

THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA
LOS TRES ENTIERROS DE MELQUIADES ESTADA

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1 EXT. ROAD, FAR WEST TEXAS -- MORNING

1

A jeep slowly drives down the dirt road. It is early and the sun is just rising on the beautifully stark, strangely delicate mountains and arroyos of the northern Chihuahuan Desert. Two hunters, in camouflage, are in the jeep. They are Jim and Chuck.

Jim stops the vehicle and Chuck very slowly scans the expansive countryside with his binoculars. It is very quiet out here. Jim, a wealthy and well appointed dentist from Dallas, is doing a good job of acting like he's at home. Chuck is his stock broker.

JIM

Where's all the mule deer at, Primo?

CHUCK

I don't know...looks like they all showed up gone.

2 EXT. ROAD, WEST TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS

2

The jeep drives on through the rough terrain. Chuck suddenly taps Jim on the shoulder.

CHUCK

Stop, stop.

Jim stops the jeep. Chuck picks up his binoculars, peers into the distance, and whispers to Jim.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

There's some coyotes over there, hopping around.

He points at a rocky slope.

JIM

What are they doing?

CHUCK

Hell, I don't know, looks like they're eating something. I guess. Hell, I don't know what they are doing.

3 DESERT -- CONTINUOUS

3

Three coyotes devour something undistinguishable in the distance.

4 INT. JEEP -- CONTINUOUS

4

CHUCK

(Quietly)

Wanna shoot a coyote?

Jim turns and from the back of the jeep, pulls out a Sako Classic 243 rifle with a 3-12X Zeiss scope. He is a meticulous marksman and takes his time in setting up the shot. We hear a bird singing softly somewhere in the brush and then the deafening crack of the rifle. Chuck checks through the binoculars. Jim checks through the scope.

JIM

He's a dead son of a bitch.

CHUCK

Good shot.

5 EXT. ROCKY HILL -- MOMENTS LATER

5

The two hunters walk up to a bloody dead coyote. Jim kneels on one knee to look at it and sees something between its jaws. He leans closer to inspect it.

JIM

Fuck...

He pulls back, horrified, and turns to Chuck.

JIM (CONT'D)

It's a hand.

Chuck kneels next to him. Some chewed up fingers can be seen between the coyote's teeth.

JIM (CONT'D)

It's a...human fucking hand...

Chuck pries the jaws open, removes the hand with horror, and lets it fall on the dusty ground. They both immediately rise to their feet.

CHUCK

God Almighty...

JIM

What the hell...

Jim looks around and spots a small mound dug up by the coyotes a few feet away. He points Chuck toward it and they walk over.

They squat down and start scraping the dirt with their hands. They uncover a human face almost at the surface. Chuck tries to stand up and back away at the same time and falls on his ass. Jim vomits.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK

THE FIRST BURIAL OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA

EL ENTIERRO PRIMERO DE MELQUIADES ESTRADA

6 EXT. MOBILE HOME SALES LOT - OUTSKIRTS OF ODESSA, TEXAS -- 6
MORNING

Hundreds of multicolored flags wave at the lot's entrance, where endless mobile homes are lined up. Large billboards advertise simple finance and easy down payments.

A 1991 Toyota with Ohio plates is parked in front of an office built of "prefabricated materials". Outside there is a sign that says "Sales Office".

Mike Norton (32) - tall, strong, white skinned and blond, wearing beige cargo pants and a green shirt - walks out of the office with his wife: Lou Ann (28), a blonde in a white shirt and blue shorts.

A salesman walks with them toward one of the houses.

SALESMAN

Who's gonna win the game?

MIKE

What game?

SALESMAN

Spurs-Mavericks, man. You're not a basketball fan?

MIKE

No.

LOU ANN

Mavericks.

They enter one of the uncounted mobile homes.

7 EXT. DESERT - ROCKY HILL - DAY 7

Someone is frantically digging a hole in rocky soil with a short handled trenching-tool shovel. He wears a green uniform but his face is unseen.

8 INT. MOBILE HOME - DAY 8

The mobile home is furnished with sofas upholstered in scarlet velvet and a pale pink, synthetic carpet.

The salesman starts his pitch as he comes through the door.

SALESMAN

This beauty has two bedrooms, each one with its own bathroom, central AC and heat throughout and all of our homes are standard equipped with electric oven, washer, dryer and dishwasher. Your Waste King garbage disposal is optional, of course.

Lou Ann opens and closes the pantry doors. Mike makes his way to a window.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)

But it's a good option because we charge a wholesale factory price on it with no installation fee and its top of the line equipment. We're strictly top of the line.

Mike is staring out the window.

9 EXT. DESERT - ROCKY HILL - DAY 9

A dead body is dragged into a shallow hole in the rocky soil by the man wearing a green uniform. We cannot see their faces.

10 INT. MOBILE HOME WINDOW - MIKE - CITY AND DESERT -- 10
CONTINUOUS

Mike contemplates Odessa and the desert stretching away.

SALESMAN (O.S.)

Strictly top of the line all the time. That's our motto.

11 EXT. DESERT - ROCKY HILL - DAY 11

A dead Mexican, Melquiades Estrada, is lying in a shallow hole in the rocky soil. Dirt and rocks are being thrown in the hole to cover him up. The dirt obscures his handsome, dead face.

12 INT. MOBILE HOME -- CONTINUOUS 12

The salesman has run out of things to say. Mike turns away from the window and turns to him.

MIKE

How much does this house cost?

SALESMAN

Thirty thousand dollars, but if you are really interested, I can get you a ten percent discount... I think.

Lou Ann and Mike look at each other without saying a word.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)

Where y'all from?

LOU ANN

Cincinnati...

SALESMAN

Long way from home, huh?

(To Mike)

And what line of work brings you to Texas?

MIKE
The Border Patrol.

With a convivial smile.

MIKE (CONT'D)
We're always a long way from home.

SALESMAN
Alright. Well...This mobile residence actually has the highest resale value of any domestic residence in its price range, in the Southwest time and time again...

13 EXT. CORRALS, W.D. RANCH -- MORNING

13

Pete Perkins (55) - a cowboy on horseback, his face wrinkled by long days in the sun, large hands, is in a corral separating calves from mother cows. Behind him, the sunrise is glorious and empty of any other human occupation.

He is aided by Steve (22), Neil (34), and Agustín (19) - a skinny Mexican boy.

The calves buck, kick, run and dodge away from the mounted cowboys who are trying to move them into a smaller corral.

Steve makes some very quick cuts to prevent the calves from escaping. Pete gives the orders.

PETE
Good cut son, now get your hand out of that horses mouth...No pushes a los becerros...Ten cuidado, cabrón.

Agustín and Steve nod their assent and slow their horses down. In the distance we can see a dust cloud. Steve whistles at Pete and points at an approaching tan pickup.

Pete turns to Agustín.

PETE (CONT'D)
Agustín, escóndete allá. [*Agustín, hide yourself over there.*]

Agustín jumps off his horse, then over the fence and trots toward a thicket. *

The calves scatter around the distracted cowboys and run back to their mothers, thereby wrecking the cowboys' work.

The pickup approaches: it is a police vehicle from the Culberson Co. Sheriff Department and it stops in front of the corrals.

Pete opens a small gate, still horseback, and rides toward the tan pickup. Belmont (50) gets out - a sheriff dressed in a brown uniform, who looks like someone who has seen too much in life and doesn't want to see it anymore.

BELMONT

Mornin'.

EVERYONE

Mornin'.

Pete stops his horse in front of Belmont and greets him with a nod.

PETE

Hello Belmont.

BELMONT

Howdy Pete.

The other two cowboys come near and sit quietly on their horses. Belmont, uncomfortable, seems at a loss for words. He points to the cattle.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

How many calves y'all have this year?

PETE

'Bout five hundred and seventy one.

Now Belmont looks at the sky.

BELMONT

It won't be long before we get a freeze.

PETE

I'd rather not have one.

Belmont looks at the ground and then looks him in the eye.

BELMONT

Pete, I think they found your Mexican friend.

PETE

Where at?

Steve decides to add his two bits.

STEVE

What beer joint they find him in?

Belmont doesn't smile; he looks at Pete seriously.

BELMONT

I need you to come with me.

PETE

Why?

BELMONT

I'll tell you on the way.

Pete, dismounts, gives the reins of his horse to Steve and opens the door of the Sheriff's pickup to get in. Belmont points to the brush where Agustín is hiding.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

(To Steve and Neil)

Tell him he can come out of there, I ain't the Border Patrol...

They get in the pickup and drive off.

14 INT. VAN HORN DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

14

Pete is looking at the dead body of Melquiades Estrada (36). There is still some dirt on his face.

Next to Pete are Belmont and Antonio, the sheriff's deputy.

PETE

When'd they find him?

BELMONT

This morning. He was buried on a hill on the side of Borracho Peak.

Belmont covers Melquiades' face with the sheet. Pete can barely control his pain.

PETE

Who killed him?

BELMONT

We don't have a fucking clue.

(a beat)

Do you know if he was involved with drugs... or smuggling... or anything like that?

PETE

Melquiades: no.

15 EXT. VAN HORN DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- MORNING

15

Pete comes out of the office and stands in the parking lot. He pulls out an unfiltered cigarette, lights it and exhales the smoke as he looks at Interstate 10 stretching across the landscape with an endless flow of trailers and cars. He coughs.

16 INT. W.D. RANCH - BARN -- LATE AFTERNOON

16

Pete, Steve, Neil, and Agustín are sitting in the enormous W.D. barn drinking beer at the end of a work day. Melquiades slowly appears in the wide barn doorway mounted on a skinny Mexican cow horse. His clothes are ragged and he is trail worn, sleepless, and completely exhausted.

STEVE

Well, lookie here.

MELQUIADES

Si no es molestia, creo que mi caballo necesita agua. *[If its no trouble, I think my horse needs water.]*

PETE

De donde vienes? *[Where'd you come from?]*

MELQUIADES

De Coahuila. *[From Coahuila.]*

PETE

Que estás haciendo aquí en Texas, hombre? *[What are you doing here in Texas, man?]*

MELQUIADES

Buscando trabajo. *[Looking for work.]*

PETE

Que clase de trabajo? *[What kind of work?]*

MELQUIADES

Soy vaquero nomás. *[I'm a cowboy and nothing else.]*

17 EXT. VAN HORN DOCTORS'S OFFICE -- MORNING

17

Belmont comes out of the office and joins Pete in the parking lot.

BELMONT

Can I bum a cigarette?

Pete offers it. Belmont takes one, lights it and takes a long drag. He reaches in one of his jacket pockets, takes out a plastic bag with some objects in it and shows it to Pete.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

Here's the stuff your friend had on him.

Pete takes the bag and opens it. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, wet and in tatters, and leaves it on the hood - then a Polaroid photograph.

He looks at it: under a tree is a thin woman with two girls, ten and eight years old, and a six year-old boy. Melquiades is further off, looking at the group from a distance.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

Do you know who they are?

PETE

His wife and kids.

BELMONT

Do you know how to reach them?

PETE

They live in Mexico.

He looks at the photograph for a moment and turns to Belmont.

PETE (CONT'D)

Can I keep this?

Belmont hesitates.

BELMONT

Yeah. Until I need it back. We gone havta to do a artopsy.

Pete nods and puts the photograph in his shirt pocket.

PETE

When you're through, I want you to give Melquiades to me.

BELMONT

Hell, I can't do that; are you crazy?

PETE

No. I'm not.

18 INT. PETE'S HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- NIGHT

18

The house is fairly humble: a room with a single bed, a pinewood table, four chairs, plastic kitchenware, a small refrigerator and a gas oven with two nob's.

The house has no decoration, not a picture, not a sign of anything.

Pete is sitting at the table, his gaze lost as he smokes an unfiltered cigarette.

19 EXT. W.D. RANGELAND -- MORNING

19

Pete, Steve, Neil, Agustín, and Melquiades are quietly moving 200 mother cows, each one with a calf at her side, through the sunrise. The cattle, the horses, and the cowboys are all at peace and Melquiades seems, somehow, to be at home. There is a knock at Pete's door.

20 INT. PETE'S HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- NIGHT

20

Pete is still sitting at the table, smoking his cigarette.

PETE

Come on in.

Steve opens the door and steps inside.

STEVE

Evenin'.

PETE

Hey.

Steve hands him a package wrapped in waxed paper.

STEVE

I brought you some jerky.

Steve puts the package on the table and stands there watching Pete smoke for a moment.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I'm real sorry about Mel.

PETE

So am I.

STEVE

You've been cooped up for two days;
you need to get outside for a while.

PETE

What's that to you?

Steve keeps quiet. He takes two spent 7mm Remington shells out of his shirt pocket.

STEVE

I found these shells out there where
we found Mel's goats on the loose...
maybe they have something to do...
with things...

Pete picks up the shells and examines them, holding them up to the light.

Steve stands around for a few seconds, then goes back out the door.

21 EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK - OUTSKIRTS OF VAN HORN, TX -- SUNSET 21

Establishing shot of the place. There are around twelve mobile homes, all of them with satellite dishes. A crimson sunset radiates the infinite sky.

22 INT. MIKE'S MOBILE HOME - OUTSKIRTS OF VAN HORN, TX -- 22
CONTINUOUS

Mike watches TV in the living room. The scarlet velvet sofas and pale pink carpet have been augmented with a tan plaid Eze-Recliner in which Mike reclines. Moving boxes are piled into a corner.

Lou Ann makes dinner in the kitchen while she watches a soap opera on another small TV set on a shelf.

Mike watches a gameshow, hosted by a fat man in a tuxedo, assisted by cutsie girls dressed like Santa Claus in red shorts. The noise of the televisions commingle.

Mike's program goes to commercial and he turns to Lou Ann.

MIKE

Lou Ann, what's for dinner?

Lou Ann answers from the kitchen.

LOU ANN

Stuffed zucchini and broccoli.

MIKE

That's it?

LOU ANN

I'm on a diet.

Mike gets up and goes to the kitchen.

MIKE

You're not fat.

LOU ANN

Yes I am...a little bit.

MIKE

No way. You're a red hot mamma.

He tries to grab her and she pulls away.

LOU ANN

Stop it...

Mike grabs her ass, puts his hands inside her shorts and pulls them down to her mid-thigh then bends her lightly over the counter.

He unzips his fly. Pulls out his dick and penetrates her. He starts fucking her quickly, doggie style. She doesn't seem to enjoy it very much.

Mike is done in way less than a minute. He pulls away from Lou Ann and zips up his fly. He gives her a small kiss and a pat on the butt and goes back to sit in front of the TV, while she remains half naked, leaning on the counter.

On Mike's TV, the host announces the return of the ridiculous gameshow.

GAMESHOW HOST

You're on "Ready, Aim, Fire", where everybody has fun and you are the one who wins.

The host smiles and the girls perform a silly dance to inane music while Lou Ann's TV provides a background of melodramatic soap opera dialogue punctuated by weeping from the actress on TV. Lou Ann is left peering at her TV screen.

23 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE

23

A DOCTOR (56), dressed in jeans, cowboy boots and a white lab coat, is standing reading a report to Belmont.

DOCTOR

The deceased died from a gunshot wound of an expansive, 7 mm bullet. It entered two inches right of the sternum, between the fourth and fifth ribs. The impact caused the lung to burst and severe hemorrhaging. It took him fifteen to twenty minutes to die. I would estimate he died seven days ago. The bullet's trajectory indicates that the shot came from three hundred yards away.

He finishes reading and looks up at the sheriff.

BELMONT

He was gunned down.

DOCTOR

Listen bud, we need to bury him now. The refrigeration's broke down in this dump and I've got to be back in El Paso tomorrow morning.

BELMONT

Ok, bury him.

DOCTOR

You need to notify his relatives.

BELMONT

He ain't got none.

24 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO, W.D. RANCH -- MORNING

24

Pete's 1987 Ford pickup is parked on a rough, remote ranch road. Pete and Steve are standing in the middle of the road fifty yards away. Pete looks out toward the desert stretching out into immensity, as if doing so would help him understand what happened to Melquiades.

PETE

Where just exactly was them shells at?

Steve points to a clearing and a large flat rock.

STEVE

Right over there.

PETE

Is over yonder where his goats were at?

Steve nods. Pete looks around again. Finally, under a bush, he spots a styrofoam cup and picks it up. He looks at it. On one side it says: Café Loco, Bar & Cafeteria, Van Horn, Texas.

25 INT. MIKE'S TRUCK, ARROYO VIEJO -- DAY

25

Mike is sitting in his truck, vigilant. He drinks from a styrofoam cup from Cafe Loco. Every now and then we hear voices from his radio.

Mike seems bored. He picks up a copy of Hustler magazine from the passenger seat and leafs through it: big tits, big asses.

Mike looks through the windshield. A hawk flies across the grasslands and Mike follows it with his eyes. He picks up the radio and then puts the radio down and slurps from his coffee. Nothing is happening. Suddenly we hear the radio.

VOICE

Miller reporting. I have a group of approximately fifteen individuals crossing la Brecha de la Loma Negra about half a mile from me. Over.

26 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- MOMENTS LATER

26

Mike and Kruger, a young border patrolman, are the first to arrive. They find Miller, another young patrolman, standing

behind the bed of his pick-up looking through a pair of binoculars.

MIKE

Where are they?

Miller signals to a point on the horizon. Mike looks through his own binoculars.

27 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 27

The suspects snake through the brush near some hills.

28 EXT. ROAD, DESERT -- MOMENTS LATER 28

The three trucks tear down the road. The wetbacks start running in different directions.

Mike's truck goes off road chasing a group of three men and two women running away.

Mike gets close enough and slams on the brakes. He gets out running.

MIKE

Stop...stop... halt...alto,
goddamit...

A woman and two men stop. Mike catches up to them.

MIKE (CONT'D)

On the ground... on the ground...

