
Ow! Fuck!

He stands, holding his aching back, buttocks and thighs. Inez takes the pan from his hand.

INEZ
Hurts?

STRIDE
Damn right. Them old cowboys,
they musta been made of tougher
stuff.

INEZ
They just got used to it.

Stride, stretching, picks up an old tin bucket, looks at the bottom, reads:

STRIDE
"Property of Western Costume,

Hollywood, USA"

Inez pulls a pack of cigarettes from her backpack, offers one to Stride:

INEZ
Cigarette?

STRIDE
No, I don't smoke.

INEZ
(lights up)
Sorry about that.

STRIDE
Why did you do it?
(beat)
It wasn't the money.

INEZ
What?

STRIDE
This morning, I saw you, you were
thinking of going your own way,
you changed your mind, you came
with me. Why?

INEZ
I thought you needed help.
(beat)
There was another thing.
(beat)
I had no place to go.

Stride digests this, sets down the bucket.

INEZ
Ben?

STRIDE
Yeah?

INEZ
Inez. Call me Inez.

STRIDE
Inez.

INEZ
Mind if I ask you something?
Something personal?

He crosses over, joins her:

STRIDE

Okay.

INEZ

What good is it going to do?

STRIDE

What?

INEZ

What you're doing.

STRIDE

Let me ask you: you wanted to set a plane down in this area, where would you do it?

INEZ

There's some plateaus up here-- depends on the size of the plane.

STRIDE

A small jet.

INEZ

Jet? That limits it. I can think of a couple.

STRIDE

Hmm.

INEZ

You didn't answer my question.

(no reply)

I asked you--because I've been thinking about it, I'm involved, you got me involved--what good is it going to do? What's the purpose? Are you going to bring your wife back to life--

STRIDE

(reprimand)

Inez.

INEZ

No. Answer me.

He shrugs; she waits.

STRIDE

(drawing close)

Inez. You know, sometimes you read books or watch TV and there's a character in crisis or despair, then they realize the

secret of life, the meaning of
life, lies in the simple
pleasures, the pleasures all
around them: the sound of the
birds, the evening breeze, the
sunset--well, that's bullshit.
I'll tell you the you the purpose
of it all, what gives life
meaning: these nine men, one by
one. That gives life meaning.

She starts to speak, stops. This is a man hidden to her.

CUT TO:

57 INT SALOON NIGHT

TIMECUT: late that night. Embers flicker from the fireplace.

Inez. in nylon sleeping bag, lies beside Stride. She reaches over in her sleep, rests her arm across his body.

Awake, Ben Stride feels her arm. He does not push it away.

CUT TO:

58 EXT COPPER CANYON DAY

Cotton, driving down a dusty rutted road, slows, stops. Cotton gets out, Chunel follows.

Cotton examines horseshoe tracks leading across the road, up a narrow canyon pass. Chunel looks around:

CHUNEL

We were here before. I remember.

COTTON

Did I ask you? Now you say something.

CHUNEL

(points)

The road goes that way, they rode this way.

COTTON

You figured that out by yourself?

(turns)

Let's go find some Indians.

A surveillance helicopter flies overhead as they head back to the truck. Cotton aims his gun, fires an imaginary shot:

COTTON

Pow!

CUT TO:

59 INT HELICOPTER DAY

Luis sits beside the PILOT in the two-seat "military" chopper. Looking out the window, he watches Cotton and Chunel get into the Dodge.

CUT TO:

60 EXT COPPER CANYON DAY

Stride and Inez ride through a verdant canyon; rock cliffs loom right and left. Below, like a mirage: an abandoned 17th century cathedral.

Inez slows up to pick berries from a tree, passes some to Ben.

TIMECUT: They sit beside a stream eating chorizo and bread. Stride watches as Inez dips her cup into the stream, refills it. She returns:

INEZ

What are you thinking?

STRIDE

Nothing.

INEZ

My mother used to say that when a man says he's thinking about nothing, he's thinking about love.

STRIDE

Never heard that one.

INEZ

Have you any children?

STRIDE

No.

(beat)

We didn't mean not to have children. We just never did.

(stands)

How far is Casa Pacifico?

INEZ

Another couple of hours, we should get to the ridge.

Stride walks over, feeds the horses the last scrap of bread.

CUT TO:

61 EXT RIDGE DAY

Stride and Inez, crouching in a stand of oak trees, overlook a valley. Their horses are tied down the hill.

Ben scans the valley with high-powered binoculars. In the distance he sees the obscured entrance to Casa Pacifico.

INEZ

(points)

Can you find it? It's in a sort of gorge.

STRIDE

I see a black Mercedes.

INEZ

That's it.

STRIDE

That's not all I see.

Stride crosses the landscape with his binoculars: every several hundred yards there are guards or lookouts.

INEZ

The place just crawls with security. From here on it's going to be very difficult not to be spotted -- and they're all on walkies. What were you planning to just ride in?

(no answer)

If you do get in, how do you plan to get out?--or hadn't you thought it out that far?

Stride digests this.

INEZ

(points to her head)

What's going on up there?

STRIDE

(lowers binoculars)

I'm thinking instead of trying to get to Juan-Juan, we should get Juan-Juan

(MORE)

STRIDE

CONT'D

to come to us. Let's back off this mountain, find someplace to camp, go back to Nueva Ideal.

CUT TO:

62 EXT NUEVA IDEAL DAY

Stride and Inez's horses wait beside a carriage outside

the store.

CUT TO:

63 INT STORE DAY

Stride and Inez purchase sausage, bread, cheese from Anna and another MENNONITE WOMAN. The room, wood-paneled, scrubbed, seems frozen in time--and Old West exhibit dotted with incongruous details like flashlights and nylon shopping bags.

STRIDE

(to Anna)

You remember me, right? We were here a couple days ago.

(no reply)

Bought some horses, supplies--quite a bit of money.

Anna whispers to the other Woman in German.

STRIDE

My name is Stride. I was looking for my son. I'd like to speak to a. . .

INEZ

Elder.

STRIDE

An Elder.

Anna looks to a man watching from a chair in the corner. He wears black overalls, a black shirt and white beard--the uniform of an ELDER. He walks over:

ELDER

Ja. What you vant?

