

From Gringo To Grave

Written By

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TITLE CARD OVER BLACK:

An investigation conducted by **El Universal** reported branches of the **U.S. government** allowed the **Sinaloa** cartel to bring loads of drugs into the U.S., in exchange for information on rival Mexican cartels from 2000-2012...

\*

AND THEN:

... according to the paper, it's unclear whether these arrangements still exist....

\*

1 EXT. SOCCER FIELD -- DAWN

1

Practically a dirt parking lot. Weeds belched out of the ground, now trimmed down to look like turf.

Shriveled barbed wire sinks into the sand, but still offers extra security around the field.

Soccer balls of plenty litter the single field.

A hilly terrain beyond us, snaked with brush-filled canyon, goes from darkness to sunlight -- this is El Paso.

But we are not in El Paso -- we are in Ciudad Juárez.

-- A ROOSTER TAIL OF DUST --

Two tented BLACK SEDANS arrive.

An ARMED MAN comes out of each car. Probes the field.

2 INT. SEDAN -- SAME

2

MIDDLE SEAT. A sea of black hair. A face painted in top-of-the-line cosmetics. She touches up her lipstick. Ruby red. Meet Juarez's "queen", ESTRELLA ARMENDAREZ (32).

Kicking, rattling behind her. She slaps the back of her seat.

ESTRELLA  
Stop it!

ESTRELLA  
Ya paren!

BACK SEAT: ARTURO ARMENDAREZ (8) and PALOMA ARMENDAREZ (7).

They listen to mom. ARTURO, with a birthday balloon tied to his wrist, moves to the window. His eyes widen with anticipation.

ARTURO  
*Mom, look at all those balls!*

ARTURO  
 Mami, mira todos esos  
 balones!

ESTRELLA puts down her make-up bag. Peers out the window and sees the field lousy with soccer balls.

Her and the DRIVER share a look, suspect.

She dials a number. We are on SPEAKER PHONE:

<p>ESTRELLA  <i>You said the field was ours          for two hours, Amilcar!  <u>Fucking</u> soccer balls          everywhere.</i></p>	<p>ESTRELLA          Dijiste que el campo iba a          ser nuestro por dos horas,          Amilcar! Esta lleno de          pinches balones por todos          lados.</p>
--	--

PALOMA "flicks" her mom on the back of the neck for saying a "no-no" word. Her mom playfully swings her arm back at her.

<p>AMILCAR (V.O.)          (coarse/heavy voice)  <i>Youth league probably left          them last night.          (knows he's on speaker)          Enjoy, Arturo.</i></p>	<p>AMILCAR (V.O.)          (coarse/heavy voice)          La liga juvenil seguramente          los dejo ahí anoche.          (knows he's on speaker)          Disfrútalo, Arturo.</p>
---	--

Inaudible sound of a whore giggling into his phone. She hangs up, knows damn well he's sleeping around "again".

ESTRELLA glances between field and ARTURO's pleading eyes.

<p>ESTRELLA  <i>Okay.</i></p>	<p>ESTRELLA          Está bien.</p>
-----------------------------------	---

DRIVER unlocks the automatic doors.

3 EXT. SOCCER FIELD -- CONTINUOUS

3

ARTURO, PALOMA rush out of the SUV. About a half-dozen KIDS exit the SUV behind them.

Kids just being kids as they rush a soccer field, passing by two armed men. ARTURO leads the pack -- he's a star in the making.

He assumes a kicking position, swipes the first ball he sees.

Twists his ankle, trips over ball.

The other kids congregate around him. Their gaze is not on ARUTRO and his clumsiness, but at the cracked ball that now looks like flaked paint.

PALOMA goes to touch the ball, but ARTURO swats at her, except it's not so much a swat, but a punch -- right in her gut. It's his birthday, so he will do the "inspecting".

He peels the weathered leather off the soccer ball. The leather is not being pressurized/held up by your typical butyl rubber bladder...