They comply while the other woman and man continue running.

Kruger catches up and Mike points to the illegals on the ground.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You take care of them, I'll get the
others.

Mike runs after the fleeing man and woman. Reynolds (55), a Border Patrol Captain, a tall, strong man whose right cheek is crossed by a thin scar, arrives in his truck and gets out to see what is happening.

Mike chases after the fugitives. He catches up to the man (25) and trips him. The man falls violently. Mike lays into him, kicking him before he tries to run again.

Mariana (21), a thin, beautiful girl, stops and runs back to help her friend.

MARIANA

José... José...

Mike punches her in the face and knocks her down.

MIKE

Where do you think you're going,
bitch?

Reynolds runs up and grabs Mike around the shoulders from behind.

REYNOLDS

Easy... easy...

Mariana lies among the cactus, with her nose broken and face bloodied, while Reynolds drags Mike away.

29 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- LATER

29

Twelve illegal aliens are handcuffed with their heads tilted down. Everyone is standing except Mariana who sits on a small rock covering her bloody nose with a rag.

The twelve are surrounded by seven Border Patrol vehicles. Reynolds is in the center. Mike watches the prisoners closely.

REYNOLDS

How many got away?

MILLER

Three.

REYNOLDS

Well, somebody's got to pick
strawberries.

A truck arrives and Kruger loads the docile illegals onto the vehicle.

Reynolds walks over to Mike.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

You were way overboard there, boy...

MIKE

No, sir. Fuck it...they were trying
to get away.

Reynolds moves off toward his patrol car.

30 INT. CAFE LOCO -- MORNING

30

At the edge of the I-10, in Van Horn, there is an old 50's diner. It is decorated with cheap reproductions of sea paintings, a dusty, broken stuffed mule deer's head and old black and white photographs of the surroundings. Across one wall, there is a crude mural depicting a giant, blond haired Christ with arms wide open blessing the I-10 Interstate Highway and the railroad and the surrounding mountains.

The tables are covered in a sun-worn red plastic material.

There are very few patrons: a pair of truck drivers, three old ladies, Belmont, seated alone, dressed in his sheriff's uniform, and Lou Ann, seated by herself at a corner table with a magazine and a cup of coffee.

Belmont is having breakfast alone, in silence, as he observes Rachel (42), the waitress, who looks like she has been working in this place for one thousand years.

She is beautiful in a somewhat unorthodox way: an imperfect body full of perfection, tired eyes, an unbalanced gait.

Rachel goes from one table to the next, serving coffee. She stops in front of Belmont's table.

RACHEL

Need a warm up on that coffee?

Belmont assents. She serves it and he caresses the back of her hand with his index finger. She gets very nervous and spills some of the coffee. She looks toward the kitchen from where Bob (46), the cook, her husband, observes them.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Bob's watching us.

Belmont moves his hand away and looks her in the eyes.

BELMONT

(Endearing)

It's been a while since we've had some time together...you dirty bitch.

She smiles at him. She turns toward the kitchen again. Bob fixes his eyes on her for a few seconds and then goes on with his work. Lou Ann is quietly observing everything.

Through the window we can see Pete's truck pull up and park in front of the coffee shop.

RACHEL

(Quietly)

I can see you tomorrow.

One of the old ladies calls Rachel over.

OLD LADY

Miss.

Rachel turns toward her.

RACHEL

Just a second...

Belmont discretely strokes her thigh. Through the window we see Pete get out of the truck and head for the entrance.

BELMONT

Same place?

RACHEL

Same place.

She turns and walks over to the old women's table. Pete walks into the diner, walks by Rachel, exchanging a glance, and goes on his way to Belmont's table and sits down.

BELMONT

What do you want?

PETE

I want to talk to you.

Belmont forks a bite of omelette into his mouth. Pete takes out the shells and a styrofoam cup and puts them on the table.

PETE (CONT'D)

We found this stuff where we found Melquiades' goats.

Belmont doesn't even look at the evidence and keeps eating his breakfast.

PETE (CONT'D)

Don't you want to look at it?

BELMONT

I'm having breakfast right now. You can see me during working hours.

PETE

It might be some kind of proof.

Belmont looks disdainfully at the styrofoam cup and the cartridges.

BELMONT

I don't need to look at this shit.

Belmont gives his cup of coffee a last slurp.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

You know what "chain of evidence" is?

PETE

No.

BELMONT

Well, this one's broke, dumb ass.
(MORE)

BELMONT (CONT'D)

How many 7mm shells do you think are layin' out there? Hell, some of them might not even have your fingerprints on 'em. This shit won't mean shit in a court of law just because you found it layin' under a bush. We got a legal system to think about.

Lou Ann is still quietly observing everything.

31 INT. KITCHEN, MIKE'S MOBILE HOME -- MORNING

31

Mike in uniform and Lou Ann in a robe have breakfast at the small kitchen table. He drinks his coffee quietly. She laughs every now and then at the cartoon characters she watches on her portable television on the kitchen counter.

Mike finishes his coffee and leaves the styrofoam cup on the table.

MIKE

I've gotta go...

He gets up and walks toward the door. She follows him.

32 EXT. MIKE'S MOBILE HOME -- CONTINUOUS

32

Mike goes down the steps.

MIKE

See you tonight.

LOU ANN

Come back early. I get real bored here.

Mike notices an obese woman walking a horrible Pekinese dog around.

MIKE

Haven't you made friends with the neighbors?

Lou Ann makes an "are you kidding" face and shakes her head.

LOU ANN

No, I don't like them.

Mike walks toward his Border Patrol truck, she walks behind him.

MIKE

I'm gonna buy you a Nintendo so you don't get so bored.

She nods in agreement, pensive.

LOU ANN

Ok and take me to the K-Mart in Odessa
this Saturday.

MIKE

OK baby. Find out where it is.

He gets in the car and leaves. Lou Ann watches him leave. The obese woman stops walking her slobbering Pekinese dog and takes in the sight of Lou Ann, an only slightly fragile girl, standing in front of an almost new mobile home sending her husband off to work.

33 INT. CAFE LOCO -- DAY

33

Lou Ann is the only customer. She sits with her coffee and a magazine looking out the window at the sparse traffic on the street. A radio is playing a country song. Bob is watching her from the kitchen. Rachel is mopping the floor.

RACHEL

Hey Bob, how long we been married?

BOB

Uh...

Bob decides to studiously wipe his grill with a rag.

BOB (CONT'D)

...twelve...or...uh...

Bob stops wiping the grill and looks up into an overhead light.

BOB (CONT'D)

Hell, I don't know, what is it?

Rachel continues to push the mop. Lou Ann, fascinated, watches Rachel swirl the mop over the linoleum floor.

34 INT. SHERIFFS OFFICE - FLUORESCENT LIGHT

34

Belmont is sitting on the couch, naked, covering his genitals with a pillow. He looks defeated.

Beside him, naked, lies Rachel.

RACHEL

Don't worry. This happens to Bob
sometimes too.

BELMONT

It's the first time it's ever happened
to me.

RACHEL

Yeah, I know.

(A beat)

Viagra works for Bob.

BELMONT

I'll turn queer before I use that
shit.

Rachel looks at him maternally and rubs his knee.

RACHEL

Yeah, that's what Bob says.

35 P.O.V. MIRROR, PETE'S TRUCK -- DARK LATE AFTERNOON

35

The wind is blowing like hell and a sand storm is in full cry. Through the rearview mirror we can see the "Cafe Loco". Several Border Patrol vehicles are parked in front.

The camera pulls back and we discover that Pete is keeping watch. He looks for a few more seconds, opens the door and gets out.

36 INT. CAFE LOCO -- MOMENTS LATER - HELLISH SANDSTORM OUTSIDE

36

Three Border Patrol officers are in line waiting for their coffee to go. In the line are two Mexican-looking boys who speak perfect English and chatter incessantly.

Pete gets in line behind the Border Patrolman and looks at the cups stacked on the counter: they are identical to the one he picked up in Arroyo Viejo.

Pete looks at the Border Patrolman in front of him for a few seconds then speaks to him.

PETE

What's your favorite rifle round?

PATROLMAN

What?

PETE

What kind of rifle do y'all shoot?
All y'all shoot the same round?

PATROLMAN

7mm Remington is standard. Why?

PETE

...just curious. I always use a 30-
30...

The officers take their coffee and leave. Pete watches them exit the cafe into the howling wind. The Mexican looking boys are now arguing about gasoline money in Spanish.

37 EXT. CAFE LOCO -- EARLY MORNING - BEAUTIFUL BRIGHT BLUE CALM 37
SPRING SUNRISE.

The doors to Cafe Loco open and Mike walks out alone holding a cup of coffee with the coffee shop's name on it.

He gets into his truck and leaves. Rachel is watching him from inside, through the plate glass window with the cafe's name painted on it.

38 INT. HIGHWAY, MIKE'S TRUCK -- MOMENTS LATER 38

Mike drives down the I-10. Speeding tractor-trailers, pickups and cars are strung out on the Interstate from horizon to horizon. When he reaches a certain point, Mike turns off the exit onto a dirt road.

39 EXT. ROAD, DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 39

The truck heads into the distant desert.

40 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO, W.D. RANCH -- LATER 40

The truck drives down the Arroyo Viejo road and parks behind the cliff where Pete found the cup.

41 INT. MIKE'S TRUCK, ARROYO VIEJO -- CONTINUOUS 41

Mike shuts off the motor. He sits back in the seat and looks out the front window at nothing. He looks out the right window at nothing then, after a moment, looks out the left window at more of the same. He turns his attention toward the Hustler magazine beside him on the seat of the truck.

42 EXT. MIKE'S TRUCK, ARROYO VIEJO -- CONTINUOUS 42

Mike gets out of the truck with his binoculars, his styrofoam cup of coffee and his Hustler magazine. He goes to sit on a large flat rock, setting his coffee cup and magazine to one side. He slowly scans the vast area around him with his binoculars: This is very boring work.

Mike languidly unbuckles his gun belt and places it to one side on the rock. He picks up the magazine and flicks through it to a preferred page as he unbuttons his trousers and drops them to his knees. He leans back on the rock and starts to masturbate. After a moment, we hear a startling gunshot from a 30.30 rifle.

43 EXT. ACROSS MIKE'S TRUCK, ARROYO VIEJO -- CONTINUOUS 43

Mike is desperately grabbing his gun belt, hiking up his britches, and hobbling back to the truck all at the same time.

We hear another shot. Mike crouches behind the truck, opens the door and pulls out his rifle. Then runs to take cover behind some rocks as he unsteadily takes aim.

He sees Melquiades in the brush surrounded by goats. Mike fires, then quickly rechambers his weapon.

He fires again and Melquiades collapses backwards. The goats scatter in every direction.

44 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO -- CONTINUOUS

44

As Mike rechambers the weapon the spent cartridge flips off into the dirt.

45 EXT. DESERT PLAIN -- CONTINUOUS

45

Melquiades is lying on the ground. We can see one of his legs and the legs of twenty goats through the brush.

46 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO -- CONTINUOUS

46

Mike tries to calm down. There is absolute silence but for the sound of a light wind and the occasional bleat of a goat.

47 EXT. DESERT PLAIN -- CONTINUOUS

47

Three hundred yards away Melquiades is lying on his side, a bullet hole in his chest, covered with blood, still alive, with blood bubbling in his mouth.

Mike walks up to him, lowers his rifle and tries not to vomit.

MIKE

Are you ok?

Melquiades tries to speak and cannot. He opens and closes his eyes. When he breathes we can hear a hoarse whistle.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Are you bueno?

Mike looks dizzy, confused, pale. Melquiades begins to breathe more quickly, closes his eyes and dies.

Mike looks around at his new world.

48 INT. CAFE LOCO -- AFTERNOON

48

Lou Ann is back at her corner table with her magazine and coffee and Virginia Slim. Rachel approaches the table with a refill.

LOU ANN

Thanks.

RACHEL

You're getting to be a regular customer around here.

LOU ANN

Well. I don't have a lot to do right now.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK

THE SECOND BURIAL OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA

EL ENTIERRO SEGUNDO DE MELQUIADES ESTRADA

FADE IN:

49 EXT. PUBLIC CEMETERY -- AFTERNOON

49

A red shovel hurls the last clumps of earth onto a cheap coffin. The camera pulls back and we discover Antonio supervising the gravedigger's work. Reynolds and Norton stand nearby.

The cemetery is on the edge of town, bordering on the desert. It is a modest place, with some unkempt graves.

The gravediggers finish their work and turn to Antonio.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

How do we register him?

Antonio remains pensive for a while.

ANTONIO

Write down Melquiades.

GRAVEDIGGER 2

Melquiades what?

Antonio shrugs his shoulders.

GRAVEDIGGER 1

Where was he from?

ANTONIO

Mexico, maybe Coahuila.

Gravedigger 1 pulls a marker out of his pocket and on a piece of cardboard writes: "Melquiades-Mexico" and sets it at the head of the grave.

Antonio and the gravediggers stand looking at the grave and listening to the wind. Reynolds and Norton turn and walk away.

50 EXT. HILLS, W.D RANCH -- AFTERNOON

50

Pete and Melquiades move a hundred cattle through the hills. The cattle move slowly, kicking up a dust cloud behind them.

Some cattle try to stop and graze, but Pete and Melquiades keep them moving- they are very good cowboys.

51 EXT. HILLS, W.D RANCH -- LATER

51

Pete and Melquiades sit resting in the shade of a tree. The cattle graze further away drinking water at a tank and the horses are tied to a mesquite tree behind them.

Pete is looking at the photograph of Melquiades' family. Melquiades points at the girls in the photograph. His eyes shine in his tanned face.

MELQUIADES

La más grande es Lizbeth, que orita debe tener catorce y la otra es Yesenia, que debe andar por los doce. [The eldest is Lizbeth, who must be fourteen by now, and the other one is Yesenia, who must be around twelve.]

He points at the boy proudly.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

Y ése es mi muchacho: Aarón. Ese va a salir bien bueno pa la vaqueada. Y esa es Evelia, Evelia Camargo, mi mujer. [And that's my boy, Aarón. He's going to be an awful good cowboy. And this is Evelia, Evelia Camargo, my wife.]

PETE

¿Hace cuánto que no los ves? [How long has it been since you've seen them?]

MELQUIADES

Como unos cinco años... [About five years.]

Melquiades grows sad. He looks over at the horizon. The cows graze and drink twitching their tails.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

Prométeme una cosa, Pedro. Que si me llego a morir acá me lleves con mi familia y me entierras en mi pueblo. No quiero quedarme enterrado de este lado entre tanto pinche billboard.

(MORE)

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

[Promise me something Pedro. That if I die, you'll take me back to my family and bury me in my town. I don't want to stay buried on this side with the fucking billboards]

Pete laughs.

PETE

Primero me muero yo, estoy más viejo.
[I'll die first, I'm older.]

Melquiades looks him in the eyes.

MELQUIADES

Prométemelo. [Promise.]

Pete thinks for a few seconds.

PETE

Ok, te lo prometo [Ok, I promise].

Melquiades pulls out a pen, tears a corner of a discarded feed sack and starts drawing a map as he explains.

MELQUIADES

Aquí estamos ¿no? Bueno, bajas por Ojinaga y te sigues rumbo al sur. Luego jalas pa el este y te vas bordeando la sierra hasta Coahuila. Llegas a un pueblo que se llama "El Tostón". A 20 kilómetros, entre "El Tostón" y "El Nacimiento" está una ranchería que se llama Jiménez. Ahí está mi casa y ahí preguntas por Evelia, mi mujer, y a ella le explicas. [We're here, right? So you go down Ojinaga and keep heading south. Then you turn east and follow the sierra till you reach Coahuila. Then you'll reach a town called "El Tostón". Twenty kilometers away, between "El Tostón" and "El Nacimiento" is a ranch called Jiménez. My house is there. Ask for Evelia, my wife, and explain.]

He points at the woman in the picture.

PETE

Mejor te aviento por ahí [Better I throw you away somewhere around here.]

MELQUIADES

(Seriously)

Me regresas a Jiménez pinche Pedro,
me lo prometiste. [You take me back
to Jiménez Pedro, you promised.]

Pete takes the map and puts it in his shirt pocket. Melquiades goes back to looking at the photograph of his family and then puts it away. Melquiades looks at the herd.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

Ya es hora de mover el ganado? [It
is time to move the herd now?]

PETE

Sí, ya [Yes, now]

They stand up and walk to their horses.

52 INT. VAN HORN SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- EVENING

52

Pete walks down the hallway and runs into Belmont at the water cooler.

PETE

Is this working hours?

Belmont looks him up and down.

BELMONT

We're about to close.

Belmont drinks the water down, crumples the cup and throws it in the garbage can.

PETE

You need to investigate them Border
Patrols. They use a 7mm.

BELMONT

You want me to investigate the Kennedy
assassination while I'm at it?

(A beat)

Before you start bitching, why don't
you find out what the little fucker
was involved with.

PETE

Melquiades wasn't involved with
nothing.

Belmont heads toward his office. Pete watches him walk away.
Belmont stops at the door frame.

BELMONT

By the way, we already buried him.

PETE

I told you to notify me...seems like you'd at least...notify me...

BELMONT

You're not his family. I don't have to notify you about a goddamn thing. He was a wetback.

53 EXT. CORRALS, W.D. RANCH -- DUSK

53

An enormous eighteen wheel cattle truck is parked at the loading chute, all running lights illuminated, and two more wait behind it. Pete, Neil, Steve and Agustín are loading calves on the trailer.

NEIL

Where's Melquiades?

PETE

I told him he could get here at noon.

NEIL

Noon, hell. It's seven seventeen.

They continue loading calves on the truck. Steve notices an approaching rider.

STEVE

Speak of the Devil.

Melquiades arrives riding on a beautiful strawberry roan. The cowboys stop working.