STRIDE

I'm from California. My son is missing. He's a young man. He's run away. I'm looking for him. Before I wasn't sure, but I spoke to someone who said he was seen here. This is Nueva Ideal?

Anna, listening, watching Stride closely, translates for the Second Woman. Ben makes eye contact with her.

ELDER

Not possible. There are no strangers here.

STRIDE

Perhaps he passed through,
perhaps someone saw him, twenty-
two years old. I just want to sit
down and have a conversation. Can
we do that?

ELDER

No.

Anna steps over to the Elder, speaks softly in German. He
nods.

ELDER

(to Stride)

Anna reminded me that there is a
person in the village who would
speak with you.

STRIDE

Yes?

ELDER

His name is Karl, but he's
working now. He won't be back
until the evening.

STRIDE

Where should we wait?

ELDER

You will wait at his home.

STRIDE

How do you get there?

ELDER

Anna will take you.

(beat)

She is Karl's wife.

The Elder motions to Anna.

CUT TO:

64 EXT KARL'S HOME DAY

Long afternoon shadows etch the adobe brick home, it's
white wooden window frames. Stride and Inez's horses tied
out from beside a black horse carriage.

CUT TO:

65 INT KARL'S KITCHEN DAY

Stride and Inez sit in the kitchen. The spare white-washed room is decorated in the past tense: enamelware, hand-hewn furniture, stencil designs, open Bible on the table.

Inez, arms folded across her chest, nods her head in sleep. Spittle drips from the corner of her mouth. Stride picks up a cloth napkin, wipes her mouth without waking her.

Anna walks in with KARL, 50. Unshaven, he wears bib overalls, a plaid shirt and dirty straw western hat. His face is red from the sun. Inez awakens.

KARL
Herr Stride?

Ben stands, shakes Karl's hand.

STRIDE
Ben. This is Inez.

Karl nods to Inez, speaks to Anna in German. She pours them fresh glasses of water from a pitcher.

KARL
(sits)
My wife tells me you have some information about my son.

STRIDE
There must be some confusion. I said I was looking for my son.

KARL
(disappointed)
Oh.

STRIDE
You have also lost a son?

KARL
Ja. That's why I agreed to visit with you.

STRIDE
My son ran away.

ANNA
Our son also--

Karl looks at Anna; she shuts up. Inez listens.

STRIDE
I think that my son may have passed through this area. He's

involved in drugs.

KARL

You want me to help you?

STRIDE

Yes.

KARL

I too wanted to look for
Reinhart, my son. The Elders said
I must stay. We do what the
Elders tell us.

STRIDE

What happened to your son?

KARL

He and a friend, another boy from
here, left three months ago. We
don't have money here. People
born in Canada go back there, not
those born here. There's money
around us. Drug money. They grow
marijuana. It's a great
temptation to the youth.

(off wife's look)

Not the marijuana, the money.
Reinhart and Matt left because
there is no future here. They
wanted money.

STRIDE

My son also. Will you help me?

KARL

What do you want?

STRIDE

I have some questions.

KARL

I'll help you on one condition.

(Stride nods)

If you find my son, you will try
to make him come home. His
mother. . .you know how women
are.

STRIDE

And men.

KARL

(nods)

We feel we have failed.

Stride, remembering the photo of the young German kidnapper, doesn't know quite how to play this:

STRIDE

What does he look like? Do you have a photo?

KARL

No.

Anna gets up, leaves the room.

STRIDE

How old is he?

KARL

Nineteen.

Anna re-enters with a snapshot, hands it to Ben. She speaks in German to her husband, then in English to Stride:

ANNA

I didn't tell him about it. I didn't want to upset him. Reinhart sent a photograph.

The photo shows two young men in contemporary clothes standing by a pickup truck. One of the young men is Kidnapper #7.

STRIDE

Which one is Reinhart?

Inez holds her breath.

Anna points to the non-kidnapper. Stride, relieved, replies:

STRIDE

Yes, I promise. If I see him, I will keep him from harm, bring him back to you.

KARL

What do you want to know?

STRIDE

I am looking for men who work for Juan-Juan Ernesto. He runs the drug trade here. That's where I think I'll find my son. A plane, a jet, is flying here from the United States. Ernesto's men will meet the plane. This will be a small plane because the landing

strips are short. That means the plane will have to refuel before flying out. I want to find that depot. It will lead me to the plane. Do you know of such a place-- where gasoline trucks fuel for airplanes?

KARL

(hesitates)

Ja. It's hidden. Reinhart told me about it. I think this was where he first met. . .those men.

STRIDE

Where is it?

KARL

It's. . .hard to describe.

STRIDE

Will you take us there?

KARL

(nods)

In the morning.

Awkward pause.

KARL

(to Inez)

Will you stay with us this evening? Break bread with us?

INEZ

I'd be proud to.

KARL

(to Stride)

Do you mind sleeping in the barn?

Stride nods, confused.

ANNA

What my husband is asking is, are you married? We have only one extra room.

STRIDE

(smiles)

The barn sounds fine.

CUT TO:

Stride, Inez and Karl, on horseback, wearing Mennonite-woven serapes, ride through a wooded arroyo.

KARL

It's confusing. We seem to be heading down, but we're gaining altitude. Across the hill is where it is.

They hear a sound, look up: Luis' "military" helicopter flies overhead.

CUT TO:

67 INT HELICOPTER DAY

Luis sits watching the trio on horseback. From above, through the trees, Karl and Stride look similar in their serapes and straw brimmed hats.

Luis speaking into the headset, motions to the pilot. The chopper flies off, looking for a place to land.

CUT TO:

68 EXT OIL DEPOT VISTA DAY

Stride, Inez and Karl lie in dry scrub atop a hill. In the distance, a small fuel tanker pulls away from a building camouflaged by trees and rocks.

Ben watches through binoculars. He sees: waving to the departing truck driver--Kidnapper #5. The truck pulls away, gears shifting, as it heads along a two-track road.

Kidnapper #5 goes inside the camouflaged building.

STRIDE

(stands)

Let's follow.

They walk to where their horses are tethered. They mount.

STRIDE

(to Karl and Inez)

Do you know where it's going?

KARL

There's a high plateau about fifteen kilometers up the track.

INEZ

The Indians call it Patzcuaro.