... but by a beaten and smashed human head protruding out of the soil, buried.

ARTURO falls backwards. He's seen some shit before, but nothing like this.

PALOMA and the others flee back to the car.

Not ARTURO. He moves to the next ball, tears it open.

Another battered head.

Onto the next ball. Same thing. Dead men buried up to their neck.

The ARMED GUARDS rush to ARTURO as he violently rips away at every ball...

... but the next one he arrives on is different. Still a human head, but a familiar one.

GUARDS jerk their heads away as they vomit.

ESTRELLA is now out of the car, curious.

GUARD nods his head for her to get over here.

TIGHT ON the head as we PULL OUT to see ESTRELLA fall to her knees; her eyes well with tears as they cascade down her silky, cinnamon cheeks. She screams to the heavens, as she sucks in Juarez's dust.

ARTURO comforts his mom as she grieves...

**Happy Birthday, Arturo...**

4 EXT. MEXICAN FEDERAL HIGHWAY 45 -- SAME 4

TITLE CARD: **Medanos de Samalayuca**

An economy car leaves Juarez's city limits.

5 INT. CAR -- SAME 5

Slithers of sun light strike through the car like a single-edged razor.

TWO MEXICAN CHOLO-GANGSTERS in the front. They are armed.

BACK SEAT. Two men with black hoods over their face, wrists pinned behind their back. They bobble up and down, head thumping into the ripped roof.

Meet CARLOS (31) and the person known simply as "GRINGO" (32).

CARLOS  
I know people, you cholo-fucks.

CARLOS  
Conozco gente, pinches cholos culeros.

CHOLO #1 strikes CARLOS with the buttstock of his rifle.

GRINGO  
(pleads to Carlos)  
Shut the fuck up, man.

CARLOS coughs up blood and a tooth.

CARLOS  
You know who the fuck I am? I know important people in El Paso and Dallas.

CARLOS  
Sabes con quién estás hablando? Conozco gente importante en El Paso y Dallas.

The CHOLO-GANGSTERS share a laugh.

CHOLO #1  
We know people, too -- in D.C (to Gringo)  
Washington D.C.

CHOLO #1  
Nosotros también. En D.C (to Gringo)  
Washington D.C.

He hits CARLOS again. Then hits GRINGO.

CUT TO BLACK.

6 EXT. SAMALAYUCA FIELDS -- MORNING -- LATER

6

The warm morning sun rays pounding on our two now-shirtless characters, shovels in hand.

Near the Dunes, both men dig their graves.

CHOLO #2 has his AK47 trained on both of them. He uses the barrel of the gun to slightly pull down the back of the Gringo's pants, exposing a little ass crack.

\*  
\*  
\*

And then...

\*

He forces the barrel into the Gringo's ass.

\*

CHOLO #2  
 You like that, don't you  
 mother fucker?

                  CHOLO #2  
 Eso te gusta, ¿no es así,  
 hijo de puta?

The GRINGO recoils, but remains steadfast. CHOLO #2, not getting the reaction he hoped, manically fires the gun dozens of time in the air, until the barrel is cherry red, smoking; we can practically here the sizzle.

CHOLO #2 thrust the barrel into the GRINGO's ass again; GRINGO caterwauls to the skies.

                  CHOLO #2  
                   (chortles)  
                   Bitch.

CHOLO #1 opens up a hood of a nearby car. Bricks of cocaine (peacock logo). 50 kilos (street value of \$3MM).

                  CHOLO #1  
                   *Mucho.*  
                   (spread his arms widely)

CHOLO #2 nearly gets a boner. They pull the hoods off CARLOS and GRINGO, forced to stare down at the graves they just dug for themselves blindfolded...

                  CHOLO #1 (CONT)  
 Say your prayers.

                  CHOLO #1  
 Di tus ultimas palabras.

                  CARLOS  
                   (to Gringo)  
 You think they serve ice in heaven?  
 You know I don't like my whiskey  
 neat.