AGUSTIN

Ora tú ¿de dónde sacaste ese caballo?
[Where'd you get that horse?]

MELQUIADES

Ya ves, de por ahí. [You know, around.]

STEVE

Robado. [Stolen.]

Melquiades dismounts. Pete goes to see the animal.

PETE

Qué bonito animal, cabrón. ¿De verdad no te lo robaste? [That's a beautiful animal. Are you sure you didn't steal it?]

MELQUIADES

No hombre. Ahorré dos años para poder comprármelo. Se lo encargué al
(MORE)

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)
 ranhero de aquí al lado y me lo
 trajeron de Fort Worth. [*No, man. I
 saved up for two years to buy it. I
 asked the neighbors and they brought
 it from Fort Worth.*]

Pete rubs its neck. Melquiades offers him the reins.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)
 Quieres montarlo? [*Do you want to
 ride him?*]

54 EXT. PLAIN, TEXAS DESERT -- MOMENTS LATER

54

Pete rides the strawberry roan: it is lively, very athletic,
 fast. Melquiades has trouble keeping up on Pete's horse and
 decides to stop and watch him.

Pete makes a circle handling the horse and makes it walk
 forward, backward and to the sides.

MELQUIADES
 ¿Te gustó? [*Did you like it?*]

PETE
 Es el mejor caballo que he visto en
 mi vida. [*It's the best horse I've
 ever seen.*]

Melquiades remains pensive while Pete pats the panting horse.

MELQUIADES
 Pues si te gusta tanto te lo regalo.
 [*Well if you like it so much, you
 can have it.*]

Pete turns to look at him, smiling.

PETE
 Sí, como no. [*Yeah right.*]

MELQUIADES
 No de verdad, te lo regalo. [*No,
 really, I'm giving him to you.*]

PETE
 Pero es tuyo... [*But it's yours.*]

MELQUIADES
 No hombre, a veces uno trae cosas
 que uno cree que son de uno, pero
 son de otro. [*No man, sometimes you
 have things you think are yours, but
 they belong to someone else.*]

He points at the horse's hip.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

Mira, este cuaco ahí tiene marcado el nombre de "Pete"...es tuyo. [*Look, he's got the name "Pete" branded on him...he's yours!*]

Pete can't believe it.

PETE

No, te costó mucho dinero. [*No, this cost you a lot of money.*]

MELQUIADES

Cómo chingados no, es más, ya ni te bajas... [*Not a chance, he's yours, don't even get off!*]

Melquiades rides off on Pete's horse. Pete stares at him in wonderment.

55 INT. CAFE LOCO -- AFTERNOON

55

There are no customers. Lou Ann and Rachel are seated at the corner table, drinking coffee. Lou Ann's magazine is closed in front of her. They are both smoking mentholated Virginia Slims.

LOU ANN

Cincinatti's real pretty in the Springtime. There's lots of malls.

RACHEL

I bet you miss it.

LOU ANN

We're glad to be here. You know... where ever the job takes us.

RACHEL

But this is difernt.

LOU ANN

Yeah, we were both real popular in high school and... now it seems like we don't know anybody anymore.

RACHEL

Well, living out here takes some getting used to, I guess.

LOU ANN

Yeah, I guess it does...

RACHEL

It must seem... real difernt.

LOU ANN

Do you know where like... the K-Mart's
at in Odessa?

Rachel regards the lonely girl for a moment.

RACHEL

Sure. It's easy to find.

56 EXT. CORRALS, W.D. RANCH -- MORNING

56

Pete and Melquiades are roping calves to brand them. The branding irons are red hot in a fire.

Melquiades ropes a calf by the hind heels and drags it toward the fire. Steve takes the red hot iron and brands the calf, while Agustín castrates it and Neil injects it with three different vaccinations.

They finish and free the calf, which runs away toward the rest of the herd. The cowboys look exhausted. Covered in dust and sweat.

MELQUIADES

¿Cuántos faltan en la otra trampa?
[How many left?]

PETE

Ciento veinte. [A hundred and twenty.]

MELQUIADES

Carajo, son un chingo...y el patrón
¿cuándo llega de Houston? [Shit,
that's a lot... When does the big
boss man get in from Houston?]

PETE

El sábado por la tarde. [Saturday
afternoon.]

MELQUIADES

Pinche niñito de papi, dice que es
ranchero sólo porque le compraron
este rancho, pero ya quisiera verlo
aquí rompiéndose la madre. [Fucking
rich kid says he's a rancher just
'cause they bought him this ranch,
but I'd like the see him out here,
working his ass off.]

PETE

Estás de malas porque desde hace
rato la única mujer que has tenido
es ésta. [You've been in a bad mood
because this is the only woman you've
had in a while.]

He holds out his right hand and opens it. Steve laughs out loud. Melquiades smiles at the joke.

PETE (CONT'D)

Este sábado te invito a Odessa. [*Come to Odessa Saturday with me.*]

MELQUIADES

No hombre, si voy a Odessa me agarra la migra. *No man. If I go to Odessa, immigration's going to get me.*

Pete shakes a loop out with his rope.

PETE

No te pasa nada ¿o qué? ¿Te dan miedo las mujeres? [*It's fine. Or what? Are you afraid of women?*]

Melquiades is going to answer him, but Pete moves his horse quickly toward the calves and ropes one. Melquiades follows. Their work with horses, calves, and ropes is both immediate and timeless.

57 EXT. VAN HORN GAS STATION -- NOON

57

Melquiades is gassing up Pete's truck. He looks left and right, nervous about being in town. Lou Ann pulls into the station on the other side of the row of pumps. She gets out and begins to fuel her Toyota. They make eye contact. They continue pumping gas then accidentally make eye contact again.

58 EXT. SIERRA DIABLO MOBILE HOME PARK -- VAN HORN -- NIGHT

58

Mike's mobile home is located in a trailer park with a dozen other mobile homes like his.

Clothes hanging from clotheslines are lit by the moon. Some dogs sniff around the houses. In the distance, the town lights shine. Various satellite dishes face the sky.

Mike sits on the steps of his mobile home, drinking from a bottle of whiskey. He is worried.

Lou Ann comes out of the house and sits down next to him on the steps without saying a word.

Mike doesn't say anything either. His head hurts.

59 INT. PETE'S TRUCK -- DUSK

59

Pete drives while Melquiades, in the passenger seat, looks nervously out the window. Both are all dressed up in their Sunday best.

PETE

Tranquilo... [*Relax...*]

MELQUIADES

Es que la migra anda por todos lados.
[*The Border Patrol is everywhere.*]

PETE

Ya hombre, no pasa nada... [*It's fine, man, don't worry.*]

Through the windshield the city of Odessa can be seen between the neon signs and McDonalds golden arches.

60 EXT. ODESSA -- LATER

60

Pete parks on a street in Odessa.

61 INT. PETE'S TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS - DUSK

61

He opens the door. Melquiades looks at him, scared.

MELQUIADES

¿Adónde vas? [*Where are you going.*]

PETE

¿Adónde va a ser? Por las muchachas.
[*Where do you think? To get the girls.*]

Pete gets out and closes the door. Melquiades remains sitting in the truck, watching the passersby without fixing his gaze on any of them.

He lowers the windows, and a few feet away he sees a shop window with several stacked television sets.

He looks one way and then the other to be sure it's safe. He opens the door and gets out.

62 EXT. STREET, ODESSA -- CONTINUOUS - DUSK

62

He walks toward the shop window. All twenty Tvs are tuned to the same channel. We see red flowers, women in bikinis, and a silver car which Melquiades stares at in amazement.

A homeless wino crosses behind him oblivious to both him and the shop window. Suddenly Melquiades hears a voice from behind him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Can I see some photo ID, Sir?

Melquiades spins around, pale. It is Pete who has changed his voice as a joke, and who smiles at Melquiades' frightened face. He is with two women: Mike Norton's wife, Lou Ann, and Rachel, the waitress.

PETE

(To the women)

Girls, I'd like you to meet
Melquiades. Te presento a Rachel and
uh.... [*This is Rachel and uh....*]

LOU ANN

Lou Ann.

Melquiades, a little embarrassed, holds out his hand to Lou Ann.

MELQUIADES

(In very bad English)

Nais tu mit chu.

Melquiades blushes. Lou Ann modestly shakes his hand.

RACHEL

You work with Pete, right?

Melquiades doesn't understand and smiles in response.

PETE

Listo, vámonos. [*Ok, let's go.*]

They go toward the truck, ladies first. Melquiades discretely walks up to Pete and signals to Rachel with his chin.

MELQUIADES

Es la esposa de Bob, el de la
cafetería ¿verdad? [*That's Bob's
wife, right? The one from the diner?*]

PETE

Brujo. [*You're a genius*]

MELQUIADES

Pero es casada. [*But she's married.*]

PETE

...y la otra también [*so's the other
one.*]

MELQUIADES

Ay chingados [*Shit*]

Pete smiles and opens the doors to the truck.

63 INT. PETE'S TRUCK -- DARKENING LIGHT

63

Pete is at the wheel. Next to him, Rachel, Lou Ann in the middle, and Melquiades on the end. Melquiades and Lou Ann are ill at ease. Pete checks his rearview mirror.

64 P.O.V. MIRROR, PETE'S TRUCK -- BRIGHT DAY

64

Instead of the street, we see the graveyard.

The camera turns and we discover a melancholy Pete looking at the landscape of headstones and desert. He opens the door and gets out. The wind is up.

65 EXT. MUNICIPAL CEMETERY -- MOMENTS LATER -- BRIGHT DAY

65

Pete is standing next to the piece of card indicating that Melquiades is buried there. The card flaps in the wind.

66 EXT. HALLWAY, HIGHWAY MOTEL -- LAST LIGHT

66

Pete and Rachel hold each other as they walk down the hallway of a cheap motel. Pete has his hand on Rachel's ass. Behind them, slightly separate and silent, walk Lou Ann and Melquiades.

Pete looks up at the doors and sees room number eight. He takes out a key, opens the door and points out the next room to Lou Ann.

PETE

That one there is yours.

Lou Ann nods. Pete speaks to Melquiades.

PETE (CONT'D)

Nos vemos en tres horas. [*See you in three hours.*]

Rachel seems to have understood what Pete said.

RACHEL

No, no. I've got to be back in two hours

(to Melquiades)

Sólo una hora. [*Just one hour.*]

With her index finger she makes the number one and walks in the room. Before entering Pete shows Melquiades three fingers as he closes the door.

67 INT. ROOM, HIGHWAY MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER

67

Melquiades and Lou Ann are sitting on the edge of the bed, without talking or touching. Lou Ann points at the TV.

LOU ANN

Do you want to watch TV?

Melquiades shrugs his shoulders: he can't understand. Lou Ann points at the box and at the same time brings her index finger to her eyes.

LOU ANN (CONT'D)
 Watch television. Want to? Telly-
 vissey-own?

Melquiades understands and nods. Lou Ann turns on the TV with a remote control lying on the nightstand. A porno movie appears.

Lou Ann quickly changes the channel: more porn. Another channel: more porn.

LOU ANN (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry.

She turns it off and points at a clock/radio lying on one of the nightstands, which is blinking a red 12.

LOU ANN (CONT'D)
 Music? Moo seeka?

MELQUIADES
 ¿Música? Ok.

She turns the radio on and switches over to a rhythmic, eighties song.

LOU ANN
 Wanna dance?

Melquiades doesn't understand. She takes him by the hand, pulls him toward her and starts to sway to the rhythm with her hands around his waist.

68 EXT. MIKE'S CAR ODESSA -- BRIGHT DAYLIGHT

68

Mike's Toyota drives around Odessa's streets.

69 INT. MIKE'S CAR -- DAY

69

Mike is driving almost automatically, looking dead ahead and burdened with incommunicable shame. Next to him, Lou Ann has a map on her lap.

LOU ANN
 I think we drove past it. It was the
 other street, back there, uh...

MIKE
 Which one?

LOU ANN
 Uh...Castle Heights Avenue.

Mike pulls off at a place called Bob's Kwiksak. He picks up the map and looks at it.

MIKE

The K-mart is in the exact...
opposite... direction.

He opens the door, gets out of the car and leans back against the fender. His eyes are hurting.

70 INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

70

Lou Ann and Melquiades lie naked on the bed. It has been a comforting hour or three. She kisses him delicately on the lips.

71 EXT. MIKE'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS - DAY

71

Mike slowly rubs his eyes with the fingers of his right hand, then reaches into his jacket and pulls out a pack of cigarettes and gets ready to smoke one.

Lou Ann gets out of the car and looks at him.

LOU ANN

You don't smoke anymore.

Mike lights the cigarette and gives it a drag.

LOU ANN (CONT'D)

It's not good for you.

Mike takes another puff and looks at the suburban wasteland.

LOU ANN (CONT'D)

Are you feeling ok?

MIKE

I'm tired.

LOU ANN

We don't have to go to the K-Mart if you don't want to, sugar.

MIKE

No, let's go.

He flicks the cigarette away and gets back in the car.

72 EXT. K-MART -- LATER

72

They park in K-Mart's enormous parking lot.

73 INT. MIKE'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

73

Lou Ann opens the door to get out. She sees Mike settle back in his seat.

LOU ANN

You're not coming?

MIKE
No, I'll wait here.

LOU ANN
You've always liked the K-Mart.

MIKE
I'll wait.

LOU ANN
But I don't want to be in a hurry.
I want to shop.

MIKE
I'll wait for you here.

Lou Ann quickly checks her lipstick in the rearview mirror.

LOU ANN
Don't smoke.

Mike shakes his head. Lou Ann gets out and closes the door. Mike watches her walk away through the rows of cars and the crowd of people milling about the entrance. He rubs his eyes again.

74 EXT. DESERT - MORNING - MELQUIADES DYING FACE

74

MIKE (O.S.)
Hey, man - are you bueno? Oh, shit.
Don't die. God damn.

Mike applies mouth to mouth resuscitation to Melquiades' mouth to no avail.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Oh, shit. Come on, man!

Mike applies more mouth to mouth resuscitation. Melquiades is clearly dead. Mike shakes Mel's shoulders.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Come on, man. What's wrong with you?

Melquiades is still dead. Mike shakes him some more and starts to weep.

MIKE (CONT'D)
God damn! What's the deal here?
You sonofabitch.

Mike socks Mel's body in the shoulder, begins sobbing and looking around at his new world again.

75 EXT. K-MART PARKING LOT - DAY

75

Mike watches Lou Ann eagerly priss toward the sliding glass doors of the entrance and get lost in the throng of shoppers.

He lights a cigarette. His eyes brim with tears. He opens the window and blows the smoke out.

76 INT. PETE'S TRUCK OUTSKIRTS OF ODESSA -- NIGHT

76

Pete, Melquiades and the women look happy, relaxed. Rachel is happily changing the stations on the radio. Several stations are heard before Rachel stops in the middle of a country song.

RACHEL

I love this song.

She and Lou Ann start singing to it as they sway from side to side. Pete turns to Melquiades.

PETE

Viejas locas. [*Crazy broads.*]

Rachel pretends she has taken offense.

RACHEL

I understand you Pete, believe you me I do, and no, we are not "locas".
No way.

The song ends and the DJ states the time.

DJ

It's Miller Time ladies and germs
and the Miller time is ten minutes
after ten o'clock. Pee Emmmm.

RACHEL

Oh fuck! Bob's going to kill me.

PETE.

It's okay, we're already here.

77 EXT. PIPE YARD, OUTSKIRTS OF ODESSA -- VAGUELY LIT BY TALL
OVERHEAD INDUSTRIAL FLOURESCENTS.

77

Pete drives around a pipe yard full of oil field equipment where there are two cars, sort of hidden away, and he parks.

They get out of the truck. Melquiades and Lou Ann go toward the Norton's family Toyota. Pete and Rachel walk toward a white Chevrolet.

PETE

When will I see you again?

RACHEL
I can't all next week.

PETE
Is it the sheriff's turn?

RACHEL
Stop it. You know how things are.

Pete raises his hands, giving in before a fight starts.

PETE
Ok, no problem.

She gives him a kiss. They look rather tense.

RACHEL
Don't mix things up. You're the one
I love, darlin', the only one. Belmont
is something else.

PETE
What about Bob?

RACHEL
That's difernt. Bob is my husband.
(A beat)
You understand, right?

Pete looks at her: it is obvious that he will never understand. Rachel bids him farewell by giving him a long kiss on the lips and gets in the car.

Pete turns to the other two, who are politely shaking hands.

PETE
Ya vámonos [let's go].

The couple separates, smiling. Lou Ann opens the door and turns toward Pete with a sweet smile.

LOU ANN
Bye Pete.

She gets in and drives off behind Rachel. The men watch the women's cars get lost in the inert pump jacks, supine drilling rigs and stacked pipe.

78 INT. PETE'S TRUCK -- DAY

78

Pete and Melquiades are driving toward the main house on the ranch, which is surrounded by a fence. Through the windshield we can see an enormous yellow Humvee pulling up to the fence in front of the house.

MELQUIADES

Ya llegó el patrón. [*The boss man is here.*]

PETE

Sí, qué mala suerte. [*Yeah, bad luck.*]

79 EXT. MAIN HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- CONTINUOUS

79

Pete parks next to the fence and gets out. Ed (31), the owner - pasty, loose bodied, small hands, dressed in a Timberland jacket and Eddie Bauer pants is removing his Louis Vuitton suitcases from the Humvee.

ED

(Effusive)

Howdy Pete.

PETE

Afternoon, sir.

Ed turns toward Melquiades, greets him with a slight gesture and turns toward Pete.

ED

We have a lot of pending issues,
Pete... Have you had dinner?

PETE

No, we haven't.

ED

Hell, come on in, have some dinner.
They said something about goat meat.
Let's see what they're talking about.

He opens the gate to let him in. Pete walks through and when Melquiades is about to enter, Ed, unwittingly, closes the gate.