CUT TO:

69 EXT NUEVA IDEAL DAY

Cotton and Chunel wheel their fire-engine-red monster truck down the main street. Cotton slows behind a horse-drawn buggy.

COTTON

Welcome to party central, Chunel.
Jesus, can you believe this?
Fucking Beverly Hillbillies.

(honks horn)

You know why Mennonites make love
standin' up?

(beat)

So people won't think they're
dancin'. Get it?

Chunel looks out the window.

COTTON

So all right, it wasn't very
funny. Mennonites ain't funny.
It's funnier when you tell it
about Baptists. That's probably
why there ain't any Mennonite
jokes. Think about it. Can you
name me one Mennonite joke?

CHUNEL

No.

COTTON

See?

Cotton pulls to a stop by the "store."

COTTON

Let's find out why Stride came
here.

CUT TO:

70 EXT TWO TRACK ROAD DAY

High altitude, helicopters fly overhead as Karl, Inez and Stride ride single file up the road. Ahead, a path forks to the right. Karl slows down:

KARL

Here's where I turn off.

They stop.

STRIDE

Karl, I want to ask you a favor.
(Karl listens)
I need to get back to the depot.
I need to get something there.

Inez looks at him. She knows what he needs to get:
Kidnapper #5.

STRIDE

I want you to ride with Inez,
wait for me at Patzcuaro. I
should be there by nightfall.

KARL

But my farm?

STRIDE

(firm)
Do you want us to help find your
son or not?

Karl reluctantly acquiesces. Stride rides off, waving
goodbye.

CUT TO:

71 EXT KARL'S HOUSE DAY

The Dodge Ram parked beside a black buggy.

CUT TO:

72 INT KARL'S KITCHEN DAY

Anna stands hemmed by the Elder and SECOND ELDER. Cotton
has dragged them to her place. The Elder throws an
accusatory glance at Anna: see what trouble you've
brought us.

Cotton responds to what Anna has said:

COTTON

That's rich. Stride said he was
looking for his son? He and a
woman?

ANNA

That's what he said.

COTTON

Let me guess: Spanish girl, good
looking?

Anna nods.

COTTON

He wanted to know about an oil
depot --for refueling planes?

CUT TO:

73 EXT OIL DEPOT DAY

Ben Stride rides up to the camouflaged (brown paint, dead
branches) pump and building. Jeans drying out back, beer
bottles in the dirt. J.J. (aka Kidnapper #5), 26, jeweled
up like a rapper, walks out to greet him.

STRIDE

Hola.

J.J.

Si?

STRIDE

Hablas Ingles? I need some
gasoline.

J.J. replies in broken English:

J.J.

(laughs)

What do I look like, a gas
station?

Ben dismounts:

STRIDE

That's all right, because I don't
have a car.

(ties up stallion)

Sure is beautiful country.

J.J.

What do you want?

STRIDE

I don't need gasoline, but I
could use a long rifle with a
scope, some explosives, an
assault weapon and cartridges--
tell me, does that

(MORE)

STRIDE

CONT'D

jewelry really impress anyone?
 You know how to impress someone?
 Put a .45 in their mouth, cock
 back the hammer. That'll impress
 somebody.

J.J. calls inside in Spanish. A YOUNG VAQUERO (not one of the kidnappers) emerges with two rifles, hands one to J.J.

J.J.
 Get on the horse, cowboy.

STRIDE
 I want to talk about a kidnapping
 in San Diego several weeks ago.
 There were nine men involved:
 (counts on his fingers)
 Troy Romeo, Juan Ruflo--they were
 found dead in a card game in
 Mexicali--Carlos Mendes, last
 seen in Creel; Carlos Tapa, the
 same. . .

The count is coming to J.J. . He raises his rifle to shoot.

STRIDE
 . . .J.J.--

Before J.J. can pull the trigger, BANG! Stride's Sig-Sauer is out of it's holster in his hand: J.J. is FALLING backward, blood flowing from his neck. He tumbles against the building, crumples on to the ground.

Stride's gun now aimed at the stunned Vaquero:

STRIDE
 I got no quarrel with you, son.
 You want to start one, that's
 your business.

The Vaquero is deciding: shit or go blind.

STRIDE
 Set the rifle down, walk over to
 the truck, drive away. Now. I'm
 not going to offer more than
 once.

The Vaquero, dropping the rifle, sprints toward the truck. The engine starts before the driver's door is fully shut. Ben watches as the pickup truck, speeding away, heads for lower elevation.

Stride holsters his gun, grabs J.J. by the arm, drags him

inside.

CUT TO:

74 INT OIL DEPOT DAY

Stride deposits J.J.'s body beside a desk, looks around: a wall map next to a "Miss Universe" calendar highlights the nearest landing strip.

Checking here and there, Stride walks into the back room.

CUT TO:

75 INT DEPOT BACK ROOM DAY

Continuing to look, Stride rummages about, opening cabinets, examining boxes. He finds what he's looking for: weapons, explosives, ammo, etc. Ben picks up an olive Army duffel, starts to load it.

CUT TO:

76 EXT OIL DEPOT DAY

Stride rides off, duffel strapped behind his saddle.

CUT TO:

77 EXT PATZCUARO DAY

Karl and Inez reach the plateau the Indians call Patzcuaro. A once-bulldozed dirt-and-grass straight- away between two mountain ridges identifies the landing strip.

Tracks from airplane tires are visible.

KARL

There it is.

Inez looks around.

KARL

What now?

INEZ

Find some high ground, look for an old campsite, put up the pup tent, start a fire--and wait.

(off his look)

That all right with you?

KARL

It's just that, well, I'm not
used to a situation like this.

INEZ

I think you sort of improvise.

CUT TO:

78 EXT OIL DEPOT DAY

Red Dodge Ram emerges from the hills, approaches the
Depot, stops twenty yards off. Cotton gets out looking
around:

COTTON

(to Chunel)

Stay close.

Cotton walks over to the camouflaged structure, drops to
his haunches, examines the oil tanker tracks, the pickup
tracks, the horseback marks, the footprints. He puts his
finger in the pump nozzle, smells his finger:

COTTON

(gestures)

We got a pickup, an oil tanker,
one man on horseback and. . .

(points to building)

. . .some fresh blood. What do
you think, Chunel?