                  GRINGO  
                   (no pun intended)  
 Go to hell.

GRINGO closes his eyes, accepts his fate.

The sound of two guns cocking --

POP! POP! Two gun shots simultaneously.

TWO BODIES drop like a sack of potatoes into the pit --

-- but it's not our "guys", but the TWO CHOLO-GANGSTERS.

Our GRINGO's eyes narrow. *What just happened?*

He eyes CARLOS --

POP!

A bullet pierces through CARLOS' head, body falls forward on top of one of the gangsters.

GRINGO stares forward -- so scared his mouth is dry, wheezes like a steam engine...

RENETA (O.S.)  
Ah, fuckin' Gringo.

Meet our GRINGO's saviors:

RENETA, a fair-skinned, expressive eyed Mexican. **She is Juarez:** full of spirit, pain, sass, bitterness, and strength -- words that will become more evident as we get to know her.

JORGE, a round and hairy-faced Mexican. Slick-backed hair, dressed in black -- the Mexican version of Johnny Cash.

They both wield .40 calibers, smoke curls from the barrel.

GRINGO turns, manufactures a half-smile, hair spiked in all directions like Wolverine.

RENETA (CONT)  
You look like hell.

GRINGO  
You look...

She knows -- she holds her hand up for him to "save it".

RENETA looks at CARLOS' corpse, then back at JORGE -- nods.

JORGE, cig in mouth, pats CARLOS, then moves to his shoes, feels around the sole. **Aha!** Looks to RENETA. She knows.

RENETA  
Ah, Gringo.

ROLL OPENING CREDITS, as we:

7

EXT. CAR -- JUAREZ CITY LIMITS -- CONTINUOUS

7

HIGH ABOVE the city -- Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission, Antigua Presidencia Municipal, "La Biblia es la verdad Leela" mountain -- then we CUT TO:

The heart of Juarez as WE FOLLOW a SEDAN through these ancient city streets. Broken glass glitter the sunken roads. Sewage wafting down the lanes. Buses and cars cut in and out. Colorful murals bring life to the drab desert landscape





9 EXT. CITY OF JUAREZ -- CONTINUOUS

9

MORE QUICK SHOTS: The city boils at 107 degrees, but she is still electric. Almost divided by an invisible line made of blood separate the rich from the poor. Massive gated communities with golden domes sit opposite of sprawling slums; shacks and adobes stacked on top of each other made of cardboard -- literally.

But in between her faults and scars, is charm and grace, a rustic charm -- families carrying groceries, youth heading to Mass, food vendors soliciting their dish, women coming out of beauty parlors, and no shortage of discotheques.

This is Juarez -- *and she goes by **femme fatale**.*

RENETA (V.O.)  
Who paid the tab?

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Me.

RENETA (V.O.)  
Fuckin', Gringo.

END OPENING CREDITS

10 EXT. MANSION -- DAY

10

Brilliant columns rise at the porticos. Gargantuan windows soaring three stories high. So much flash and gilt. Each shade of the rainbow represented in the paint job.

This is NARCROTECTURE at its finest.

We PUSH IN on a specific room; the sound of sloppy sex.

CUT TO:

11 INT. AMILCAR ARMENDAREZ'S OFFICE -- SAME

11

**NOTE: We never see Amilcar's face.**

We are TIGHT ON a dark-skinned Mexican woman's face, ROSA MARÍA (23), eyes rolled back, her teeth piercing into her lips. She moans. She fakes an orgasm, but she's believable.

ROSA MARÍA	ROSA MARÍA
Ah, yes! Yes! Cum in me, big papi!	Oh, sí! sí! Vente en mi papasito!

We now see the outline of AMILCAR ARMENDAREZ, a fat fuck, bloated belly, swimming in gold jewelry. Leader of the **Juarez Cartel**.

Angered, he pulls away from her, yanks the back of her hair, twists it in order to position her face towards him --

AMILCAR	AMILCAR
<i>I don't cum in las morenitas whores!</i>	No me vengo en zorras morenas!