Melquiades has to stay outside. Ed chatters on as he walks to the front door, struggling with his luggage. Pete helps him.

ED (CONT'D)

You have no idea the kind of flight we had. The airplane was bouncing around the whole fucking time and I still feel like puking... I mean, shit, we need a bigger plane. I mean it. I'm serious.

Ed pounds his fist on the huge front doors of his hacienda. Melquiades watches and Pete is embarrassed.

ED (CONT'D)

Hello? Habree el porto?

80 INT. MELQUIADES' HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- EVENING

80

Melquiades' house is just one room with a single bed and, like Pete's, it is rather humble. It has a small paint-chipped table, an old pink plastic radio with a radial dial, a frying pan hanging from the wall, a peeling mirror, and a calendar with the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe on it advertising the Carnicería Martínez in Ojinaga.

Melquiades eats four fried eggs and a tortilla for dinner, alone, in silence.

81 EXT. REMOTE AREA, W.D. RANCH -- EARLY MORNING

81

Very early, Melquiades, riding Petes old horse, arrives at some goat corrals.

He dismounts, ties the horse to a mesquite tree, pulls out a 30-30 Winchester lever action rifle and opens the corrals. The goats come out running.

82 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO, W.D. RANCH -- MOMENTS LATER

82

Melquiades is keeping an eye on the goats. The sun is barely rising from between the mountains.

The goats become restless, and in the distance Melquiades spots a coyote, zigzagging east.

Melquiades cups his hand to block the dazzling sun from his eyes. The coyote stops a hundred and fifty yards away and Melquiades aims and fires.

The coyote scampers away in a panic. Melquiades chambers another round and shoots; The coyote yelps and falls down.

Suddenly we hear another shot in the distance. Melquiades calmly looks to see where it might have come from.

There is a second shot in the distance and Melquiades falls backwards into the dirt without letting go of the rifle. He feels the wound with his left hand and it is stained red. He tries to breathe in and he starts coughing up blood.

Frightened, he tries to yell. He can't. Over his shoulder from where he is lying we see, in the distance, a man emerge from the sun's glare and hide behind a large flat rock. Melquiades breathes with great difficulty.

He looks up with an odd expression of wonderment at the wide blue and orange morning sky.

83 EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- LATE AFTERNOON

83

A pick up truck arrives at the house.

84 INT. STEVE'S HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- CONTINUOUS

84

Steve is having dinner alone on the screened in porch. He hears knocking at the door - it's Pete.

STEVE

What's going on?

Pete opens the screen door and steps onto the porch.

PETE

Have you seen Melquiades?

STEVE

No, I ain't seen Mel.

From inside the house the sound of Steve's unseen crying children and scolding wife are heard.

PETE

I ain't seen him since the night before last.

STEVE

Maybe he took off with that girl he was with on Saturday.

PETE

No...

(A beat)

He didn't tell you where he was going?

STEVE

I think he was going to Arroyo Viejo to check on his goats.

Pete stares at him. Steve's children are still crying.

85 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO, W.D. RANCH -- LATER

85

Pete and Steve travel across the desert on their horses in the middle of the night. They have flashlights that, after a moment, suddenly illuminate the eyes of Melquiades' horse tied to the mesquite.

Steve dismounts and approaches. The horse is nervous but Steve calms him down by stroking him under the chin. He unties him and then ties the reins to his own saddle horn.

86 EXT. BASIN, ARROYO VIEJO, W.D. RANCH -- MOMENTS LATER

86

They continue searching through the night. The flashlights break the darkness. They find the loose goats, who run a few steps and then stop to see what is going on.

Pete dismounts and with the flashlight searches all around. He finds nothing and no one.

He stands in the middle of nowhere shining a light on nothing.

87 EXT. BORDER PATROL PARKING LOT BRIGHT DAY LIGHT -- DAY 87

We are looking closely at Mike Norton's face.

MIKE

Captain Reynolds. I need to talk to you. Something terrible... something I did... something terrible has happened. I'm scared.

A hand is placed on Mike's shoulder and we see that it belongs to Captain Reynolds who regards Mike with a benign smile.

REYNOLDS

You want to tell me about it?

88 EXT. PUBLIC CEMETERY -- AFTERNOON 88

Antonio, Reynolds, and Mike are watching the gravediggers throw the last shovel full of dirt into Melquiades' second burial.

The wind is whistling. They turn and walk away from the gravediggers.

89 INT. CAFE LOCO -- DAY 89

Belmont is drinking coffee in his usual place. Rachel is attending the table next to him. Reynolds arrives and goes straight to Belmont.

REYNOLDS

I need to talk you about that dead Mexican y'all found.

Rachel overhears Reynolds and discretely moves closer.

BELMONT

What's on your mind?

Reynolds looks around.

REYNOLDS

I'd rather talk outside.

90 EXT. CAFE LOCO PARKING LOT - BRIGHT DAY LIGHT -- DAY 90

Reynolds and Belmont speak in the empty parking lot.

91 INT. CAFE LOCO -- CONTINUOUS 91

Rachel is standing next to an open window, discretely eavesdropping on the men's conversation.

92 EXT. CAFE LOCO PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

92

In the distance we see Reynolds and Belmont ending their conversation. They shake hands. Belmont goes back to the cafe and Reynolds gets in his truck.

93 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO -- MORNING

93

Mike is behind the rocks where he was hiding when he shot Melquiades. Breathing heavily he looks toward the place where Melquiades dropped. In the distance he sees him lying still, in the middle of the vast desert.

With his rifle at the ready, he walks cautiously towards Melquiades.

94 EXT. ARROYO VIEJO BASIN -- CONTINUOUS

94

On his way towards Melquiades, he stumbles onto a wounded coyote that yelps and struggles to get up. Mike is startled and jumps back. The coyote cannot move: its neck is covered with blood and it breathes with difficulty.

Mike sees Melquiades.

MIKE

(To himself)

Shit.

Mike walks up to Melquiades who is lying on his back with a hole in his chest, lowers his rifle and tries not to vomit.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Are you ok? Are you bueno?

95 INT. PETE'S HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- NIGHT

95

Pete is carefully sharpening his pocket knife with a small whetstone. From outside, a car horn honks. He looks up.

96 EXT. PETE'S HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- NIGHT

96

Pete walks out and finds Rachel - in her waitress uniform - waiting for him, leaning on her car, smoking anxiously.

PETE

What are you doing here?

RACHEL

I need to talk to you.

PETE

What about?

Rachel gives the cigarette a long drag and expels the smoke. The wisps disappear in the cold night air.

RACHEL

Belmont come by the cafe today.

PETE

So what?

Rachel inhales smoke from her cigarette again. She holds the smoke in and blows it out with her eyes closed.

RACHEL

A Border Patrol by the name of Reynolds come looking for him.

PETE

So what?

RACHEL

Reynolds told him who killed that Mexican.

Pete lays one hand softly on her shoulder.

PETE

Don't fool with me, girl.

RACHEL

Hell no. He told Belmont one of the other Border Patrols killed him in a shootout.

PETE

Did he say his name?

RACHEL

Yeah, a guy named Mike Norton.

PETE

You heard him say that?

RACHEL

He said his name like six times.

PETE

What are they going to do with him?

Rachel shrugs her shoulders, puffs her cigarette, and exhales the smoke up toward the moon.

RACHEL

He didn't say.

She puffs her cigarette some more.

97 EXT. VAN HORN STREETS -- DAY

97

Pete's truck travels through the streets of Van Horn.

98 INT. PETE'S TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

98

Pete drives apparently in search of something. He stops at each intersection and looks left and right.

Finally he spots Belmont's patrol car and turns his pickup toward it.

99 EXT. VAN HORN STREETS -- CONTINUOUS

99

Pete catches up to the patrol car and cuts it off. He gets out of the truck. Belmont also gets out, furious.

BELMONT

What's wrong with you. God damn!

PETE

You have to arrest him.

BELMONT

Who the hell do you think you are?

PETE

You have to arrest that sonofabitch that killed Melquiades...

BELMONT

Oh yeah? Who?

PETE

Norton. That Border Patrol...

BELMONT

With what evidence?

PETE

You know damn well who killed him.

BELMONT

I don't know a goddamn thing.

Belmont turns and walks toward his patrol car.

PETE

You ain't going to arrest him?

Belmont ignores him, opens the door and gets in the car.

PETE (CONT'D)

You ain't going to arrest him, are you?

Belmont turns on the ignition, turns the wheel and leaves Pete standing in the middle of the street.

FADE OUT:

BLACK
THE JOURNEY
EL VIAJE

FADE IN:

100 EXT. TRAILER PARK -- EVENING

100

Pete's truck is parked a hundred yards away from Mike's house. He watches Lou Ann washing their Toyota with a water hose.

Dusk is imminent. Some kids play touch football at the end of the lot. The obese woman is sitting in front of her trailer reading a National Enquirer with her Pekingese dog in her lap.

Mike's Border Patrol truck pulls up and parks in front of the mobile home. Lou Ann turns the hose off and goes to greet him.

101 PETE'S P.O.V., WINDSHIELD, PETE'S TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

101

Mike walks past Lou Ann toward the house. Lou Ann follows.

102 EXT. TRAILER PARK -- LATER

102

It is dark. There are no more children playing and most of the lights in the mobile homes are out. In the distance we can hear dogs barking. A baby cries in one of the houses. The immortal moon sits on the horizon.

Pete continues keeping watch for a while, then he gets out of the truck and walks up the steps that lead to Mike's house.

He knocks three times and waits.

MIKE (O.S.)

Who is it?

Pete waits for a few seconds and makes sure no one sees him.

PETE

I'm here for officer Norton. Captain Reynolds sent me.

MIKE (O.S.)

Just a second.

A few seconds pass and the door opens. Mike is in his shorts and a T-shirt.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Yeah?

103 INT. MIKE'S MOBILE HOME -- CONTINUOUS

103

Pete walks in and points the barrel of a .45 automatic at Mike's forehead. Mike takes two steps back.

PETE

Kneel down and put your hands behind your head.

Mike complies. Lou Ann asks from the bedroom.

LOU ANN

Who is it honey?

Lou Ann appears in the hallway dressed in a transparent nightgown. She screams.

LOU ANN (CONT'D)

Aaaaah!

Pete turns to look at her and Mike lunges to tackle him, but Pete reacts quickly and hits him in the head with the pistol butt. Mike falls on his chest.

Lou Ann screams again and Pete points the gun at her face.

PETE (QUIETLY)

Scream again and I'll kill you.

Lou Ann is silent. Mike sits on the floor, woozy.

PETE (CONT'D)

Do you have any handcuffs?

MIKE

They're on my uniform belt.

PETE

(To Lou Ann)

Bring them handcuffs in here with his uniform and keep quiet.

She stands without knowing what to do.

MIKE

Do what he says Lou Ann.

Lou Ann walks away. Pete keeps the gun on Mike's head. Lou Ann comes back with the uniform and the handcuffs.

PETE

(To Mike)

Put on the uniform and then the handcuffs.

Mike obeys, awkwardly but thoroughly, as Lou Ann stares at him, afraid, breathless, tearful.

PETE (CONT'D)

(To Mike)

Have you told her what you did?

LOU ANN

What did he do?

PETE

He killed a friend of mine.

Lou Ann looks at her husband struggling to dress himself in his uniform.

104 EXT. MIKE'S MOBILE HOME -- A MOMENT LATER

104

Pete drags Mike Norton out of the mobile home and hand cuffs him to the brush guard of his ranch truck. Mike struggles a little and Pete smashes his head into the hood of the pickup.

PETE

Try to relax.

105 INT. MIKE'S MOBILE HOME -- CONTINUOUS

105

Pete enters and quietly approaches Lou Ann who is tied up to one of her dining room chairs and gagged with a cup towel. Pete hunkers before her as if he were at a campfire and looks into her eyes. After a moment, he gets up, goes to her couch and picks up a small quilt. He drapes it around her bare shoulders.

PETE

It might get cold.

Lou Ann's eyes are wild. Pete delicately brushes her hair back from her face.

PETE (CONT'D)

If you call the police I'll have to kill him, darlin'.

106 EXT. MUNICIPAL CEMETERY -- MOMENTS LATER

106

They arrive at the cemetery and Pete drives the truck to Melquiades' grave.

He stops the vehicle and opens the door.

PETE

Get out.

MIKE

Are you going to kill me?

Pete sticks the barrel of the 45 in Mike's ear.

PETE

Get out.

Mike gets out. Pete pulls a shovel out of the back of the truck and points at Melquiades' grave.

PETE (CONT'D)

Dig him up.

MIKE

Who?

PETE

Melquiades Estrada, you stupid gringo son of a bitch. You killed him, now dig him up.

Pete places the shovel into Mike's cuffed hands.

107 EXT. MUNICIPAL CEMETERY -- MOMENTS LATER

107

Mike has been shoveling for quite some time. He is standing in a hole seven feet long, three feet wide, and five feet deep. Finally, his shovel blade hits something.

PETE

Get out of the way.

Pete gets into the hole with Mike and scrapes away some dirt: it is the coffin. He scrapes away some more dirt and lifts the lid. Inside is Melquiades in a state of partial decomposition.

Mike brings his cuffed hands to his mouth to hold back the vomit. Pete looks at his dead friend for a moment, then climbs back out of the grave and stands at its edge.

PETE (CONT'D)

Take him out.

Mike swallows and reaches into the coffin to try to get him out. He gags and turns away.

MIKE

I can't.

PETE

Take him out.

Mike gathers courage and, holding his breath so as to not smell the body, grabs it by the shoulders, pulls it out of the coffin and almost out of the grave. A beetle climbs up his hand and Mike lets go of the body, horrified. The body falls back into the grave.

Pete's gaze causes Mike to jump back into the grave where he resumes the struggle to get the body back up on the ground.

Pete pulls out two blue blankets from the bed of the pickup and spreads them out on the ground.

PETE (CONT'D)

Wrap him up and put him in the truck.

Mike drags the body to the blankets and wraps it up, with difficulty, then manages somehow to get it loaded in the bed of the pickup.

PETE (CONT'D)

Let's go.

108 INT. PETE'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

108

Pete drives out onto the I-10. Some trailers pass by them. Mike, in handcuffs, looks at them as if hoping to be discovered.

MIKE

Where are we going?

PETE

What do you care?

109 EXT. RURAL ROAD, W.D. RANCH -- MOMENTS LATER

109

Pete's truck turns off I-10 and drives onto the road that leads to the W.D. Ranch and advances into the dark desert plain.

110 EXT. HOUSES, W.D. RANCH -- MOMENTS LATER

110

The truck parks in front of Melquiades' house. A dog barks at it.

PETE (to Mike)

Get out.

They get out of the truck and Pete speaks to the dog and then to Mike - all the while keeping the gun leveled at Mike's head.

PETE (CONT'D)

Hsh, Pinto, callete. [*Shhh, Pinto, hush.*]

Pete walks to the rear of the truck as he speaks to Mike.

PETE (CONT'D)

Come back here.

Mike obeys.

PETE (CONT'D)

Take him out.

MIKE

What?

Pete kicks him in the ass.

PETE

Por que tantas preguntas motherfucker?
Take him out, now.

Mike opens the tailgate and starts to unload the body. He slips and falls and Mel lands on top of him.

Mike raises his eyes expecting Pete's wrath, but Pete only opens the door to the house.

PETE (CONT'D)

Bring him in the house.

111 INT. MELQUIADES' HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- CONTINUOUS

111

Mike places the body on the bed. Two changes of Melquiades' clothes are lying on a short bench: work clothes and the ones he wore to meet Lou Ann.

PETE

Sit down at that table in that chair.

Mike does so.

PETE (CONT'D)

Melquiades lived here.

Mike says nothing: he is scared. Pete points at the bed.

PETE (CONT'D)

That was his bed.

He points at some layers of shelving.

PETE (CONT'D)

That's where he kept his clothes.

He points at a plate and blue cup on the table.

PETE (CONT'D)

He ate from that plate, and that was his cup.

He picks up the cup and pours some water from a tin pitcher. He hands it to Mike.

PETE (CONT'D)

Drink it.

MIKE

No.

PETE

Drink from that cup.

Mike's cuffed hands are unsteady and his breath is short but he picks up the cup, drinks a little and puts it on the table. Pete picks up Melquiades' work attire and hands it to Mike.

PETE (CONT'D)

These were his work clothes. Put them on and then put them dress clothes on Melquiades.

He points at the other change of clothes on the chair.

112 INT. MELQUIADES' HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- MOMENTS LATER

112

Mike is wearing Melquiades' clothes: the shirt too tight, the pants won't zip all the way up.

Beside him, Melquiades' body is dressed handsomely and lying on one of the blue blankets.

Pete puts Mike's uniform on the bed. He then gets a five pound bag of salt and opens it.

He sprinkles salt over the dead man's face and body, making sure he covers every bit of skin, including the handleless stump of the left arm. He puts salt in the shirt-sleeves, on his waistline, his neck, his ankles, as if he were salting a deer.

When all the salt is used up he wraps Melquiades in the blanket and turns toward Mike.

PETE

All right carry him outside.

113 EXT. MELQUIADES' HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- NIGHT

113

Behind the house are two horses and two mules - among them the strawberry roan Melquiades gave to Pete. The horses are already saddled and one of the mules is loaded with supplies.

Pete points to the other mule.

PETE

Get Melquiades up there and tie him on.

He throws him a rope. Mike looks down helplessly at the hemp rope in his hands.

114 EXT. MELQUIADES' HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- LATER

114

The body hangs across the mules' back. Mike is handcuffed. Pete points at his boots.

PETE
Take them off.

MIKE
What?

PETE
Take them boots off.

Mike looks down at his feet then suddenly lunges at Pete and knocks him down. Pete lands like a sack of potatoes.