CHUNEL

I think somebody did some
killing.

Cotton walks over to where J.J. fell, enters the
building. Chunel follows.

CUT TO:

79 INT OIL DEPOT DAY

Cotton, standing over J.J. face down beside the desk,
turns him over, says to Chunel:

COTTON

I knew this boy, knew his brother
too. Neither of them worth a
shit. Stupid too. You wanted
something fucked up--they'd the
ones you'd call.

He looks around, spots the map next to Miss Universe,
steps closer:

COTTON

My, my.

Cotton checking here and there, walks into the back room.
Again, Chunel follows.

CUT TO:

80 INT DEPOT BACK ROOM DAY

There, Sig-Sauer 9mm on the table before him, sits Ben Stride. He looks at Cotton:

STRIDE

I saw your truck from the rise.
Heard it too--real good vehicle
for sneaking up on folks. Circled
around. What do you want here?

COTTON

I'm looking for you.

STRIDE

I told you I wasn't interested.

COTTON

Juan-Juan offered me fifteen
thousand dollars to kill you.

STRIDE

Fifteen thou? That's not much.

COTTON

It was five. I had to negotiate
him up to fifteen.

STRIDE

(turns head)
Hello, Chunel.

Chunel nods.

STRIDE

How'd Juan-Juan find out about
me?

COTTON

A little bird told him.

CHUNEL

Cheep, cheep.

This remark is so unexpected, so unlike Chunel, that
Cotton and Stride just stare at him for a split second.

COTTON

You know I used to think about it
in jail, Sheriff: the different
ways I could do you--crowbar,
hammer, Maglite, concrete block.
. .

STRIDE

So?

COTTON

So?

Stride looks at the gun on the table, looks from Cotton to
Chunel:

STRIDE

You got me outnumbered, you got
the angles--

Stride poised, ready to reach for his automatic. Cotton
relaxes:

COTTON

It's not that simple.

(explains)

That's not the way I got it
figured. I looked around: tanker
tracks, fresh jet fuel smell on
the pump, airstrip map--it seems
a plane's coming in. A small
plane. If that plane is the plane
I think it is, it's going to be
carrying a hell of a lot more
than fifteen thousand dollars--
oh, yeah, maybe twenty million
dollars. That kind of money could
set a man up for life.

STRIDE

How do you plan to get it?

COTTON

I was thinking about that. Where
are the others?

STRIDE

Who?

COTTON

Inez and the German.

STRIDE

They went ahead to the landing
strip.

COTTON

Some crew you put together here,
Sheriff: a Mexican woman and a
Mennonite pacifist. Come
tomorrow, if it is tomorrow,
Ernesto's boys, ten or twelve of
them, will ride in

(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

carrying automatic weapons.

(beat)

I figure you could use two more
guns.

STRIDE

And after that?

COTTON

We'll play that as it comes.

(no reply)

How about it?

Stride thinks it through, nods slightly:

STRIDE

We should set out now. It will be
slow going. I want to take Elvis.

COTTON

Elvis?

STRIDE

My horse.

CUT TO:

81 EXT TWO TRACK ROAD AFTERNOON

Cotton's 4x4 pickup drives slowly up the two track road, Stride's unsaddled horse tethered to the back.

Cotton drives; Stride sits beside. Chunel stretches out on the cab seat behind.

COTTON

You know that empty church you passed--we questioned some Indians there--Chunel was telling me about it. Built by Jesuits. Forced Indian labor. The Indians were so P.O.-ed they would never go inside--never used it. Went to ruin. Oh yeah there's a lot of history in these

(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D

hills, Sheriff. Silver mines, gold mines, banditos, dead conquistadors. Always was wild country. Used to be land reform and revolution--now it's narcotics and kidnapping.

Stride looks out the window.

COTTON

You trust the woman? Inez?

(no reply)

How you think she came to know Juan-Juan's crowd? I seen her before. The girl could party. She hung with those boys, why you think she'd do that--for the conversation? It ever occur to you she might have her own plans for the money?

STRIDE

Tell me, Cotton, do you always think with your mouth open?

COTTON

(laughs)

You should get to know Chunel.

Cotton looks at Chunel: Chunel opens his eyes, closes them.

COTTON

You're both alike. Idealists. Oh, yeah. Half of everything he makes goes to Chiapas. To the revolutionaries.

Stride looks ahead. The sun slices across his face.

COTTON

You know this thing that's going down tomorrow, whenever--that's not going to change anything between us.

STRIDE

I know.

CUT TO:

82 EXT PATZCUARO DUSK

POV through rifle scope: a man sitting across the campfire from Inez. The man turns: it's Karl.

Luis, holding rifle with scope, turns to Zeca:

LUIS

Damn!

Zeca takes the gun, looks through the scope:

ZECA

Where's the American?

Luis doesn't answer; Zeca looks around:

ZECA

There's only two horses.

LUIS

Let's go and ask them.

CUT TO:

83 EXT PATZCUARO CAMPFIRE NIGHTFALL

Luis and Zeca have tied Karl and Inez's hands. Karl has a bruise on his face, blood around his mouth. Inez's leg is scraped, oozing.

Luis has ripped open Karl's shirt. Inez watches terrified as he puts a lit cigarette to Karl's collarbone:

LUIS

Where did the American go?

Karl issues a muted cry of PAIN.

LUIS

Tough guy.

Luis BURNS him again. Karl's body shudders.

LUIS

Believe me, senor, my ability to put you through pain is much greater than your ability to endure it.

INEZ

He won't talk.

LUIS

(turns)

How about you, Inez? I've known you to talk plenty. I've even seen you fuck--that I'd like to see again. Why you turn on your friends.

INEZ

I don't know where he is. We don't know. He didn't say.

LUIS

(to Karl)

I suppose you make love in the dark, so God won't see you naked. You want to see?

Luis rips open Inez's shirt, exposing a breast, turns to Karl:

LUIS

Some God you got, senor. He loves you and sends you to Hell. Sex is dirty but you can do it with someone you love. Aye, carumba! Well, ask your God: what does he think of this?

He motions, instructs Zeca in Spanish. Zeca takes out a knife, places it to Inez's throat.