He turns her around, aggressively palms her face. He fucks her from the front, until --

-- the door swings open.

ROSA, in an awkward angle, pulls her head back, sees ESTRELLA in the doorway.

ROSA rushes for her clothes, sprints to the door. When she tries to cross ESTRELLA she flinches.

ESTRELLA	ESTRELLA
(Insulted) <i>Don't flinch. You think you are the first girl?</i>	No te espantes. Crees que eres la primera?

She mouths "lo siento" and sees herself out.

ESTRELLA charges at AMILCAR, strikes him in the face multiple times, until he maintains a grip of her. Throws her up against the wall.

AMILCAR	AMILCAR
<i>Get a hold of yourself. That bitch ain't important to me.</i>	Tranquilízate. Esa zorra ni me importa.

ESTRELLA	ESTRELLA
<i>You, fucking swine!</i>	Maldito cerdo!

She pulls out a gun and pins it under his chin.

ESTRELLA (CONT)	ESTRELLA
<i>The entire field was a graveyard!</i> ( <i>off his unwavering stare</i> ) My <b>brother</b> Diego is dead, Amilcar!!	Asesinaron a mi hermano! Todo el campo era un cementerio. ( <i>off his unwavering stare</i> ) Diego está muerto, Amilcar!!

He moves away from her, knowing full-well she knows better than to shoot. He faces the window, his back facing us. Takes a drag from a cigarette.

AMILCAR	AMILCAR
<i>He was getting sloppy.</i>	Ya la estaba cagando mucho.

ESTRELLA pauses, puzzled by that comment. Lowers gun.

AMILCAR (CONT)

*He lost his third load in a month. Fuck, Estrella, you know there are overhead prices for bribes, muscle.*

*(beat)*

*Parlay that with whores and his coke habit, the cabrón cost me hundreds of thousands.*

*(dead serious)*

*Would you rather me hold you responsible for his debt?*

AMILCAR

*No mames Estrella. Perdió tres cargas en un mes. Sabes que un error así tiene su precio.*

*(beat)*

*A eso agrégale putas y coca, ese cabrón me costo miles.*

*(dead serious)*

*Hubieras preferido que te hiciera responsable de su deuda?*

A light bulb moment for her. We can see it in her expression. Thirty-two years on this planet, and she finally has the bastard pegged...

\*

ESTRELLA

*You had him killed?*

ESTRELLA

*Tu hiciste que lo mataran?*

AMILCAR

*No. He had himself killed.*

AMILCAR

*No. Él solo se lo ganó.*

She raises gun back at AMILCAR, determined more than ever.

ESTRELLA

*Our son and daughter were there...*

ESTRELLA

*Nuestros hijos estaban ahí...*

She grips the trigger. AMILCAR looks over her shoulder:

AMILCAR

*You excited for your tu fiesta de cumpleaños?*

AMILCAR

*Estás emocionado por tu fiesta de cumpleaños?*

She turns to the doorway, where ARTURO and PALOMA are holding hands, watch their mother about to murder their father.

AMILCAR (CONT)

*Mama has gone a little loca.*

*(to Estrella)*

*Isn't that right, mama?*

AMILCAR

*A mami se le botó un poquito la canica.*

*(to Estrella)*

*Verdad, mami?*

PRE-LAP -- OUTSIDE CHATTER...

SISTER JOSELYN (V.O.)

*Thank you again for inviting Paloma's entire class to the birthday party...*

SISTER JOSELYN (V.O.)

*Gracias de nuevo por invitar a toda la clase de Paloma a la fiesta...*

12

EXT. MANSION -- COURTYARD -- LATER

12

An old world exterior Spanish Villa with heavy plaster, rich blues and oranges, arches galore.

WE FOLLOW BIANCA (22), a server, walking with a tray full of drinks through GROUP OF WORKERS setting up for the party.