Mike takes advantage and kicks him hard. Pete barely manages to cover himself with his arms and Mike starts winning the fight by furiously kicking.

Suddenly Pete rolls and grabs one of Mike's ankles. He twists Mike down and, once he is on the ground, grabs a fistful of dirt and grinds it in his eyes. Mike is blinded.

Pete hits him in the face. He splits Mike's mouth and one cheek. Mike is semi-conscious on the ground. Pete has kick marks on his face.

PETE (CONT'D)
Take them boots off.

115 EXT. DESERT PLAINS, W.D. RANCH -- NIGHT 115

The faint light of the waning moon lights both riders crossing the plain with their horses and mules.

116 INT. MELQUIADES' HOUSE, W.D. RANCH -- MORNING 116

Belmont is scrutinizing the room. Next to him, Antonio looks at Mike's uniform lying on the bed.

BELMONT
Goddamn crazy son of a bitch Pete Perkins.

ANTONIO
What'd he leave the uniform like that for?

BELMONT
Beause he's crazy... What time did we found this guy's wife?

ANTONIO
Nine o'clock this morning.

Belmont calculates.

BELMONT
He's got a two day lead on us.

Through the window we see four Border patrol trucks drive up. Belmont and Antonio look at each other.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

Llegó el chauistle. [*Here comes the plague*]

117 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE WEST TEXAS -- DAY

117

Pete and Mike ride down a very narrow path through rocky slopes. As the animals step carefully, some rubble comes loose and falls away into the emptiness.

Mike is frightened, trying not to look down. Pete rides confidently. They both have cuts and bruises from yesterday's fight.

Mike is barefoot, with no socks, wearing Melquiades' clothes, with his hands cuffed in front of him.

A faraway noise is heard. Pete stops his horse and listens. He stands up in the saddle trying to figure out where the noise is coming from. The noise comes and goes.

Pete dismounts and ties his horse to a bush. He then ties the mules up as well. The noise is still there.

PETE

(To Mike)

Get down.

Mike dismounts and Pete takes his reins and ties them to a tree.

PETE (CONT'D)

Come on.

Mike walks toward him limping with his tender feet on the sharp rocks. Pete takes out the keys and unlocks the cuffs.

PETE (CONT'D)

Hug that tree.

Mike hugs it and Pete puts the cuffs back on.

MIKE

You're not going to leave me here like this, are you?

Pete doesn't answer. He skillfully climbs up the steep hill.

He reaches the top and, crouching down, hides behind some rocks. In the distance he discovers where the noise is coming from: a helicopter circling over the desert plain, about five miles away.

The helicopter looks tiny, but the noise travels clearly in the transparent morning air.

118 PETE'S P.O.V., MOUNTAIN RANGE WEST TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 118

The helicopter is green and white - Border Patrol colors.

119 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE WEST TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 119

Suddenly, the helicopter heads toward him but, some five hundred yards away, it turns and disappears around the mountain.

Pete breathes a sigh of relief.

120 EXT. DESERT -- DAY 120

Four Border Patrol trucks and Belmont's patrol car, are parked on the road. Reynolds and Belmont look over a map spread out on the hood of a truck. Reynolds traces a route with his finger while Belmont watches.

REYNOLDS

Right now they should be somewhere along in here headed for Mexico.

BELMONT

There a thousand ways he can go to Mexico and that sonofabitch is so fucking nuts he might even be headed north to Canada.

REYNOLDS

We're going to start with the Llano Largo, the Arroyo Negro and the Sierra del Diablo. Where ya'll going?

BELMONT

The rest of the United States.

REYNOLDS

Do what?

BELMONT

I'll go south east, to Alarid Canyon.

121 EXT. CANYON -- DUSK 121

The two riders and four beasts move down a trail. The noise from the helicopter can still be heard in the distance. They arrive at a narrow and wooded box canyon. They look very tired. Pete dismounts.

PETE

We'll camp here.

Mike also dismounts. He is still barefoot and when his foot hits the ground he steps on a thorny plant.

MIKE

Ow!

Pete grabs the reins and brings the animals into the bushes.

PETE

Sit down there.

He points at a rock. Mike sits down and looks at the sole of his foot. He looks exhausted, sick of this.

The sound of the helicopter draws near. Pete looks out, hiding behind the branches of a tree.

The chopper passes about half a mile away, turning circles around the canyon.

Pete goes back into the bushes. He takes the saddles off the horses, speaking to them softly. Then he takes the load off the mules, carefully lowering Melquiades' body.

Mike watches Pete as he methodically does his work.

Pete takes out a canteen. He drinks, closes it and throws it to Mike who can barely catch it with his cuffed hands.

Mike opens the canteen and drinks. He turns toward Pete.

MIKE

Where are we going?

Pete doesn't answer. He takes some blankets off the pack mule and unfolds one next to Mike.

PETE

Go to sleep.

He picks up his rifle, the pistol and Mike's boots and goes to lie down, putting them next to him.

122 EXT. CANYON -- AFTERNOON

122

Pete and Mike reach a steep slope covered in loose rocks. From his horse, Pete looks for the best place to go up. Mike sees the enormous challenge awaiting them.

MIKE

Shit.

Pete dismounts and ties the mules and Mike's horse to his saddle head to tail.

Pete climbs back on his horse and spurs it forward. The horse stumbles upward on the loose rocks, followed by Mike's stumbling horse and the balking mules.

The caravan climbs up the slope with great difficulty.

123 EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

123

Belmont and Antonio scramble up a steep, rocky incline and settle on a convenient hiding place at the top of a ridge. They wait and sweat. Sure enough, the fugitives appear on another ridge, three hundred yards away, and across a deep canyon, laboring toward the summit. Belmont, in a prone firing position, prepares his rifle and takes aim. Pete Perkins is brought into the cross hairs. Belmont's finger caresses the trigger. His thumb releases the rifle's safety. Pete leads the horses and mules upward with the cross hairs on his chest. Belmont peers through the scope, sweats some more, and works to bring his breath under control. The tip of his finger delicately touches the trigger. He follows Pete with the cross hairs and then - lowers the rifle and closes his eyes in exhaustion. When he opens them he sees a little lizard in the dirt next to his shoulder. The lizard is untroubled. Belmont looks back up to Pete and watches him climb onward.

BELMONT

Well. Shit.

He is not going to shoot. His cell phone warbles. Belmont answers it.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

This is John Belmont.

RACHEL (over the phone, perky)

What are you doing?

BELMONT

I'm at work.

RACHEL

Am I going to see you tonight?

BELMONT

Yeah. Sure.

RACHEL

Same time and same place?

Belmont watches Pete and his captive and animals climb out of range.

BELMONT

Yeah. Sure.

RACHEL

Good.

Belmont is now laying on his back looking up into the sky, talking to his married girl friend.

BELMONT

Yeah....

Belmont just lays there and tries to imagine what a good nights sleep would feel like.

RACHEL

Stop at the store and pick up a pack of Kotex.

She hangs up.

Belmont sits up and hands the rifle to Antonio. The little lizard is gone. Belmont's eyes hurt.

BELMONT

Let's go.

124 EXT. PASO VALLEJO -- MOMENTS LATER

124

The horses can barely go up. Mike looks back: if they slip, they will fall down a deep cliff to certain death.

Suddenly the pack mule, trying unsuccessfully to dig hooves into the ground and remain upright, begins to slide.

The pack mule slips toward the edge of the cliff, dragging the horses and the other mule with it.

PETE

Jump.

Mike, terrified, grips his saddle horn with both his handcuffed hands.

PETE (CONT'D)

Jump off that horse, goddamnit.

Mike jumps, luckily uphill, and clears the flailing hooves of his horse. Pete jumps off his horse, pulls his knife and quickly runs downhill to cut the lead rope of the mule sliding toward the void.

He has trouble grabbing it because the rope burns his hands and the other mule is falling toward him.

Finally, Pete cuts the rope. The pack mule slides loudly off the cliff and out of sight with all the provisions.

Pete runs back uphill, grabs the roan by the reins as they climb the slippery flat rocks with extreme difficulty.

Pete leads the roan toward the top. Finally, both horses and the mule manage to reach the peak.

Pete and Mike remount and begin descending the other side, but the slope is so steep they start gathering speed.

Pete tries to slow his horse down, but the animal is going so fast that it cannot stop. Suddenly all three animals fall and roll down the slope. Mike and Pete fall beneath their horses and also roll down the mountain and don't stop until they reach the bottom.

125 EXT. DESERT ROAD -- DAY

125

Belmont's pickup crosses a rough and steep road. Suddenly the car smashes against a rock and the right front tire falls into a deep hole.

Belmont gets out of the car with Antonio and examines the damage: a broken axle and a flat tire.

BELMONT

Shit, shit, shit...what am I doing here?

ANTONIO

It's our duty, sir.

BELMONT

Shut up...

Belmont reaches in his car and picks up his radio.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

Belmont to Reynolds...

126 EXT. PASO VALLEJO -- MOMENTS LATER

126

Mike and Pete are wrecked and sweaty on the lower part of Paso Vallejo. Their animals struggle to get up and then everything is quiet: it is a miracle any of them are alive.

Mike's bare feet are bleeding.

PETE

You alright?

Mike turns to look at him.

MIKE

Fuck you.

Pete pulls out the canteen, pours some water on a rag and throws it at him.

PETE

Clean yourself up.

He then goes toward the surviving mule. He checks a wound on its hind leg: nothing serious. He checks the mule's load to make sure Melquiades is secure.

He walks to his horse and pulls out a flask from the saddlebag. He sips it and then offers it to Mike.

PETE (CONT'D)

Want some whisky?

Mike doesn't answer - he is busy cleaning his bloody feet with his cuffed hands.

Suddenly Pete pours a trickle of whisky on his wounds. Mike screams from the burn.

MIKE

What are you doing?

PETE

Disinfecting your feet.

MIKE

What do you care?

PETE

I need you alive and well so you can bury Melquiades in his home town.

He pulls out the picture of Melquiades with his family and shows it to Mike.

PETE (CONT'D)

...And so you can explain to his kids why you killed him.

He holds the photo in front of him for a moment, puts it away, has another drink from the flask and returns to the horses.

127 EXT. PATH, MOUNTAIN RANGE -- EVENING

127

Mike and Pete ride down a path at dusk. Mike rides ahead, watched by Pete. His feet are bandaged with dirty and bloodsoaked rags.

Pete suddenly stops the horse. To his right, a hundred yards away, a mule deer is grazing.

Quickly, Pete draws the rifle, aims and fires.

128 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE -- NIGHT

128

Pete is roasting strips of deer meat over a fire. He stabs one with his knife, puts it on Melquiades' old plate and offers it to Mike.

MIKE

I'm not gonna eat that.

Pete smiles and leaves the plate next to Mike.

PETE

Yes you will.

MIKE

I'm a vegetarian.

PETE

Fine.

Pete picks up some venison and tears off a piece with his teeth. Mike stares at him, picks up the strip on his plate and starts eating.

129 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE -- NIGHT

129

Pete and Mike ride in the dark. Nearby a choir of coyotes howl.

130 EXT. MOTT OF TREES -- MORNING

130

Pete sleeps, leaning against a tree trunk, with Mike's boots, the pistol and the rifle by his side. The horses, unsaddled, and the mule, free of its load, rest in some shade.

Mike is lying down with his eyes open. Melquiades's body is nearby leaning on another tree trunk with the face uncovered and the rest wrapped in the blue blanket.

Mike tries to sit up, but his feet hurt. He lifts himself painfully and scoots a few feet away on his ass.

We hear the noise of a pistol cocking. Mike turns around and spots Pete pointing the gun at him.

PETE

Where you going?

Mike points at Melquiades' body.

MIKE

He fucking stinks, I can't sleep.

PETE

Why didn't you think of that before you killed him? Stay where you're at.

Mike desists, scoots back to the blanket, and lies down. After a moment, he raises his head and looks at the body. He notices something strange. He leans forward to get a better look and calls to Pete.

MIKE

Hey you...

Pete tiredly sits up and looks at Mike.

PETE

My name's Pete.

MIKE

Well Pete, the ants are eating your friend.

Pete quickly looks and the ants are, indeed, devouring Melquiades. His eyes are red with ants and there is a red row of them coming out of his mouth, carrying pieces of esophagus.

PETE

Mother fucker.

Pete grabs the body and starts brushing it off. The ants climb up his hands and start stinging him. Pete smacks the back of his hands against his legs, trying to get them off.

Mike smiles at his kidnapper's desperate dance and makes no attempt to help him.

Pete runs to the saddlebag, pulls out the flask, empties it on the body, pulls out a match and lights it.

A flame flashes out and disappears. Pete draws close to take a look: most of the ants have been burnt to a crisp.

Pete grabs one of his leather gloves, slapping Melquiades on the arms, shoulders, face and head killing the remaining ants, every now and then removing one that bites him.

131 EXT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE -- DAY

131

Mike and Pete ride down a path. In the distance they spot a humble ranch house from which there emerges the loud sound of a radio narrating a baseball game in Spanish.

NARRATOR (O.S.)

Estamos en la parte alta del séptimo inning. Los Naranjeros están arriba en la pizarra por dos carreras, pero el torpedero Venezolano, Edgar Ramírez, puede destaparse con un jonrón e igualar los cartones.. *[We're at the top of the seventh inning. Los Naranjeros are on top by two runs, but the Venezuelan slugger, Edgar Ramirez, can break loose with a homerun and even the score...]*

Pete draws his pistol.

PETE

Get down. And don't try nothing.

Mike dismounts. It hurts his feet and he quickly sits down in the dirt in order to avoid standing.

PETE (CONT'D)

Stay there.

Pete ties the horses to a post in front of the house and leans in through the window. An old man (87) - gray hair, thin, wrinkled white skin - listens to the radio.

PETE (CONT'D)

Buenos días.

The old man doesn't move, still listening to the radio.

PETE (CONT'D)

Buenos días.

The old man turns the radio off, gets up and walks clumsily.

OLD MAN

I don't speak Spanish, what do you want?

PETE

We're friends, we just want a little water for the horses.

OLD MAN

Sure, why not?

The old man walks slowly toward the door. Pete notices he's blind and puts his pistol back in his holster. The old man smiles and walks out of the house.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

I like listening to that Mexican radio station. I can't understand anything, but I like the way Spanish sounds, don't you?

PETE

Yeah, it sounds alright.

The old man sniffs the air.

OLD MAN

Smells like there's something dead around here.

PETE

I killed a deer a few days ago and it's starting to turn.

OLD MAN

Well, throw it away, 'cause it's rotten.

PETE

I want to keep the hide. Do you have any salt I can use to cure it?

OLD MAN

No son, I've barely got enough salt to put on the table.

PETE

You got any alcohol or anything like that?

OLD MAN

I've got a jug of anti-freeze. Will that work?

132 EXT. PATIO, OLD MAN'S HOUSE -- LATER

132

The horses and the mule drink water from a tin trough. Further away there is a large tank of water supplied by a windmill.

Pete and Mike have Melquiades' body in front of them. Pete is smearing anti-freeze all over him with a rag.

He finishes, picks up a small hose and puts it in the five gallon plastic bottle.

PETE

Suck on that hose.

MIKE

Are you crazy? That's pure poison.

PETE

Spit it out before you swaller.

MIKE

Why don't you suck on it?

PETE

You killed him: you're responsible for him.

Mike understands and starts sucking. On the third try the liquid comes out of the hose. Mike spits, disgusted and gives the leaking hose to Pete, who quickly puts it in Melquiades' mouth. The liquid empties into the corpse's entrails.

PETE (CONT'D)

Them ants won't eat him anymore, after this.

The liquid starts bubbling out of his mouth: it can hold no more. Pete rolls the rag into a ball and packs into Melquiades' mouth so that the liquid won't come out.

MIKE

You're crazy man. Totally. Fucking.
Crazy.

Pete doesn't say anything. The old man looks out the window.

OLD MAN

Y'all come and eat.

133 INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

133

The three are sitting at the table. In the middle, a steaming bowl of soup, some pieces of hard bread and strips of jerky. The old man holds his hands out to them both.

OLD MAN

Let us pray.

The three of them clasp hands. The old man feels the cuffs, raises his eyes trying to figure out what it is and doesn't say a word about it.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

We thank you Lord for this meal and
for bringing me these friends and
our daily bread and all the animals
and beasts of the fields. Amen.

The old man grabs a plate and starts serving. He spills some soup. Mike and Pete look at each other silently.

The old man stops serving. Mike tries the soup and makes a disgusted face. With a gesture, Pete warns him to keep eating.

PETE

(To the old man)
Do you live alone?

OLD MAN

I've got a son that comes to see me
ever month and brings me food, but
it's been six months since he was
here.

PETE

What do you eat?

OLD MAN

I've got some things stored away.

Pete looks the blind man in the eyes and then eats some more soup.

134 EXT. PLAIN, TEXAS DESERT -- DAY

134

The four Border Patrol trucks are parked on a road. Reynolds is exploring the terrain with some binoculars. Kruger rolls down the window of one of the trucks and calls to Reynolds:

KRUGER

Sir, the helicopter reports that...
they don't have nothin' to report.

Reynolds puts down the binoculars.

REYNOLDS

Hell, there ain't no tellin' where
this sonofabitch is liable to be at.

KRUGER

Yes, sir.

135 EXT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE -- DAY

135

Mike and Pete are getting their horses ready to leave. The old man is standing in front of them. Pete speaks to him.

PETE

Thank you.

Pete gets on his horse and nods for Mike to do the same.

OLD MAN

I'd like to ask you a favor.

PETE

Whatever you want.

The old man turns his gray eyes toward Pete.

OLD MAN

I wanted to ask you... if you can
shoot me.

Pete and Mike are speechless.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

My son ain't coming back.

PETE

He'll come back.

OLD MAN

No. He told me he had cancer and he
told me to go back to town with him,
but I don't want to leave. Because
I've always lived here.