LUIS

(lifts arm)

My compadre, Zeca, when I lower my hand, he is going to slice Inez's throat. Then she will bleed and die --unless you tell me where Senor Stride has gone. Will your God let Zeca do that?

Karl, watching Luis' hand, starts to speak: he can endure his pain, but he cannot be responsible for this.

A nightbird WHISTLES. Luis and Zeca twist heads toward the sound.

A dart PIERCES Zeca's neck. He grabs his throat, FALLS to his knees, collapses.

Chunel steps from the shadows, small blowpipe in hand: firelight flickers on his face. He WHISTLES again.

Luis, confused, tries to find his gun.

RIFLE SHOT rings out: Luis, HIT in the upper chest, SPINS backward. The horses neigh, pull at their harnesses.

Distant headlights flick on. Cotton's Dodge engine turns over. The headlights grow nearer.

The Ram pulls up to a stop. Cotton and Stride, rifle in hand, get out. Ben, kicking him, turns Luis on his back, looks at him: six men down.

He goes over, unties Inez:

STRIDE

Are you hurt?

INEZ

Not really, bruised. Look after Karl. He's burned.

Cotton, meanwhile, untying Karl. Ben lifting Inez to her feet, his arm around her.

STRIDE

(to Cotton)

Cotton, that's Karl. Karl, Cotton.

(to Inez)

We had a change of plan. Cotton's going to help out tomorrow.

COTTON

(to Stride)

You got some burn ointment?

STRIDE

Yeah.

Inez walks to Luis, leans over, SPITS in his face.

COTTON

Looks like we're gonna need those shovels again, Sheriff.

(to Inez)
What you got cooking?

INEZ
Rice and beans.

COTTON
Damn, ain't life funny that way.

CUT TO:

84 EXT CAMPFIRE NIGHT

Night sounds echo as they sit around the fire, eat, sip from canteens. A pup tent set near a fresh mound of dirt. The horses tied to Cotton's Dodge.

Stride has drawn a map on the ground near the fire; he points with a stick:

STRIDE
. . .Here's the airstrip, the
plane lands from the north,
northeast, say, two hours after
dawn. Here we are: high ground --

COTTON
Maybe not dawn.

Stride waits for him to explain.

COTTON
Could also be the end of the day.
They escape by dark.

STRIDE
(nods, points)
We'll be here. Inez, tomorrow
you'll be here with the long gun
and scope. Cotton, Chunel, you
wait here in the 4x4--

Karl gets up, walks away at the mention of a gun.

STRIDE
The hostage and his guards will
have to come through this ravine--
-just a second.

Stride gets up, walks in the moonlight after Karl. Inez watches a moment, pulls out a pack of cigarettes, takes one, offers one to Cotton.

COTTON
Thank you.

He takes the matchbook from her hand, lights both their cigarettes. Cotton glances at Stride and Karl in the distance:

COTTON

I was noticing you and the Sheriff.

INEZ

Yes?

COTTON

It seems to me, the way you were talking, looking, you're getting a little sweet on the Sheriff.

(MORE)

COTTON

CONT'D (off her look)

I just want to warn you about that.

INEZ

About what?

COTTON

The Sheriff is not somebody I'd get sweet on. He'll break your heart. The Sheriff, he wasn't much of a husband. When his wife was killed-- they weren't even living together. Word is she was seeing another fella. Stride had gotten too much for her. After he lost his job, the Sheriff became a hard and cold and bitter man. No woman should have to take that: she didn't. The Sheriff, he doesn't know how to appreciate a strong and beautiful woman like yourself.

(hands on his breast)

I, on the other hand, do. I have some flaws but I'm willing to change.

(no reply)

What do you think?

INEZ

I'm flattered, but I don't think that's the way to go.

COTTON

Think about it, mam. Don't rush to judgment. Twenty million dollars can do wonderful things to a woman's heart.

CUT TO:

85 EXT PATZCUARO BLUFF NIGHT

Stride sits beside Karl on a bluff overlooking the landing strip:

STRIDE

You all right?

KARL

Yeah.

STRIDE

Sorry to be responsible for putting you through this. You'll leave first thing in the morning.

KARL

The men who were killed--my son is involved with them?

STRIDE

Yes.

KARL

I'll see it through, Mr. Stride. Whatever happens.

(Stride nods)

Who is this man Cotton? Is he a criminal too?

STRIDE

Has been.

Karl thinks.

KARL

You don't have a son who's missing, do you?

STRIDE

No.

KARL

Do you have a son?

STRIDE

No.

KARL

What's in it for you? Money?

STRIDE

No, something else. It's hard to explain to someone such as yourself.

KARL

You'd be surprised.

STRIDE

Let me ask you something, Karl. You're opposed to modern technology, I can understand that--

KARL

Name one good thing that's come from modern technology.

STRIDE

Medicine.

KARL

Really? So you can make artificial babies, change a person's appearance, keep people suffering alive long after God has called them?

STRIDE

But how do you decide? How do you decide what's okay, what's not?

KARL

The Elders decide.

STRIDE

You don't have automobiles, you drive buggies; yet I saw tractors out in your fields.

KARL

The tractors don't have rubber tires.

STRIDE

That makes the difference?

KARL

You have to draw the line somewhere. Otherwise the line keeps moving.

(beat)

I'm going to pray. I'd like to

pray for you.

STRIDE
I'd appreciate that.

KARL
But I don't know if it'd be
right.

CUT TO:

86 EXT CAMPFIRE NIGHT

Embers glow in the fire. Stride, cradling a rifle, sits outside Inez's pup tent.

Cotton and Chunei lie in the bed of the Dodge pickup, rifles at their sides.

Karl kneels by the horses, praying.

Stride takes out an envelope, hands it to Inez:

STRIDE
I want you to keep this for me.
In case things don't work out
tomorrow.

INEZ
What is it?

STRIDE
Just some things I wrote down.
Letters of recommendation to
various people, so forth.

INEZ
Ben Stride, I don't want your
guilt money.

STRIDE
Just take it.

INEZ
It's not too late to change your
life, you know. People do it all
the time. Just up and walk off.

He offers the envelope again; she accepts. He brushes her hair, kisses her forehead.

STRIDE
You should get some sleep.

He stands, takes a position from which he can oversee the

plateau. She watches him a moment, turns over, tries to sleep.