She swings her hips like a streetwalker. The bottom portion of her scoop neck mini dress is tucked into her panties.

She reaches SISTER JOSELYN (34), a nun, in her traditional garments, who sits opposite of ESTRELLA.

ESTRELLA notices BIANCA's panties (not to mention the slight nose bleed from coke). She knows all too well where she's "been". She turns her head in disgust.

BIANCA removes the water pitcher, bottle of wine, and glasses from her tray. ESTRELLA shoos her off before she pours. \*

SISTER JOSELYN (CONT)  
*.. the kids are so excited.  
 All they've been talking  
 about all week is what they  
 will get painted on their  
 face.*

SISTER JOSELYN  
 ...los niños están muy  
 emocionados. De lo único que  
 han estado hablando toda la  
 semana es de cómo se van a  
 pintar la cara.

ESTRELLA feigns a fragile smile. Pours JOSELYN a glass of wine. She kindly declines -- ESTRELLA downs it herself.

ESTRELLA watches as the WORKERS turn her outside patio into a fiesta for the ages: piñatas, colorful cloths draped over tables, mini Mexican flags on each tabletop, gourmet dishes - even a mariachi band setting up.

ESTRELLA can feel JOSELYN's glare as she watches.

ESTRELLA  
*Something else on your mind,  
 Sister?*

ESTRELLA  
 Te pasa algo, hermana?

SISTER JOSELYN  
*As a matter of fact, there  
 is.  
 (leans in)  
 When I had Arturo 2 years  
 ago, I was impressed with his  
 English.*

SISTER JOSELYN  
 De hecho, sí. Cuando Arturo  
 estuvo conmigo hace unos  
 años, me impresionó con su  
 Inglés. \*

ESTRELLA holds up her glass, "salud".

SISTER JOSELYN (CONT)  
*But, I can't say the same  
 about Paloma. In fact, she  
 can't speak a word.*

SISTER JOSELYN  
 Pero, no puedo decir lo mismo  
 de Paloma. De hecho, no sabe  
 ni una palabra. \*

ESTRELLA swirls her wine around. Spots something in her glass, picks at it.

SISTER JOSELYN (CONT)  
Does this not concern you?

SISTER JOSELYN  
No te preocupa ésto?

ESTRELLA  
Amilcar forbids it.

ESTRELLA  
Amilcar lo prohíbe.

JOSELYN  
(giggles)  
Forbids it? You're kidding, right? Arturo's English is just as good as his Spanish.

JOSELYN  
Lo prohíbe? Estás bromeando verdad? El inglés de Arturo es igual de bueno que su Español.

ESTRELLA  
Amilcar doesn't believe women should learn the language, let alone travel there. Sure you can appreciate why.

ESTRELLA  
Amilcar cree que las mujeres no deberían aprender el idioma, o mucho menos viajar solas. Seguro puedes imaginar por qué.

JOSELYN  
No, I really can't.  
(beat)  
Do you speak English, Mrs. Armendarez?

JOSELYN  
No, la verdad no puedo.  
Do you speak English, Mrs. Armendarez?

ESTRELLA looks over her shoulder, and for the first time thus far, speaks English:

ESTRELLA  
Fluently. But never in front of Amilcar.

JOSELYN  
Have you considered, maybe, teaching her privately?

ESTRELLA summons up a half-ass laugh. She grabs onto JOSELYN's hand, then whispers into her ear:

ESTRELLA  
You don't know Amilcar Armendarez very well do you?

JOSELYN  
(perplexed)  
Are you saying he does things behind locked doors?

ESTRELLA  
And locked phones.

ESTRELLA lights a cigarette, blows a billow of smoke around JOSELYN'S rosy cheeks. Raises out of her seat --

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

ESTRELLA  
*I need to prep the cake.  
 Please excuse me.*

ESTRELLA  
 Necesito preparar el pastel.  
 Discúlpame.

ESTRELLA takes one more puff, then flicks cig into bushes.

PRE-LAP -- SOUND OF FRYING...