PETE

Well, we can't do it.

OLD MAN

I don't want to offend God by killing myself. It's a problem.

Pete looks at him for a moment.

PETE

We don't want to offend God either.

OLD MAN

It'd be the best thing to do.

Pete turns his horse and starts riding away, Mike follows

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

You're good people. You need to go ahead and shoot me.

They ride away. The old man listens to them ride away for a moment. He turns around and goes back inside.

Pete and Mike again hear the radio playing the baseball game in Spanish.

136 EXT. MOUNTAINS, TEXAS DESERT -- DAY

136

Pete and Mike ride. The helicopter is heard in the far distance.

MIKE

I didn't mean to kill your friend.

Pete pays no attention.

MIKE (CONT'D)

He shot at me.

Pete doesn't look at him.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I swear to God, really, if I could...I'd...

They ride on in silence.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Let me go and I promise you...I swear...I promise you...I won't press charges.

They keep riding. The helicopter circles in the distance and then is lost in the horizon.

137 INT. SHERIFFS OFFICE - FLUORESCENT LIGHT -- AFTERNOON

137

Belmont is seated on the couch, naked, covering his genitals with a pillow.

BELMONT

Where's that sonofabitch at?

RACHEL

I don't know.

BELMONT

You ought to. You been fucking him.

She stares at him.

RACHEL

We don't talk a lot.

Belmont rises, crosses to his desk, pours himself a shot of whiskey into a paper Dixie cup, returns to the couch and takes a sip - all the while keeping his genitals covered by the pillow.

BELMONT

I don't care where that sonofabitch is at.

138 EXT. APPARENTLY INFINITE SAND DUNES -- AFTERNOON

138

Pete and Mike ride their horses through a new world of mountainous pure white sand. Pete stops his horse and stands up in his saddle to have a better view.

PETE

We'll cross through there.

139 EXT. DUNES -- MOMENTS LATER

139

They are crossing the dunes with great difficulty. The horses are struggling through nearly knee deep sand. Mike's horse is tied to Pete's saddle horn.

They come to some very steep dunes. There is no other way. They begin to climb when the roan rolls down and falls on him.

Pete, trapped under the flailing horse, calls out to Mike.

PETE

Get this damn horse off me!

Mike watches Pete struggle and decides to jump from his horse. He runs as fast as he can up the dune and over the top.

Pete, fights to free himself from the fallen and kicking horse. He stands up and hurries to pull out the rifle. He climbs up the dune and sees Mike stumbling as fast as he can across the pure white sand toward the brush of the desert at the edge of the dunes perhaps half a mile away.

Pete keeps his aim for some seconds, then lowers his rifle. He watches Mike disappearing in the distance, rubs his hurting leg and goes to check his horse.

140 EXT. DUNES -- CONTINUOUS 140

Mike runs, falling down several times, panting, turning to see if Pete is following him, but he can only see the vast dunes behind him.

141 EXT. DUNES -- LATER 141

Pete rides slowly, following Mike's tracks.

142 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- AFTERNOON 142

Mike runs down a low dune and stops where the desert begins.

He sits on the ground. He takes his pants off and tears the lower part of the legs off with his teeth. He rips some of the cloth into strips and manages to tie the fabric of his pant legs on his feet to make a pair of rudimentary shoes.

He puts his tattered, now short legged, pants back on and takes off across the desert..

143 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- EVENING 143

It starts to get dark. Pete looks for Mike and carefully surveys the terrain: nothing.

He goes up a low hill and explores from there again. He notices something in the distance.

144 PETE'S P.O.V. -- CONTINUOUS 144

He discovers Mike running and hiding in the brush.

145 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 145

Pete does nothing. He dismounts and takes the saddles off the horses.

146 EXT. BRUSH, TEXAS DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 146

Mike watches Pete in the distance, on the hill, getting ready to make camp for the night.

Mike decides to run further away, fleeing like a frightened cottontail rabbit.

147 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- NIGHT 147

Pete sleeps placidly wrapped in a blanket next to a fire.

- 148 EXT. BRUSH, TEXAS DESERT -- NIGHT 148
Mike sleeps in a growth of Tobosa grass curled up into a ball and shivering.
- 149 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- MORNING 149
Pete mounts his horse and rides off looking for Mike's tracks. He discovers some footprints and takes up the trail.
- 150 PETE'S P.O.V., DESERT, TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 150
In the distance, Mike is again running among the brush.
- 151 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 151
Pete makes no attempt to catch him. He just watches him.
- 152 EXT. BRUSH, TEXAS DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 152
Mike hides under a bush. He notices that Pete, instead of following him, rides away toward another low hill.
- 153 EXT. HILL-DESERT, TEXAS -- AFTERNOON 153
Pete is sitting on the low hill, looking at Mike in the distance.
- 154 EXTERIOR BRUSH - DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 154
Mike pulls some prickly pear fruit off a large cactus, getting his hand stabbed by the thorns. When he tries to eat the fruit, it too has tiny spines that get stuck painfully in his lips. He squats in the dirt and picks at the thorns and spines in his hands and lips and sweats and tries not to cry.
- 155 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- CONTINUOUS 155
Pete smiles.
- 156 INT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE -- AFTERNOON 156
The old blind man is listening to his radio.

NARRATOR

Son las cinco de la tarde y la temperatura marca cuarenta grados. Mandamos un saludo a todos nuestros amigos que nos escuchan en Presidio. Y en Tardes del Recuerdo presentamos "Me Caí de la Nube" de Cornelio Reyna. [It' five o'clock in the afternoon and the temperature is four degrees. Warm greetings to everyone listening to us in Presidio. And today in

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*"Sunset Memories" we have "I Fell
 Off the Cloud," by Cornelio Reyna.]*

The song plays on the air. Suddenly we hear the sound of a helicopter flying overhead and vehicles arriving.

The old man turns off the radio and walks to the door.

157 EXT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

157

Five vehicles pull up to the old man's house and Reynolds gets out of one of them. From the other four trucks, nine officers emerge while the chopper hovers above and behind them. The display is intimidating.

Reynolds approaches the house. The old man opens the door and stands on the small porch.

REYNOLDS
 Good afternoon, sir.

OLD MAN
 Hidy do.

REYNOLDS
 Yes sir...

Reynolds glances around at the run down premises while he speaks.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
 Sir: we need to know: have you seen anyone coming through here or in this general area on horseback here lately.

The old man is silent.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
 Like maybe two men on horses maybe with some mules?

OLD MAN
 I ain't seen nobody in thirty years.

Reynolds realizes the old man is blind. He exchanges silent looks with his subordinates.

REYNOLDS
 Alright. I am sorry, sir. Have your heard anyone come this way in the last few days? Or hours?

OLD MAN
 Are y'all cops?

REYNOLDS

No sir, we're actually with the Border Patrol.

OLD MAN

Ain't no Mexicans passed through here.

REYNOLDS

We're not looking for Mexicans.

The old man thinks for a moment.

OLD MAN

No, no one's come through.

REYNOLDS

Are you sure?

OLD MAN

Hell no I'm not sure. But I don't think so.

Reynolds studies his face.

REYNOLDS

Ok. Do you need anything?

The old man is slightly amused at the irony of the question.

OLD MAN

No. I don't.

Reynolds turns around and walks toward his vehicle. The blind man walks into his house. We hear the radio in Spanish again.

The five vehicles leave, kicking up dust. The helicopter swirls away.

158 EXT. BRUSH, TEXAS DESERT -- EVENING

158

Mike is checking his feet. His improvised footwear is torn and bloodstained.

He is dirty and hungry: like a wounded animal. He walks with a great deal of pain.

He finds a coyote den. He digs a bit to make it wider and puts half his body in to hide himself.

We hear a rattlesnake. Mike, nervous, looks for it. He hears it again and tries to take cover by getting further into the hole.

Suddenly he yelps and jumps out of the hole with a rattlesnake attached to his right foot. He tries to get it off, but the snake's fangs are hooked into one of the makeshift shoes.

Mike grabs a stone and starts beating the snake furiously on the head until he knocks it off his foot and kills it.

Shaking his arms he yells at Pete, who is far away from him.

MIKE

Help! help!

Pete doesn't answer. Mike is struggling.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Help! Help me!

Mike yells and waves his arms but he cannot get Pete's attention. He tries to walk toward him, but the pain in his feet prevents him from doing so.

159 EXT. HILL, DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 159

Pete is resting; hears the screams, then rises up calmly, and looks toward Mike.

160 PETE'S P.O.V. -- CONTINUOUS 160

He sees Mike throwing his arms about and screaming in a frenzied dance.

161 EXT. HILL, DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 161

Pete settles back down in his blanket and watches Mike thrash. In the distance we hear Mike's continued desperate screams.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK

THE THIRD BURIAL OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA

EL ENTIERRO TERCERO DE MELQUIADES ESTRADA

162 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- MORNING 162

It is very early. From the brush a group of twelve Mexican wetbacks come trotting. They are eight men and four women guided by Lucio (21) and Tomás (20).

LUCIO

Denle por acá. [*This way.*]

The group turns right. Lucio pushes the shrubs away and the rest follow. Suddenly one of the women screams.

WOMAN

Un muerto! [*A dead body!*]

The group stops. Lucio walks toward her and finds Mike on the ground. He leans over him and puts his ear near Mike's nose.

LUCIO

No está muerto, todavía respira.
[He's not dead, he's still breathing]

One of the men picks up the snake with its mashed head.

MAN

Yo creo que le picó la víbora. [I
think the snake bit him]

Lucio checks him out and sees the snakebite on Mike's foot.

LUCIO

Sí, se lo chingó. [Yep, he got him.]

MAN 2

¿Será gringo? [It is a gringo?]

LUCIO

Se ve muy jodido para ser gringo.
[He looks too fucked up to be a
gringo.]

Lucio tears a shred off Mike's already shredded shirt and applies a tourniquet on his thigh.

TOMÁS

¿Ya pa qué? Yo creo que el veneno se
le fue al cerebro. [What's the point?
The poison must have gone to his
brain]

Lucio shrugs his shoulders.

PETE (O.S.)

Buenos días. [Good morning]

The Mexicans, busy with the wounded Mike, are frightened. Pete steps forward on his horse, leading Mike's horse and the mule.

PETE (CONT'D)

Tranquilos, soy amigo. [Don't worry,
I'm a friend]

Lucio takes a few steps toward Pete.

LUCIO

(In English)
We didn't do nothin'.

PETE

I know.

Pete dismounts.

PETE (CONT'D)

What happened to him?

LUCIO

He was bit by a snake. He's dying.

Pete looks around and sees the snake on the ground. The other members of the group, frightened, just watch.

PETE

Do you know where can we get some help?

LUCIO

I know a girl who's good with herbs and maybe she can cure him, but she lives across the border.

PETE

Is it far?

LUCIO

No, the border is not far, but la migra is all around. They're looking for a gringo who kidnapped a migra agent.

Suddenly Lucio puts two and two together.

LUCIO (CONT'D)

You that gringo?

Pete nods. Lucio is worried.

PETE

Can you help me get him across? I don't want him to die.

Lucio thinks things over and turns toward Tomás.

LUCIO

Tomás, síguete tú con ellos. Voy a llevarme a este gringo a que lo curen. En Palomas preguntas por El Tigre y dejas a estos con él, él se encarga. *[Tomás, you keep going with them. I'm going to take the gringo and get him cured. In Palomas ask for El Tigre and leave these guys with him. He'll take care of it.]*

The others stare at him. Lucio signals for them to move on.

LUCIO (CONT'D)

Orale, jálenle... *[Go on, go...]*

The group leaves. Pete and Lucio carry Mike to his horse and throw him up across the saddle.

163 EXT. DESERT, TEXAS -- DAY

163

Lucio is riding Mike's horse with Mike draped across the saddle in front of him. In the distance, the helicopter circles.

Lucio points at the bundle in the blue blanket on the mule.

LUCIO

What's that?

PETE

It's a friend who died that I have to bury in Mexico.

LUCIO

How did he died?

PETE

That son of a bitch right there killed him.

Lucio looks at Mike hanging before him on the saddle.

LUCIO

As how he looks, you are going to bury both.

164 EXT. HILL, TEXAS DESERT -- LATER

164

They ride in the desert through a hilly area, hiding among the rocks. Mike looks terribly bad, completely limp on the horse's back.

We hear a motor. Lucio stands up in the saddle and explores the terrain. In the distance he sees a truck coming.

LUCIO

La migra... [*The Border Patrol...*]

He turns his horse.

LUCIO (CONT'D)

Vámonos para allá. [*That way.*]

He spurs his horse toward the cover of the rocks. Mike bounces on the saddle and is about to fall. Lucio barely manages to grab him by the shirt.

Pete has trouble making the mule run.

LUCIO (CONT'D)

Hurry up, they're gonna see us...

Pete pulls on the mule with all his strength and manages to make it trot and they hide just in time. The truck passes fifty yards away from them, but does not seem to have seen them.

Lucio turns toward Pete.

LUCIO (CONT'D)

See? You fuck my whole business.

Now the Border Patrol is everywhere.

(A beat)

And when I say hurry I say hurry...

165 EXT. EDGE OF CANYON -- LATER

165

They ride around some rugged hills, hiding behind the large rocks. Lucio looks around, making sure they are not seen. When they reach a certain point, Lucio signals for Pete to quietly dismount.

They tie the animals in some shade. Mike, battered, upside down and faint, whines and moans. His foot is swollen and bruised.

Pete and Lucio climb one of the hills. Lucio indicates for him to take cover and they observe from there.

They are on the lip of a canyon that stretches straight downward for 1000 feet.

The Rio Grande is below. A swarm of Border Patrol trucks drive along the roads.

PETE

Can you get us across?

LUCIO

Yeah, but I've never crossed people from this side to that side much less on horses.

PETE

Ok, take us.

LUCIO

What about the price?.

PETE

What price?

LUCIO

The price to cross you. Is one thousand a person.

PETE

A thousand dollars? I don't have a thousand dollars.

LUCIO

Three thousand dollars: a thousand for you, a thousand for the gringo and a thousand for the dead guy.

PETE

Well. Bullshit. I'll find a way to get across.

LUCIO

Ok, lets make a deal: give me your rifle and your horse.

PETE

No.

He sees a helicopter on the horizon and reconsiders.

PETE (CONT'D)

Alright. Not my horse. I'll give you the other horse and that's it.

LUCIO

And the rifle.

PETE

Just the horse.

Lucio reconsiders the offer, then gives Pete a friendly slap on the back.

LUCIO

Orale, trato hecho. [Ok, done deal].

166 EXT. RAVINES -- AFTERNOON

166

They ride through a very different area surrounded by giant steeply walled cliffs bordering the Rio Grande. Mike is constantly moaning, unconscious.

167 EXT. RIVER BANK, RIO GRANDE -- LATER

167

They descend through a small path that crosses a huge canyon and ends in a small sandy place by the river completely isolated by two large walls twelve hundred feet tall.

LUCIO

This is where we cross.

PETE

Is it very deep?

LUCIO

A little.

168 EXT. RIVER BANK, RIO GRANDE -- LATER

168

Pete rides across the sand and steps his horse out into the water. The river is not very wide or deep. Lucio follows with the groaning Mike draped across his saddle. As Lucio's horse steps into the water, Mike's eyes open and he takes a pained, squinted look at his surroundings. He thinks it over for a moment then starts to thrash and kick.

MIKE

No! Godammit! No, no, no!

Lucio tries to steady him and Mike bites Lucio on the thigh. Lucio yelps and Mike falls off the horse into the river. While Lucio tries to regain control of the horse, Mike gets to his feet and begins to wade, limping, back to the solid ground of the United States.

169 EXT. RIVER BANK, RIO GRANDE -- CONTINUOUS

169

Midstream, Pete stops his horse and looks back at Mike's escape attempt. Pete calmly turns the roan around and heads back to Texas as he shakes out a loop with his rope.

170 EXT. RIVER BANK, RIO GRANDE, U.S. SIDE -- CONTINUOUS

170

Mike mumbling and groaning with delirious pain, struggles ashore and runs, limps, stumbles toward the bushes.

MIKE

You sonofabitches! I don't need this bullshit! Fuck you! To hell with this! I mean it! Fuck you sonofabitches.

The loop of Pete's rope lands on Mike's shoulder and snakes up snug around his neck. Mike is jerked off his feet like a runaway calf.

171 EXT. RIVER BANK, RIO GRANDE, U.S. SIDE -- CONTINUOUS

171

Pete winds the rope around his saddle horn, spins the roan around and drags a screaming Mike across the river into Mexico.

Lucio catches up with them and looks at Mike who, although unconscious, is gagging and coughing up water.

LUCIO

I think now he is really dying.

Pete dismounts and pushes Mike's abdomen with both hands to help him throw up. After several attempts, Mike begins breathing normally.

LUCIO (CONT'D)

Ok, let's go.

Lucio turns to move on.

172 EXT. STREETS, MEXICAN TOWN -- AFTERNOON

172

They arrive at a small town. A man on a green, yellow and red bicycle drives past them, dressed in a Lance Armstrong T-shirt and a Fertimex cap.

GUY

Epa Lucio. [*Hey Lucio*]

LUCIO

Epa Jorge...

The guy on the bicycle drives on.

173 EXT. HUT -- MOMENTS LATER

173

They arrive at an adobe hut at the edge of the town, bordering on the desert.

Lucio dismounts. Adriana (60) walks out - a woman hardened by life - who looks at the large bundle wrapped in a blue blanket and the inert gringo draped over the horse.

LUCIO

Buenas doña Adriana ¿no está Mariana?
[*Hello Mrs. Adriana, is Mariana in?*]

174 INT. HUT -- LATER

174

Mike is lying, semi-conscious on a bed, sweaty, moaning. Pete and Lucio are standing next to him, with not one idea of what to do.