CUT TO:

87 EXT SILVER MINE DAY

Morales (Kidnapper #8), Jesus, MATT (runaway Mennonite: Kidnapper #7), Reinhart (Karl's son) and four other HENCHMEN lead Edward Craig, blindfolded, ear and finger bandaged, hands tied behind his back, out of his cell.

Juan-Juan is not present.

All are armed, all wear black neck warmers.

Three vehicles wait: camouflage-painted 4x4s fore and aft, a black Chevy Blazer in between.

Morales and Jesus escort Craig, put him in the back seat of the middle vehicle.

MORALES

(to Craig)

Today is the day you have to ask yourself, do I feel lucky?

CRAIG

Am I being released?

MORALES

That's what we're going to find out. Your people do their part, we'll do ours.

Morales checks his watch, gets in beside Craig.

CUT TO:

88 EXT PATZCUARO DAY

Cotton sits with Chunel in the Ram, tucked behind a hillock, overlooking the landing strip. Karl, in the cab seat, rests against the door jam. Cotton checks his watch: the sun's past it's prime.

CHUNEL

Listen.

COTTON

What?

CHUNEL

No helicopters.

Cotton nods: it's time.

COTTON

Karl, this is the part where you
get out. Quietly.

Karl softly closes the door behind him.

Inez waits atop a ridge, rifle with scope in hand.

A SOUND catches Cotton's ear: the oil tanker approaches.
Events are in motion.

The tanker drives onto the plateau.

Ben Stride, arm hooked around a pipe, feet propped
against the struts, rides in the UNDERCARRIAGE of the oil
tanker. Over his head, under the fuel tank, are tied
three sticks of dynamite and protruding fuse.

Inez watches: the tanker stops, idles. Sound of
approaching airplane.

Cotton and Chunnel look up: a Gulfstream jet approaches
low from the northeast, lowers its flaps, prepares to
land. The wheels extend.

The Gulfstream hits the landing strip with a high squeal,
backfires its engines, comes to a noisy halt. The jet
taxi 180 degrees, repositions itself for takeoff.

The oil tanker, puffing smoke, pulls alongside the jet,
stops. The TANKER DRIVER and JET PILOT get out. Pilot
shows the Driver where to refuel the jet.

Under the tanker, Stride listens, watches their feet: the
Pilot helps the Driver refuel.

Removing the nozzle from the jet's tank, the Driver
speaks into a walkie-talkie.

Cotton and Chunnel, watching from the Dodge, turn toward a
sound: the kidnappers' caravan APPEARS from round the
bend, drives toward the landing strip. Three vehicles,
nine men, restrained hostage in back seat, middle
vehicle.

Pilot signals to window of jet: the door opens, stairs
lower. Pilot helps secure stairs.

Two Americans emerge from the Gulfstream: BOB ANDERS, 40,
wearing suit and tie, carrying a large suitcase--followed
by ARMED GUARD, 25, assault rifle in hand. They wait at
the foot of the stairs.

The caravan approaches, stops.

Karl watches: Ernesto's men emerge pulling their black neck warmers over their noses, obscuring the bottom halves of their faces. Karl's son, Reinhart, gets out of the third vehicle with Matt. They scan the horizon for danger.

Leaning under the tanker, Stride watches: he spots Morales, Jesus.

Inez watches: Jesus and Morales lead Craig out. The hostage stumbles; Jesus and Morales help him to his feet.

Cotton and Chunel watch: Jesus and Morales walk Edward Craig to the Americans.

ANDERS

(to Craig)

Ed, its Bob Anders. The money is here.

CRAIG

(frightened)

Don't remove the blindfold!

ANDERS

Are you all right?

CRAIG

Get me out of here!

Morales lowers the large suitcase to the ground, opens it. He examines the stacks of cash--mucho green:

MORALES

Looks good: a million here, a million there--I'm not going to nit-pick.

ANDERS

It's all there.

MORALES

He's yours.

Pilot re-enters the cockpit as Anders and the Armed Guard lead Craig up the stairs, into the plane. They pull the stairs behind them, CLOSE the door.

The jet, all the while idling, REVS its engines.

Morales locks the suitcase, hefts it. Ernesto's men return to their assigned seats in the vehicles--Jesus helping Morales with the suitcase.

The oil tanker drives away.

Underneath the tanker, Stride, his muscles cramping, flicks a lighter, IGNITES the fuse, drops free, hitting the ground under the moving tanker. Tires pass on either side of him.

The caravan drivers start their engines, pull their 4x4s away, freeing the plane to take off.

Stride, in plain sight on the ground, takes out his gun. HENCHMAN #1 turns to notice him--

KABLOOM-BOOM-BOOM! The oil tanker explodes into a giant echoing fireball.

This is the signal for Cotton and Chunel to make their move: Cotton drops the Dodge Ram into gear.

The Ram 4x4 charges dead on toward the grill of the first vehicle, Cotton and Chunel leaning out their respective windows, FIRING automatic weapons: Cotton a 9mm, Chunel an AK-47.

The Dodge RAMS the lead vehicle: passengers flop around. SECOND HENCHMEN'S bloodied head ricochets off the windshield.

Cotton and Chunel are on their feet beside the truck FIRING at anything that moves. It's a free-for-all.

Inez aims, HITS HENCHMAN #3 as he emerges from the lead vehicle. The Henchman crumples.

Stride, on his feet, looks to see the First Henchman turn toward him. Ben SHOTS, killing him.

The Gulfstream, accelerating through the fireball and gunfire, rises from the ground. Flying low, it barely withdraws its wheels as it skims the north plateau mountain ridge: it's gone.

Edward Craig, blindfold off, looks out the window at the firefight down below--his POV of the firefight.

Jesus, gun blazing, charges Cotton: Chunel RIDDLES Jesus' body with bullets.

Stride, turning, is hit in the foot. He falls to one knee, kicks the empty cartridge out of his Sig-Sauer.

Matt spots Stride reloading, turns to shoot him. Inez fires at Matt--misses. Stride, reloaded, catching Matt stunned by the whistle of her passing shell, shoots, KILLS him.

Karl watches: Stride whirls to shoot again: it's Reinhart--Ben pulls his gun back.

Morales aims at Cotton--Chunel CALLS to his partner.
Morales turns, FIRES, hits Chunel in the chest.