RENETA (V.O.)  
 So, let me get this straight: you  
 picked up our coke from **Jorge's guy**  
 in **Villa Ahumada...**

CUT TO:

13

EXT. CAFE UNO -- DAY -- CONTINUOUS

13

Under a canopy a line of HEAVY WOMEN, despair in their eyes,  
 turn vegetables into salsa. The slicing of the vegetables  
 almost has a majestic beat to it.

GRINGO, RENETA, JORGE at a picnic table a few feet away.  
 Several pitchers of beer.

RENETA  
 ... and somewhere along the way back  
 Carlos met some girls who drove you  
 (rolls eyes)  
 to a bourbon bar. Carlos then  
 secretly sells our stash, gets  
 caught by some cholos?  
 (Gringo nods)  
 Carlos is then threatened, thus  
 giving up the location of your car  
 with our 50 kilos.  
 (off his look)  
 Leave anything out?

GRINGO chugs beer. Hair is a mess, spiked every which way.

GRINGO  
 'Bout sums it up.

JORGE grinds his cig into the table.

JORGE  
*Something is bothering me...*      JORGE  
 Hay algo que me esta  
 molestando...

Gets up, spits in both hands, walks behind GRINGO.

GRINGO  
 (to Reneta)  
 What the fuck is going on?

JORGE reaches in his back pocket, pulls out a plastic comb.

He uses his saliva to wet down GRINGO's hair, then parts it to the side. GRINGO jerks away, but JORGE has a firm grip.

JORGE  
Relax, Gringo. Let it happen.

Done. It looks, well, a little bit better...

JORGE's phone rings. He looks at caller, then at RENETA -- it's a call they were expecting. JORGE walks out of earshot.

OWNER (60) of the café brings them their dish. \*

While inaudible, JORGE is visually steamed.

GRINGO  
Who's that?

RENETA  
The plaza is in trouble. Juarez is no longer happy with the level of "muscle" **La Línea** is providing.  
(points to Jorge with fork)  
Armendarez is handing it over to **Barrio Azteca**. \*

GRINGO  
(half-interested)  
What does that mean for you? \*

RENETA  
(points at Gringo)  
Means that "we" control the movement of coke and muscle for Juarez. \*

GRINGO  
You're not even Azteca. \*

RENETA  
We're contracted. Jorge said the CIA are days away from taking down major players. It's our chance to move up. \*

ANGLE ON JORGE on phone: \*

JORGE  
*Thirty-fucking seconds is all it should take! 2 cops block each end. One sicario. One shot. Then the coup de grâce. (beat) Who the fuck ordered these "kids" to spray 300 rounds on one target!?*

JORGE  
*Treinta putos segundos es lo que se necesita! 2 policías bloqueando cada lado. Un sicario. Un tiro. Después, el tiro de gracia. (beat) Quien chingados mandó rafaguearlos!?*

People start to stare. JORGE moves behind the hut.

BACK TO RENETA, GRINGO

GRINGO coughs -- either he doesn't take her serious or he's about to throw up. \*

GRINGO  
Ahumada was crawling with new faces.

RENETA  
Might be Sinaloa. Things are changing, Gringo. Juarez needs us more than ever. \*

GRINGO waves her off. Sweat drips off his nose and chin, from the heat or **something else**.

JORGE reappears, still on the phone. His demeanor has changed. Relaxed.

GRINGO  
I leave for Phoenix in the AM.

RENETA  
Give your mom my best.

GRINGO  
She only has 2 weeks left to live.

RENETA  
Then give her her last rights.

GRINGO playfully flicks her off.

RENETA (CONT)  
Don't stay too long. I can really use you right now.

RENETA scoots him an envelope with wad of cash. It's thick. He peels it open with his pinkie, slides out about \$40 -- there is well-over **\$10K** in there. He slides it back.

She pushes it back (it's his, he earned it), but he refuses.

RENETA  
Keep your eyes open when you cross tomorrow. These are strange times in Juarez.