Mariana (21) walks in the room; the same girl Mike punched when they arrested the illegal immigrants. She is still wearing bandages on the bridge of her still bruised nose.

She looks over Mike who is dirty, disheveled, with his clothes torn to shreds.

MARIANA

¿A éste es al que le picó la víbora?
[*Is this the one that got bitten by a snake?*]

Lucio nods. Mariana comes close and recognizes Mike. She takes an angry step back.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Saca a este pinche gringo, éste fue el que me rompió la nariz. [*Get this fucking gringo out of here. This was the one that broke my nose.*]

LUCIO
 ¿Segura Mariana? [*Are you sure Mariana?*]

MARIANA
 Segura, tiene cara de chango. [*I'm sure. He has the face of a monkey.*]

LUCIO
 Si lo saco se muere. [*If I take him out he'll die.*]

MARIANA
 Pues que se muera. [*Well, let him die.*]

Pete steps forward.

PETE
 Por favor, cúralo. [*Please cure him!*]

MARIANA
 ¿Por? [*Why?*]

PETE
 Porque lo necesito vivo. [*Because I need him alive.*]

Pete's reason seem to be sufficient for Mariana.

175 INT. HUT -- MOMENTS LATER

175

Mariana heats a knife in a gas burner until it becomes red hot. She turns to Mike's foot and makes an incision with it on the swollen tissue. Blood and pus flow.

Mike, cuffed, yells and Mariana continues her incision. Mike squirms in pain, held down by Pete and Lucio.

The blood stains the sheets and Mariana's dress. From a glass jar, she takes some herbs soaked in alcohol and packs them into the wound, with no compassion for Mike.

176 INT. HUT -- NIGHT

176

Mike looks better although still semi-conscious. His foot is bandaged. Mariana wets his lips with a dark brew.

PETE
 ¿Se va a curar? [*Will he be ok?*]

MARIANA
 Del veneno sí, hay que esperar que no se le gangrene la pata porque, si no, vamos a tener que cortársela.
 (MORE)

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[From the poison, yes, but we have to wait to see if his foot doesn't get gangrene because otherwise we'll have to cut it off.]

177 INT. CAFE LOCO - DAY

177

Lou Ann is sitting at her usual corner table with her usual magazine, cup of coffee, and a smoldering mentholated Virginia Slim.

LOU ANN

I'm leaving.

We now see that Rachel is sitting across from the table from her.

RACHEL

You're leaving.

LOU ANN

Yes. Mike won't ever come back. I hate this place.

RACHEL

Maybe he'll come back.

LOU ANN

No. Pete will kill him. Or... he'll stay gone.

RACHEL

He'll come back.

LOU ANN

No. The sonofabitch is beyond redemption. I'm leaving.

178 EXT. CAFE LOCO - DAY

178

A Greyhound Bus pulls up, stops, and exhausts its airbrakes. The automatic door glides open, Lou Ann steps on board, the door glides shut and the bus pulls away. Rachel is left looking out the window with CAFE LOCO written on it at the departure.

179 EXT. LOCAL STORE, TOWN -- NIGHT

179

The place works as both store and phone booth. Outside are some benches painted red and blue, under a roof made of branches. A "Cerveza Victoria" ice box is on one side.

A black and white television hangs from a corner of the ceiling of branches. Several peasants and cowboys, with their bicycles and horses outside the locale, are absorbed watching

a Mexican soap opera. Among them is Pete, who drinks a "Sol" beer sitting down. It is not his first one.

El "Chino" (40) - an extremely large man - calls out to Pete with a old cream colored telephone in his hand.

CHINO

Está lista tu llamada. [*Your call is ready.*]

He points to a rickety wooden phone booth. Pete walks in and picks up the phone.

180 INT. CAFE LOCO -- CONTINUOUS

180

Rachel answers a phone set on the counter.

RACHEL

Cafe Loco, how may I hep yew?

PETE (O.S.)

Rachel, it's me.

RACHEL

Pete?

She nervously turns to the kitchen to see if her husband is listening. But Bob, good old Bob, is frying eggs on a griddle.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Where are you?

181 INT. PHONE BOOTH -- CONTINUOUS

181

PETE

I'm in Mexico.

RACHEL (O.S.)

You know the Border Patrol is on your ass?

PETE

What's Belmont doing?

RACHEL (O.S.)

He went on vacation. He said he had nothing to do with this; that it's all between you and the Border Patrol and he wanted to go to Sea World.

Pete is quiet for a moment. He seems to be choosing his words.

PETE

Rachel, I want you to come to Mexico...

182 INT. DINER -- CONTINUOUS

182

RACHEL

What for?

PETE (O.S.)

To marry me... and be my wife.

RACHEL

Are you crazy? I can't do that.

183 INT. PHONE BOOTH -- CONTINUOUS

183

Pete is quiet for a few moments, disconcerted.

PETE

Why not?

RACHEL (O.S.)

Because I love Bob, Pete...

PETE

You said I was the only one you loved.

RACHEL (O.S.)

Pete, you don't understand. I have
to go... take care.

She hangs up. Pete softly puts the phone back and, sad and pensive, opens the phone booth door and leaves.

184 INT. CRUDE WOODEN SHED -- NIGHT

184

Pete, very drunk, drinks from a pint of cheap sotol. He is sitting on some color-worn serapes lit by a wick with gasoline in a Nescafe jar. On the other side of the shed we can hear the grunts and snorts of a sow and her suckling piglets.

Melquiades' body leans before Pete. He is clearly in an advanced state of decomposition: eyes withered, grimacing mouth, cheeks sunken, hair tussled and dirty.

Pete pulls out the photograph of Melquiades and his family and looks at it.

PETE

We'll get you home pretty soon,
Melquiades. Just about any day now.

He drinks and puts the picture away. He looks at Melquiades.

PETE (CONT'D)

You look like hell.

He rummages in his pockets and pulls out a comb. He starts to comb Melquiades' hair. Impossible: the comb gets stuck in the messy hair's knots.

Pete pulls the comb a little more strenuously and it gets stuck and breaks in half. This seems to hurt Pete deeply. His weeping silences the pigs.

185 INT. HUT -- MORNING

185

On the bed, Mike opens his eyes and looks around trying to find out where he is. He moves and his foot hurts immediately.

He leans over to rub it and in doing so discovers Lucio sitting at a table drinking coffee.

LUCIO

Good morning.

Mike stares at him, puzzled.

MIKE

Where am I?

LUCIO

Ejido Los Lobos, Municipio de Ojinaga,
Chihuahua, México.

MIKE

Mexico? Who are you?

LUCIO

Your private 911, dude.

Mariana walks in with a jar with several plants suspended in alcohol. She looks at the awakened gringo.

MARIANA

Vaya, ya se despertó el gringo ojete.
[Hey, the asshole gringo woke up.]

She walks up to Mike, who is still noticeably disoriented.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Te voy a revisar. *[I'm going to look
you over.]*

Mike looks at Lucio, expecting him to translate.

LUCIO

She's going to check you out.

Mariana sits on the bed, takes the bandages off Mike's foot and examines it: it is a clump of cuts, dirt, caked blood and a huge bruise. But it is no longer swollen.

Mariana opens the jar with plants, makes a plaster and puts it on the wound. Mike whines a little.

Mariana picks up a blue-colored bottle and gives him a potion to drink. Mike drinks and grimaces in disgust.

MARIANA
Acábatelo. [*Finish it.*]

Mike turns to look at Lucio who gestures for him to drink it. Mike drinks it down and struggles not to gag.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
¿Hay café caliente? [*Is there any
hot coffee?*]

LUCIO
Acabadito de hacer. [*Just made.*]

MARIANA
Tráeme la jarra. [*Bring me the coffee
pot*]

Lucio takes the coffee pot off the stove and brings it to her. Mariana takes it, lifts it and pours the boiling coffee on Mike's dick and balls.

As he screams, Mariana knocks him in the face with the coffee pot. Mike falls back with a broken nose and parboiled genitals and writhes on the bed.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
Estamos a mano, cabrón. [*We're even,
asshole.*]

Lucio smiles benignly at Mike.

186 EXT. HUT -- EVENING

186

Pete, Lucio, Adriana and Mariana shuck corn and sit watching the desert sunset. The men are sitting on the disembodied and broken seat of a Volkswagen van; the women on chairs made of wood and palm fronds.

In the sky we can hear the honks of invisible flocks of geese flying south.

Mike, one foot bare and the other bandaged, handcuffed, and with a broken nose, limps out. Without saying a thing, he takes a wooden chair and sits down next to Mariana. Now both their noses are bandaged.

Mariana hands him an ear of corn. Mike watches how everyone else is doing it and starts to shuck.

Nobody speaks. The five silently watch the sunset and shuck corn.

187 EXT. HUT -- MORNING

187

Pete is readying the roan and the mule, upon which Melquiades has been loaded. Lucio has the other horse's reins firmly in

his hands. Mariana and Adriana are standing in front of the fence surrounding the house.

Mike, cuffed, beaten, and with a bandaged foot, walks out with difficulty. He stops in front of the three Mexicans.

MIKE

(In terrible Spanish)

Moo chaz grah see ass. [*Thank you very much.*]

ADRIANA

Muchas de nada. [*You're very welcome.*]

His eyes meet with Mariana's. Mike bows his head in a gesture of gratitude. He turns around and, without Pete saying a word, mounts the mule - with some difficulty, because of the wounds, the cuffed hands and because the body is in the way.

Pete mounts his horse and raises his hand to say good-bye.

PETE

Gracias. [*Thank you.*]

They start riding. Mike's eyes meet and hold with Mariana's for a few seconds and then they both turn away. Mike spurs the mule forward.

188 EXT. DESERT, MEXICO -- AFTERNOON

188

They ride down a path that crosses the desert mountain range. It is cold and the gray sky presages a storm.

Mike draws close and shows him his cuffs.

MIKE

Aren't you going to take these things off?

Pete shakes his head.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What about boots?

PETE

No.

He rides on. Mike, resigned, follows.

189 EXT. DESERT, MEXICO -- LATER

189

It darkens. The storm has let loose. Several rivulets stream down the gullies.

The roan and the mule are tied to some bushes. Pete and Mike, huddled under some mesquite trees, endure the rain.

Melquiades' body is lying in a puddle of water and mud.

190 EXT. VALLEY -- MORNING

190

Pete and Mike ride through a wide, very dry valley. Next to the path there are puddles reflecting the clouds.

Mike is unrecognizable: his clothes are tattered, he is skinny, gaunt, and with a grown beard. He resembles a savage. Pete is not far behind: tired, dirty, disheveled, bearded.

They are desert castaways - hollow-eyed like prisoners of war.

191 EXT. DESERT PLAIN, MEXICO -- DAY

191

They are crossing the plain when they encounter an old man (80) - with kind eyes, good-natured - and a girl, Lorena (17) - thin, pretty -, whose wagon is stuck in a muddy trail.

A skinny, tick-ridden mule pulls the wagon trying, unsuccessfully, to free it. The bed of the wagon is covered by a tarp and five goats are tied to one side.

Pete and Mike approach. The old man looks at them with a certain mistrust that disappears as soon as Pete offers to help.

PETE

Necesitan ayuda? [*Do you need help?*]

192 EXT. DESERT PLAIN -- MOMENTS LATER

192

Pete's mule is teamed with the other mule, pulling the wagon with Mike in the saddle pounding its ribs with his bloody heels. Pete is in the mud, pushing on the wagon. The old man and the girl are watching.

The task is not simple: the wagon's wheels have sunk more than two feet into the mud.

After a great deal of mud and effort, they manage to release the wagon. The old man approaches them.

OLD MAN

Gracias. [*Thanks.*]

PETE

Para servirle. [*At your service.*]

OLD MAN

¿No quieren comer algo? [*Do you want something to eat?*]

Pete and Mike look at each other: it is obvious that they are hungry. They both nod. The old man signals to the girl and she goes to where the goats are.

She grabs a kid, pulls it away from the group, takes out a knife and starts to cut its throat.

Mike observes this action with a vacant stare. When we hear the kid goat's final bleat, Mike's eyes slowly close.

193 EXT. DESERT PLAIN, MEXICO -- LATER

193

The four are sitting in front of a fire where they are roasting the kid. The old man cuts off several pieces of the goat and offers them to Mike. Mike declines.

Pete looks at him with a face as if to say "don't offend them", but Mike doesn't seem to care.

Pete tries to explain.

PETE

Es que es vegetariano. [*It's that he's a vegetarian.*]

The old man guffaws.

OLD MAN

¿Vegetariano? Vegetarianas las vacas.
[*Vegetarian? The cows are vegetarians.*]

Pete, the old man and the girl laugh. Mike, who doesn't understand, only gives them a grim look. The old man turns to the girl.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Lorena, traele pan y queso al gringo.
[*Lorena, go get the gringo some bread and cheese.*]

The girl gets up and goes toward the wagon.

PETE

(To the old man)
¿Es su nieta? [*Is she your granddaughter?*]

The old man laughs with his mouth open, showing his gums.

OLD MAN

No, es mi mujer. [*No, she's my wife*]
(Proud)
La quinta. [*The fifth one*].

The girl comes back and gives Mike the bread and cheese. The old man notices he's cuffed.

LORENA

¿Vienen huyendo? [*Are you running?*]

PETE

Se puede decir que sí. [*You might say that.*]

OLD MAN

Tarde o temprano los hombres siempre hacemos algo que lleva a la ley a perseguirnos. [*Sooner or later we men always do something that makes the law come after us.*]

Pete looks at Lorena then at Mike gobbling his bread and cheese.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(Pausa)

¿Para dónde van? [*Which way are you going?*]

PETE

A "El Tostón" y ¿ustedes? [*To "El Tostón" what about you?*]

The old man turns to look at the girl and they both smile.

OLD MAN

A donde nos lleve la vida. [*Wherever life takes us.*]

194 EXT. DESERT PLAIN -- LATER

194

Pete and Mike are getting ready to leave. The old man goes to the wagon and lifts the tarp. In the back are hundreds of packages wrapped in rag paper and covered in plastic. He throws one at Mike, who, distracted, can barely catch it.

OLD MAN

Tengan [*Here.*]

Mike examines the package and looks at Pete.

MIKE

What is it?

The old man seems to understand and walks over.

OLD MAN

Un camino más a la felicidad. [*One more road to happiness.*]

Pete raises his hand to thank him.

PETE

Gracias. [*Thanks.*]

They leave.

195 EXT. DESERT PLAIN -- LATER

195

Pete and Mike ride. Mike opens the package: it contains a brick of marijuana and a small packet of cigarette papers. He smells it and turns to where they left the old man.

Pete rides up besides him.

PETE

What is it?

Mike shows him and Pete smiles.

196 EXT. ROCKY CLEARING -- SUNSET

196

The horse and mule, unsaddled and without a burden, graze in a small clearing on the side of a hill.

Pete is leaning on a rock, smoking a joint while he looks at the horizon. Mike, a few steps away, also smokes. Melquiades leans on another stone, very serious. They are lit by a small campfire.

Pete looks melancholic. He turns to Mike.

PETE

Do you think your wife's got any extra mules kicking in her stall?

Mike looks at him, puzzled.

MIKE

What?

PETE

Do you think your wife cheats on you?

MIKE

(Indignant)

What do you care?

PETE

Yes or no.

MIKE

No. Never.

PETE

Mine did. Fifteen years ago she left me for another man and took my kids.

They gaze into the fire for a moment.

PETE (CONT'D)

They grew up calling the son of a bitch "Daddy".

MIKE

That's only natural. I'd do the same.

PETE

You'd leave me for another man?

They both smile slightly.

197 EXT. ROCKY CLEARING -- NIGHT

197

They sleep wrapped in blankets. The last logs sputter in the fire. Mike cannot sleep: Pete snores thunderously with the gun in his hands.

MIKE

Shh...

He covers his ears, but the noise is deafening. He picks up a pebble and throws it at Pete's face.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Shut up.

Pete is still out cold. Mike stands up and limps toward him.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(Raising his voice)

Shut up, man.

Nothing: Pete sleeps undisturbed. Suddenly, Mike seems to realize his advantage. He slowly reaches for the gun, but Pete is clutching it in his hands.

He gives up. He puts the saddle on the horse and turns to see if Pete has not woken up. No: he is still out.

He gets on the horse and sets off. Twenty steps away, he stops. He remains meditative for a moment. He gets off and ties him up without removing the saddle.

He grabs the boots tied to the saddle and sits down to put them on. He goes toward his blanket and lies down again.

198 EXT. ROCKY CLEARING -- MORNING

198

Dawn. Pete is kneeling before the fire, making coffee. Mike wakes up.

PETE

You want some coffee?

Mike nods. He gets up and sits next to the fire. Pete serves him some coffee in Melquiades' cup.

Mike accepts it as if it were his. Pete notices he is now wearing the boots. He drinks his coffee and says nothing.

199 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE, MEXICO -- DAY

199

They ride down a trail snaking along some cliffs. Mike no longer looks so afraid, but now looks somewhat disgusted. His relatively unused boots look strange with the tattered rags he has left for clothing.

MIKE

He stinks, I can't take it anymore.

Pete ignores him. Mike's revulsion is total.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Really, he fucking stinks.

Pete draws close and then pulls back from the smell.

MIKE (CONT'D)

He started to smell worse when he got wet.

Pete stares at the body and at Mike.

200 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE, MEXICO -- MOMENTS LATER

200

The path goes through a rocky patch next to a narrow mountain pass. Now, both Pete and Mike are riding on Pete's horse with the mule bearing Melquiades's body on a long lead rope. The animals move slowly, carefully.

The horse stops. Before them is a rocky, narrow, slippery path.

PETE

We're going to have to walk up.

They dismount. Pete takes the horse's reins and starts going up. Mike has a great deal of trouble climbing the rocks with his hands cuffed.