Cotton and Inez HIT Morales simultaneously: Morales jerks forward, backward, sideways, spins--Stride also HITS him--head first to the ground, his walkie landing beside him.

In the confusion, the utter mayhem, Reinhart rescues the suitcase, jumps into the Chevy Blazer with the Third Henchman. The Henchman jams the 4x4 into gear.

Cotton turns toward Chunel: the FOURTH HENCHMAN aims at Cotton's back--Stride, seeing this out of the corner of his eye, turns and SHOOTS the Fourth Henchman in the back. Cotton, turning, acknowledges Stride.

Leaning low in the 4x4, Reinhart and Third Henchman speed off. Cotton fires at their rear tires, misses.

Suddenly, it's over.

Cotton, the last one standing, surveys the scene.

Stride, on one knee, does the same.

Bodies lie here and there: Jesus, Morales, Matt, Henchmen One, Two and Four, Chunel.

The sun is setting. Cotton steps over to Chunel's body, looks at him:

COTTON

Sorry, buddy.

The Dodge Ram and first 4x4 are rammed grill to grill. Cotton walks toward the third vehicle, the last one operable.

STRIDE

Where you going?

COTTON

(looks back)

I'm gonna get that money.

STRIDE

Not without me you're not.

COTTON

Huh?

STRIDE

Or Inez. Or the German.

COTTON

You got what you want, Stride,
now it's my turn.

STRIDE

I'll shoot you right here. By my count, I still got three bullets in this gun. You know I will.

Cotton thinks it over.

COTTON

Damn!

(walks over)

Let me help you up.

Cotton walks over to Ben Stride, leans down, helps his to his feet:

COTTON

That was a hell of a fight, Sheriff.

CUT TO:

89 EXT PATZCUARO BLUFF NIGHT

The third vehicle, a camouflage 4x4, drives up to Karl and the horses. Cotton, Ben and Inez are inside.

The horses' eyes glow iridescent in the highbeams.

STRIDE

Karl, get inside.

KARL

The horses?

STRIDE

Cut 'em free. I'll pay you for that mare of yours. \$200. Fair price? We're going to find your boy.

(holds foot)

Cotton, help him.

CUT TO:

90 EXT COPPER CANYON NIGHT

The 4x4 makes its way through the darkness. Cotton, at the wheel, leans forward, trying to follow the tracks of the Chevy Blazer.

Karl rides shotgun. Inez sits in back with Stride, makeshift bandaging his foot with torn cloth.

Sound of helicopters overhead.

COTTON

(reacting to choppers)

The hostage must be safe.

(explains)

Federales. Now that Craig is safe and sound in San Diego, they're gonna bomb somebody--make a point to the Americans, the press. How you doing, Sheriff?

STRIDE

Hobble a bit, but I'm fine.

Ben looks at Inez, brushes her cheek: she blushes.

COTTON

Damn, this is a hard track to follow. We should wait till daylight, but then the choppers will be all over us.

(pause)

I'm gonna miss that Indian. He didn't talk much, but he was good company.

(to Karl)

How 'bout you Karl? You wanna ride with me?

(to Inez)

That was good shooting, mam. You ever kill anybody before?

INEZ

No. Animals. Not humans.

COTTON

It's a bad habit. Don't pick it up. Ask the Sheriff.

Helicopter noise grows louder. Cotton cuts the headlights, slows to a crawl.

Silence. The helicopter grows distant.

STRIDE

Cotton, it seems to me that you know where you're headed.

COTTON

(reluctantly)

Yeah, I do.

KARL

(to Cotton)

Are you one of them?

COTTON

(mock offended)
Does that mean you won't be my
partner?

Recognizing a landmark, Cotton continues.

Inez helps Ben pull his boot over his bandaged foot. He
sits up, pulls her next to him.

INEZ
I still have the envelope.

STRIDE
Keep it.
(beat)
You, Karl, I've dragged a lot of
people into this thing.

INEZ
You didn't drag me. I made a
choice.

He looks away.

INEZ
What are you thinking about?

Ben, remembering their earlier conversation, looks her
straight in the eyes:

STRIDE
Nothing.

INEZ
Me too.

STRIDE
I'm scared. For the first time
since this thing started, I'm
scared.

Cotton, watching in the rear-view mirror, has had about
as much of this as he can take:

COTTON
Sheriff, you gonna be able to
walk when we get there?

STRIDE
Yeah.

COTTON
Good. I got a woman, I got a
Mennonite. The last thing I need
is a fucking cripple.

Inez leans her head against Ben. He puts his arm around her.

CUT TO:

91 EXT NEAR SILVER MINE NIGHT

Cotton swings onto a two-track road, cuts the headlights, stops the truck: he knows where he is.

COTTON

This coming hill falls off. Below it there's a hidden silver mine. From the way those boys were driving, I thought they might be coming here.

(beat)

The hostage was held here.

INEZ

So you were involved?

COTTON

No, mam, I was not. I opened my heart to you. My offer stands. But right now I've got one thing and one thing only on my mind. I have worked for this money and I deserve it.

Cotton turns off the engine, opens the glove compartment, finds a flashlight.

COTTON

From here on, we go on foot. You're free to stay or come. No noise.

Stride places his hand on Cotton's shoulder:

STRIDE

We'll go, check this mine out. If they're there, we come back, we wait. Give me two hours. That's all I'm asking. After that, do what you want.

COTTON

Why don't I just pick off those boys, take the money, leave you here to wait for Juan-Juan on your lonesome.

Reacting to "pick off those boys," Karl looks at Stride.

STRIDE

They have walkies. Juan-Juan
won't come until he gets an all-
clear.

COTTON

That's not my problem.

STRIDE

As long as I'm here, it is.

COTTON

(agrees)

Two hours, Sheriff.

(beat)

I hope I don't regret this.

Stride, Inez, Cotton and Karl get out, silently shut the
doors, follow Cotton.

Hunched over, they creep in the moonlight toward the
distant sound of Latin music.

Looking over the precipice they see the Chevy Blazer,
door open, motor running, tape player playing. Henchman
#4 sits in the shotgun seat, head back, eyes closed,
asleep. A walkie-talkie rests beside him.