GRINGO  
I want out. \*

RENETA  
No one gets out. \*



GRINGO  
I'm not coming back to Juarez.

RENETA  
Ah, Gringo. You love Juárez too  
much. And you know why...

GRINGO nods, he's ready to be "enlightened". RENETA takes a  
big bite of food, speaks as she chews:

RENETA  
... it's not the after parties, or  
the adrenalin rush you get when  
you're the only Gringo in the room,  
and it's certainly not the  
landscape...  
(she pauses)  
It's the people. They have heart.  
And you love that.

He smiles warmly, and then:

GRINGO  
I don't like the heat.

RENETA stands up. Pays the tab...

RENETA  
What's that American song you  
gringos love... Hotel... California?

... leaves a generous tip.

RENETA  
*"You can check out anytime you want,  
but you can never leave."*

GRINGO stares at her, quiet as a mouse.

BACK TO JORGE laughing hysterically. He drops his phone..

... and WE HEAR the sound of a girl giggling.

RENETA turns to the sound --

RENETA  
*Is that the bitch from  
Praxedis!?*

RENETA  
No me digas que es la pinche  
vieja de Praxedis!?

RENETA charges at JORGE, he hurries to pick up the phone --

-- too late. She takes the phone and heaves it over a fence.

JORGE runs after his phone.

GRINGO  
Why you still married to him?

She leans in, kisses him on the cheek.

RENETA  
Call me when you get to Phoenix, ya?

He nods "yes".

AT THE FENCE, JORGE climbs over without any trouble. Grabs his phone, hops back over.

JORGE  
(to himself, laughs)  
And Trump thought a wall  
would keep us out.

JORGE  
(to himself, laughs)  
Y Trump cree que con un muro  
nos va a detener.

\*  
\*

BACK TO RENETA, GRINGO. His face is flushed.

GRINGO  
By the way, how did you know where  
to find us?

RENETA  
Bar owner called me. Oh, and by the  
way, they weren't serving you  
bourbon.

And just like that the GRINGO throws up -- *who the hell knows what was in his drinks.*

PRE LAP -- SOUND OF MARIACHI BAND PLAYING...

14 EXT. MANSION -- COURTYARD -- EVENING

14

In the corner of the courtyard a mariachi band finishes.

ANGLE ON BIANCA and ARTURO away from the crowd. BIANCA puts a blindfold over ARTURO's eyes. She hands him a pinata bat.

\*

BIANCA  
*Now, remember, the trick to  
hitting a pinata on your  
first swing is to listen to  
the crowd. If you are close  
you will hear gasps -- if you  
are far, you will hear  
laughs.*

BIANCA  
Recuerda, el truco para  
pegarle a la piñata, es  
escuchar a la gente. Si estás  
cerca vas a escuchar porras,  
si estás lejos, vas a  
escuchar risas.

She playfully spins him in circles.

BIANCA  
You think you can handle  
that?

BIANCA  
Crees que puedes con esto?

He's bursting with anticipation. Enough practice, he wants the real thing. He swings the bat at her.

As she guides him to the main floor, ESTRELLA grabs his arm.

ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
*I got this from here.*

ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
De aquí me encargo yo.

BIANCA takes the hint, leaves.

ARTURO, with his mom holding his arm, takes a step forward. She turns him in a different direction.

ESTRELLA  
Wrong way.

CUT TO:

15

INT. ESTRELLA'S CAR -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

15

TIGHT ON ARTURO in the backseat. Blindfold still on.

ARTURO  
*Mom, what's going on?*

ARTURO  
Mami, que está pasando?

A hand reaches over, takes off the blindfold.

ARTURO spots PALOMA next to him. Duffel bags on floorboard.

ARTURO  
*Mom?*

ARTURO  
Ma?

ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
*Baby, we have to get out of here.*

ESTRELLA  
Mi amor, nos tenemos que ir de aquí.