Pete turns to Mike and without saying anything, pulls out a key and takes the cuffs off.

PETE (CONT'D)

If you run away again I'll kill you.
I guess you know that by now.

201 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE, MEXICO -- AFTERNOON

201

They ride down the mountain range, both mounted on Melquiades' formerly beautiful strawberry roan, leading the mule bearing Melquides' body.

PETE

Ya se está secando Melquiades.
[Melquiades is drying out]. And he'll
quit stinking soon.

202 EXT. DESERT PLAIN, MEXICO -- AFTERNOON

202

They cross an immense plain at dusk. Mike is now back on the mule with Melquides' body slung over it's hindquarters. There is nothing around them for miles. Every now and then, jackrabbits shoot out to hide behind the cacti. We only hear the steps and the horse's and mule's breathing. They are riding across the front porch of Hell.

203 EXT. DESERT PLAIN, MEXICO -- DUSK

203

They ride through the plain. In the distance, they can see a 1973 Chevrolet truck and some men sitting around it.

They ride up and discover that there, in the middle of nowhere, five cowboys, sitting on rickety wooden benches, watch a color television connected to the vehicle's battery.

On the TV is a program in English, which the cowboys watch attentively. One of the cowboys sees them arrive.

COWBOY 1

Buenas tardes. [*Evening.*]

PETE

Buenas tardes. [*Evening.*]

Juan (44), the tallest of the cowboys, gets up.

JUAN

¿Quieren café? [*Do you want coffee?*]

PETE

Sí, por favor. [*Yes, please.*]

They dismount. Juan pours some coffee from a thermos and gives it to them.

Mike watches the TV and sees that they are showing commercials in English. He sits with the other cowboys, stupefied.

PETE (CONT'D)

(To Juan)

¿Podría vendernos algo de comida?
[*Could you sell us some food?*]

JUAN

¿Comida? Te la regalo...ahí tenemos carne fresca, agarra la que quieras.
[*Food? You can have some for free...*]
We've got fresh meat there, you can have as much as you want.]

He points at the back of the truck. Pete goes over there and finds an enormous black bear with a bullet hole in its skull.

Pete turns over one of the bear's massive arms and discovers that its body is split from top to bottom and that they have cut out some strips of meat.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Tuvimos que matarlo, estaba matando muchas cabras. [*We had to kill it, it was killing too many goats.*]

Pete pulls out his knife and cuts off strips of meat from the ribcage.

PETE

(To Juan)

¿Esto ya es Coahuila? [*Is this Coahuila?*]

JUAN

Sí, estás en mero Coahuila. [*Yep. You're right here in Coahuila.*]

Pete pulls out Melquiades's map and points to it.

PETE

¿Y sabe cómo llegar a "El Tostón"? [*Do you know how to get to "El Tostón"?*]

Juan stands looking east. He stretches out his hand.

JUAN

Síguete derecho veinte kilómetros. Topando con la sierra das vuelta para el sur y ahí vas a llegar. [*Keep going straight for about twenty kilometers. When you bump into the sierra, turn south and you'll get to it.*]

Mike has sat down in Juan's chair and is absorbed by the TV. One of the other cowboys pulls out a bottle of cheap rum and offers it to him.

COWBOY 2

Quieres? [*Do you want some?*]

Mike nods in thanks and gives it a long swill. Suddenly, on the screen, the gameshow host from the show Mike used to watch appears.

GAMESHOW HOST

You're on "Ready, Aim, Fire"...

Mike repeats in unison.

MIKE AND GAMESHOW HOST

...The show where everybody has fun
and you are the one who wins.

The cowboys find this funny and turn, smiling, toward him.
Mike smiles too, but then, suddenly, starts weeping quietly.

The cowboys look at each other, disconcerted.

COWBOY 1

(To cowboy 2)

¿Pues qué dijo el de la tele? [*What'd
the guy on TV say?*]

Cowboy 2 shrugs his shoulders. Mike is still crying. Pete is
packing the meat in the saddle bag.

PETE

Let's go.

Mike watches TV for another moment and gets up. Cowboy 2
offers him the bottle.

COWBOY 2

Llévatela. [*Take it...*]

Mike turns it down, drying his tears. The cowboy insists.

COWBOY 2 (CONT'D)

Llévatela hombre, para las penas.
[*Take it man, for your troubles.*]

Mike takes it and thanks him by bowing his head.

204 EXT. DESERT PLAIN -- EVENING

204

Dusk, Pete and Mike ride silently. Mike, still sad and teary
eyed, takes a light pull on the bottle of rum. Pete looks
at him and doesn't say a word.

205 INT. SUPERMARKET VAN HORN -- DAY

205

Pete is in the line waiting to pay for a couple of six-packs
in the small supermarket in Van Horn. Meanwhile, Melquiades
is reading some magazines.

Melquiades shows Pete the photograph of a skinny, blonde
model in a flashy bikini.

MELQUIADES

¿Te gustan las flacas que salen en
las revistas? [*Do you like the skinny
ones that appear in the magazines?*]

Pete examines the girl.

PETE

Sí, si me gustan [Yes, I like them]

MELQUIADES

Pues a mí no [I don't like them]

PETE

¿Por qué? ¿Te gustan las gorditas?
[Why not? You like chubby women?]

MELQUIADES

No, las gordas no, me gustan las
mujeres de verdad [No, not the fat
ones, I like real women]

PETE

¿Ah sí? ¿Y esas cuáles son? [Yeah,
and which are those?]

MELQUIADES

Las que te miran bonito, las que te
miran con todo el cuerpo, las que no
les importa que las beses estando
sucio, las que les vale que las veas
desnuda, las que te dejan ser...las
que te la chupan sin mordértela...
[The ones that glance at you nicely,
the ones that look at you with all
their body, the ones that kiss you
and don't care if you're dirty, the
ones that don't care if you see them
naked, the ones that allow you to be
yourself... the ones who suck your
dick without biting it...]

After they quietly contemplate this wisdom for a moment,
Melquiades points to the skinny model in the magazine.

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

De verdad, a quién se le ocurrió que
esas flacas desabridas se te pueden
antojar, si parece que se rompen
nomás las tocas... [Really, who had
the idea that we like flavorless
skinny women, who look like they
will break the moment you touch them].

The cashier interrupts the philosophical flow.

CASHIER

Is this all, sir?

Pete nods and puts both six-packs on the check out counter.
Melquiades puts the magazine on the counter and the cashier
rings up the merchandise.

206 EXT. "EL TOSTÓN" -- MORNING

206

They arrive at "El Tostón", a hamlet with dirt roads. There are several parabolic antennas and new cars with American plates.

It is a small town, but seems wealthy. The houses are well painted, the shops well stocked.

The citizens of "El Tostón" dress well although somewhat garishly: cowboy boots made from exotic skins, plaid shirts, imitation leather jackets, large silver buckles.

The people stare at the dirty, bearded and badly dressed foreigners. Pete stops in front of a store and dismounts.

PETE

Do you want a beer?

Mike nods. Pete goes into the store.

207 INT. "EL TOSTÓN" GENERAL STORE -- CONTINUOUS

207

Two women chatter away when Pete walks in. They grow quiet and one of them moves up to the counter to tend to Pete, who takes a couple of beers from the cooler.

PETE

¿Cuánto es? [*How much?*]

WOMAN

Veinte pesos. [*Twenty pesos.*]

PETE

¿Aceptan dólares? [*Do you take dollars?*]

WOMAN

(In English)

Sure, it's two dollars.

PETE

You speak English?

WOMAN

Everyone here speaks English. We've all worked on the other side. What are you doing here?

PETE

We're looking for a village called Jiménez.

The woman thinks for a few seconds.

WOMAN

There's no place like that here.

She turns to the other woman.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

María ¿Tú sabes de un lugar por aquí que se llama Jiménez? [*Mary, do you know of somewhere around here called Jiménez?*]

WOMAN 2

No, ninguno. [*No, none.*]

The woman looks behind a cloth curtain and yells.

WOMAN

Manuel, ¿conoces una ranchería que se llama Jiménez? [*Manuel, do you know of a village called Jiménez?*]

Manuel (40) - tall, burnt by the sun, yellow eyes, graying moustache -, walks into the store.

MANUEL

Jiménez? No, not around here.

Pete pulls out the piece of feed sack on which the map is drawn and shows it to him.

PETE

They told me it was a village that was ten kilometers away, between "El Tostón" and "El Nacimiento".

MANUEL

No, the only village around here is called Los Chilicotes.

Pete takes out the picture of Melquiades' family. He points at the woman.

PETE

Do you know this woman? Her name is Evelia Camargo.

Manuel takes it and looks at it.

MANUEL

Yeah, I know her, but her name's not Evelia, it's Rosa.

PETE

(Pointing at Melquiades)
And did you know him? He's the one that lived in Jiménez... His name was Melquiades Estrada.

The man looks at the picture. He shakes his head.

MANUEL

No, we don't him.

PETE

What's he doing with the woman?

MANUEL

I don't know. Why you don't ask her;
she lives around the corner.

208 EXT. ROSA'S HOUSE, "EL TOSTÓN" -- LATER

208

Mike sits on the mule, with Melquiades, drinking a beer, in front of a green, wooden house with a screen door. Pete is talking to the woman and the boy who appear in the picture.

ROSA

Yes, that is me and my kids, but I don't know who he is.

PETE

He told me you was his wife.

Rosa giggles.

ROSA

Oh no, don't say that because my husband is very jealous and he'll beat me up 'cause he's so jealous.

She smiles knowingly at Pete. The boy looks at the photograph.

BOY

Oye ma íese no es el amigo de don Casimiro? [*Mom, isn't that don Casimiro's friend?*]

The woman looks at the photograph.

ROSA

Maybe.

209 EXT. PORCH, DON CASIMIRO'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

209

Pete sits in a chair on the porch while Casimiro (53) - fat and good-natured - examines the photograph. Mike stands nearby.

DON CASIMIRO

No, I don't know him.

PETE

Are you sure?

DON CASIMIRO

Sure, I am sure.

PETE

What about a village called Jiménez?

DON CASIMIRO

No. It doesn't exist around here.

Pete looks at the floor.

DON CASIMIRO (CONT'D)

I am sure. Why?

210 EXT. "EL TOSTÓN" -- MOMENTS LATER

210

Pete and Mike ride through the town before the eyes of its inhabitants, who at this point know who they are and what they're looking for.

MIKE

Your friend lied to you.

PETE

No, he didn't.

MIKE

Sure he did. There's no fucking Jiménez, man...wake up.

Pete won't let him go on. He pulls out the gun and points it directly at his eyes.

PETE

No, he didn't lie to me and we're going to find that place and we're going to find his family.

His jaw shakes. This time Pete does look willing to shoot him. Mike knows it and lowers his head. Pete motions to the right- toward the hills outside of town.

PETE (CONT'D)

Jiménez is that way.

211 EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE -- DAY

211

They ride through a mountain range. Nothing: no ranch, no road, no cattle. No nothing.

Pete pulls out his shoddy paper map and checks it again. He lifts his eyes to explore the terrain.

212 EXT. SLOPE, MOUNTAIN RANGE -- LATER

212

They go up a slope. The horse and mule have trouble doing so. They finally reach the top. Pete eyes the horizon: nothing.

213 EXT. SLOPE, MOUNTAIN RANGE -- MOMENTS LATER

213

They go down the slope with the same difficulty they had going up it.

214 EXT. RAVINES -- LATER

214

They travel through some ravines. There are no signs of civilization. Mike stares at him.

MIKE

That place doesn't exist.

PETE

Yes it does.

Mike is exhausted, sun baked, nearly dying of thirst, ragged as hell, angry, and ultimately disappointed with Pete.

MIKE

There is no...fucking Jimenez, man.
There is no...Jimenez.

PETE

It exists.

215 EXT. HILLS, W.D RANCH -- DAY

215

Pete takes the map and puts it in his shirt pocket. Melquiades goes back to looking at the photograph of his family and then puts it away. Melquiades motions toward the herd.

MELQUIADES

Ya es hora de mover el ganado? [It
is time to move the herd now?]

PETE

Sí, ya [Yes, now]

They stand up and walk to their horses. Before they mount up, Melquiades stops to describe his home town.

MELQUIADES

Jiménez es un lugar bien chingón. Es un ranchito en medio de dos cerros. Ahí el aire es tan clarito que sientes que puedes acariciar las montañas. Y lo cruza un arroyo con agua bien fresca que sale de la tierra ahí mismo. Si vas a Jiménez te juro que el corazón se te apachurra de tan bonito. [Jiménez is such a fucking beautiful place. Is a little piece of land between two hills. The air there is so clear you feel you can almost hug the mountains with your

(MORE)

MELQUIADES (CONT'D)

arms. A stream of clear clean fresh water crosses it, that bubbles up right there out of the rocks. If you go to Jiménez I swear your heart will break with so much beauty.]

216 EXT. VALLEY, RAVINES -- DAY

216

They exit one of the ravines and arrive at a small green valley.

They head toward a small crumbling adobe house.

Pete dismounts and looks around at the small imagined paradise surrounding him.

PETE

This is Jiménez...just like Melquiades said it was...good water.

He points at several places. There is no water.

PETE (CONT'D)

There's the house, the store, the graveyard...the gardens are over there.

Mike turns to look at where Pete points. It is obvious that Pete has lost his mind. He shows Mike the photograph.

PETE (CONT'D)

See? Right there just like that.

The photograph proves nothing to Mike who is laboring not to faint and fall off the mule.

MIKE

Yeah. This is it.

Pete seems to have discovered a brave new world.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You found it, Pete.

PETE

Get down.

Mike dismounts. Pete goes to the mule and carefully unloads the body. He takes it straight to the run-down house.

PETE (CONT'D)

This was his house.

He softly puts him down in front of what used to be the door.

- 217 EXT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- DAY 217
- Pete and Mike are rebuilding the house. Across the walls they have placed several dead tree limbs over which they have laid many smaller yucca leaves to complete the roof.
- 218 INT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- DAY 218
- They plaster the cracks in the walls with mud.
- 219 EXT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- AFTERNOON 219
- Pete ties some branches together to create a primitive door. He hinges it with pieces of rope and hangs it handsomely in the front entrance.
- 220 EXT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- DAY 220
- Mike puts some small logs in the windows to reinforce them.
- 221 INT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- EVENING 221
- Dusk. Mike sweeps the floor with a mesquite branch. Pete continues to touch up the walls. It is a madman's home improvement project.
- 222 EXT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- NIGHT 222
- They are finished. It is not a great arrangement, but the house looks decent. By weaving several green vines together, Pete constructs a sign that says: "Jiménez, Coahuila" and when he's finished he puts it on a post.
- 223 INT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY, FIRST LIGHT OF THE NEXT MORNING 223
- The exhausted, ragged Mike is sprawled in the shade of a mesquite tree. Pete kicks his foot to awaken him.
- PETE
- Start digging.
- MIKE
- What?
- PETE
- You have to dig a grave.
- 224 EXT. RUINED HOUSE, MESQUITE TREE - LATER 224
- Mike is scratching in the ground with a stick and his bare, bleeding hands. Finally, he is unable to go on and collapses into the half dug grave he is working on. Pete grabs him by the hair and pulls him out of the grave and throws him to the base of the mesquite tree. Pete takes the polaroid photograph of Mel and his "family" out of his pocket and impales it on one of the tree's thorns.

PETE

Ask for forgiveness.

Mike looks at him, puzzled.

MIKE

What?

PETE

I said ask for forgiveness.

Mike doesn't know what to do.

PETE (CONT'D)

Ask for forgiveness right now. Or go
to hell...right now.

Mike blinks at the air around him. Pete fires a round from
his .45 between Mike's legs. The sound of it is thunderous.

MIKE

I'm sorry. I swear to god that...

He has trouble going on. He doesn't want to weep.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I swear to god that...

He turns to Pete.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I didn't want to kill him... it was
a mistake. I'm sorry, I really didn't
want it to happen. It hurts me...and
I regret it terribly... please...

He turns to the photograph.

MIKE (CONT'D)

...forgive me...Melquiades, for taking
your life...

Quietly, Pete walks away. Mike kneels down in front of the
picture, his eyes open, the palm of his hands uplifted, his
face toward heaven.

MIKE (CONT'D)

...forgive me...forgive me...

The sunset is blue and red and orange and gold.

225 EXT. JIMENEZ -- LATER

225

Mike and Pete carry Melquiades' body to the edge of the hole.

They lay him softly at the bottom of the hole. Mike starts
filling the grave with his bleeding hands. Pete calmly watches

the third burial of his friend. The rocks and dirt begin to obscure the dirty and torn blue blanket wrapped around Melquiades Estrada.

226 EXT. RUINED HOUSE, VALLEY -- NIGHT

226

Mike sleeps leaning against the wall. In the distance Pete stands next to the grave, lit by a small mesquite wood fire.

227 EXT. VALLEY -- MORNING

227

Mike is still asleep as the sun rises. We hear the distant gobble of a wild turkey. Melquiades's horse is tied to the tree. Pete is still at the grave, now mounted on the mule. The mesquite fire has gone out but its smoke is rising up into the wind.

Mike awakens and looks at Pete. He goes to the brook and kneels to wash his face. His wrists are scarred and hurt and his hands still bleed. When he lifts his head Pete is in front of him.

PETE

You can go now...

Mike stands on his feet, his face dripping water.

MIKE

Where?

PETE

To your wife. Wherever.

MIKE

I always thought you'd...

Mike looks off at the rising sun and thinks for a moment.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I thought you's end up killing me.

PETE

You can keep the horse, son.

Pete rides away. Mike sits on a rock and contemplates the valley and Melquiades's grave and Melquiades's strawberry roan.

He finally looks toward Pete's receding figure and calls out:

MIKE

You gonna be alright?

Pete keeps on riding.

THE END