Reinhart paces near the Blazer, flashlight in hand. The
suitcase sits beside the open door.

Stride taps Cotton, points to his watch, motions for them
to back off, circle around and wait. Cotton, reluctant,
backs off.

CUT TO:

92 EXT SILVER MINE NIGHT

TIMECUT. Stride, Inez, Karl and Cotton have positioned themselves in the thicket leading to the cave. Reinhart and the Henchman wait by the Blazer as before.

Karl, beside Stride, watches his son. He whispers to himself:

KARL

What did I do wrong?

STRIDE

Sssh.

The CRACKLE of the walkie-talkie wakes the Henchman. He speaks into the walkie, signs off. He turns to Reinhart:

HENCHMAN

They're coming.

Reinhart flicks the flashlight across the thicket, points it down the road.

Headlights FLICKER in the distance. Cotton and Stride ready their guns.

A black Mercedes, high beams on, pulls up the path leading to the mine entrance.

The Mercedes stops in front of the Chevy Blazer: its headlights illuminate the mine entrance--Juan-Juan and driver, his BODYGUARD, ride the front seat. The Henchman hops out of the Blazer.

Juan-Juan gets out of the Mercedes cursing in Spanish at Reinhart and the Henchman--they struggle to explain.

Cotton, looking alongside, realizes Stride has slipped away. Helicopters RASP overhead: Juan-Juan looks up--the chopper lights diminish in the distance.

Cotton searches for Stride. Inez and Karl hunched together--she slips away.

Stride sneaks toward the rear of the Mercedes.

Cotton, looking for Stride, keeps his concentration on the Mercedes--and the suitcase.

Juan-Juan, yelling at Reinhart and the Henchman:

JUAN-JUAN

You fuckups! Oh, did you fuck up this time!

REINHART

We have the money!

In the distance, miles away, munitions EXPLODE: the army is attacking something, perhaps Casa Pacifico, perhaps a random marijuana field.

Juan-Juan's Bodyguard looks around, gun in hand.

Karl can stand it no more: he dashes forward, yelling:

KARL
Reinhart! Reinhart!

Reinhart, panicking, pulls his weapon, SHOOTS blindly at the approaching silhouette.

Karl, hit in the upper shoulder by his son, staggers forward, FALLS. The Bodyguard whirls, fires blindly into the darkness.

Everything's up for grabs: Stride, stepping forward, shoots and KILLS Juan-Juan's Bodyguard.

Henchman #4 fires in the direction of Stride's pistol flare: Ben Stride, hit in the thigh, FALLS, his leg caught in the fork of a tree, his gun out of reach.

Cotton returns the Henchman's FIRE: the first bullet misses, the second takes to top of his head off.

Reinhart, distraught, bends over his father:

REINHART
Papa! Papa!

Juan-Juan picks up his Bodyguard's automatic, looks for Stride as Cotton, making a dash for the suitcase, catches his eye.

Stride, wounded leg wedged in the tree, reaches vainly for his gun: he is, at this critical moment, helpless.

Juan-Juan swivels, fires, HITS the suitcase. Cotton takes cover behind the Blazer's grill.

JUAN-JUAN
Cotton! You Judas!

Cotton calls from behind the Chevy:

COTTON
I ain't no Judas, Juan-Juan, and
you ain't Jesus Christ. You're
too fucking fat! You'd break the
goddamn cross!

Juan-Juan, seeing Stride trapped and prone, slouches

toward him. He raises his gun to kill Ben--Stride braces for the immanent retort.

A SHOT rings out: Juan-Juan, hit in the chest, staggers, COLLAPSES.

Inez, rifle in hand, having shot Juan-Juan, watches Juan-Juan fall.

Reinhart, trying to staunch his father's wound, embraces him.

Cotton, seizing the opportunity, hefts the heavy suitcase--using the flashlight as a guide, lugs it toward the camouflage 4x4.

Inez extricates Stride from the tree fork, helps him to his feet. They limp to the Chevy Blazer.

Reinhart, helping his father, joins them.

AT THE CAMOUFLAGE 4x4: Cotton shoves the suitcase into the front seat, jumps in.

He reaches to start the engine--there's no ignition key. Cotton thumps the dashboard.

Taking the flashlight and gun, Cotton retraces his footsteps.

There, at the mine entrance, he finds Stride, Inez, Karl and Reinhart. Stride, gun in one hand, leans on the Blazer for support.

COTTON

Sheriff, I'm gonna need that key.

STRIDE

What key?

COTTON

The key to the fucking truck.

(no reply)

C'mon, give it up.

STRIDE

I can't do that.

COTTON

What you gonna do?

STRIDE

Thought we'd head back to Nueva Ideal, heal up there.

COTTON

That's fine for you. But I ain't

walking out of here. Not carrying Superman's fucking suitcase, I'm not. Give me the key.

STRIDE

I can't do it.

COTTON

It ain't your money. It's my money. You don't even care about it.

STRIDE

Start walking. You'll be all right.

COTTON

I sort of figured it this way. Your play, Sheriff.

They face each other, guns at their sides: classic Western standoff.

Inez steps between them:

INEZ

He can't give it to you because he doesn't have it.

Inez takes the ignition key from her pocket, walks to Cotton, hands it to him.

INEZ

Take the money.

Cotton thanks her with a nod, pockets the keys.

Stride, his view of Cotton obscured by Inez, does nothing.

Cotton starts to leave, turns back:

COTTON

There's something I meant to tell you. I forgot. This was about six months ago. I was at a party at Juan-Juan's. Watching TV. This guy Craig comes on, the micro-chip billionaire. I says to someone, now there's guy you should kidnap instead of those losers you waste your time on.

(beat)

So I guess I set it all in motion. I apologize for that, Sheriff.

STRIDE

You've been waiting to shoot me.
Now's your chance.

COTTON

I changed my mind.

STRIDE

A man can do that.

COTTON

How about you?

STRIDE

See you around, Cotton.

Inez returns to Ben's side. Cotton walks toward the truck, says to Stride as he goes:

COTTON

I doubt it.

(looks back)

Sheriff, you get back to El
Cajon, a month or two, check your
bank account. I think I owe you
something.

Cotton disappears into the darkness.

Inez helps Stride into the Blazer where Karl and Reinhart wait.

THE END