ARTURO  
*I want to go back to the party!*

ARTURO  
Quiero volver a la fiesta!

ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
*No, baby. But I'll throw you a huge party in a few days, okay?*

ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
No podemos mi amor. Pero en unos días te haré otra, sí?

ARTURO pouts. Once realizing backseat doors are locked, he bangs his hands against the window.

ESTRELLA, in silhouette, reaches the end of the driveway, slows down when she sees GUARDS fraternizing with the "help".

She reaches back to ARTURO, holds him. We now see her face: severely bruised, swollen.

ESTRELLA	ESTRELLA
We have to leave, Arturo. You	Nos tenemos que ir Arturo.
have to believe me.	Tienes que confiar en mi.

He looks to PALOMA who pleads with her eyes for him to stay.

And boom -- just like a wild dog, ARTURO climbs over the passenger's seat, opens car door, flees.

16      EXT. DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS      16

He races back to house. Stops, turns, stares back at car...

17      INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS      17

ESTRELLA watches ARTURO in the rear view mirror.

Beat. He turns on his heel, sprints towards the house. **His loyalty is to dad.**

She puts the car in reverse, looks back at PALOMA, studies her innocent face, considers...

FADE TO:

18      EXT. EL BAR -- NIGHT      18

Nothing to look twice at. Hole in the wall, single door sort of place. Oh, and there is a GUY pissing against the wall...

19      INT. EL BAR -- JUAREZ -- NIGHT -- LATER      19

GRINGO smiles at a bar fly several stools down, let's call her LOLA. She's Mexican, wavy long hair, detached/withdrawn from the world.

Being friendly, our GRINGO smiles at her; goes to speak, and then:

LOLA	LOLA
(looks straight ahead)	(looks straight ahead)
Not interested. Move along.	No interesada, muévete.

He shrugs; it's whatever. He polishes off his drink. Slides it down the bar.

GRINGO  
Another Oaxacan old fashioned, por favor.

The mammoth, tatted butch MEXICAN BAR-BACK snarls at him. The bar-back is a "lady". From the back appears VALENTINA (37).

She posses a confidence that shows in her stride, demeanor.  
Points for BAR-BACK to chill.

She tends to our GRINGO.

VALENTINA  
Oaxaca, huh? Long way from home,  
honey.

GRINGO  
I'm from here.

She mixes the drink. She knows her way around a bar. She  
grabs a straw, dips it into drink, tastes. Perfecto!

GRINGO (CONT)  
Haven't seen you here before.

VALENTINA  
I usually work in the back.

GRINGO  
Busgirl? Janitor?

VALENTINA  
Try owner.

GRINGO  
Get out of here.

VALENTINA  
You don't think a woman in Juarez  
can own an establishment?

He sinks in his seat, feels as small as a fruit fly.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
Relax, white boy. My husband bought  
it for me.  
(off his look)  
He's not involved. In fact, he hates  
drinking.

GRINGO  
Can't trust a man who doesn't drink.

She watches as he takes another sip, studies him.

GRINGO (CONT)  
How much you pay for protection  
here?  
(she's taken back)  
No, I mean, it's just... I know  
Armendarez controls this district.  
He makes people pay for protection.

VALENTINA  
I don't pay.

GRINGO  
(chuckles/kidding)  
Why, you work for him or something? \*

VALENTINA  
Yes.

GRINGO  
Oh.

Her gaze doesn't leave the GRINGO. He raises glass, a toast:

GRINGO  
I think I kinda do, too.

VALENTINA  
You think?

GRINGO  
Fuck, I don't know. What, between El Paso and Juarez there are like 100 gangs that work for the Juarez Cartel?

VALENTINA  
(positive)  
Try **300**.

GRINGO  
I work, well, used to work for one. Well, not one. Well, one person. **She.**  
(beat)  
Yeah. I work for her. But more as a favor... or maybe a punishment?

VALENTINA  
You lost me, white boy.

GRINGO  
Yeah.

GRINGO notices LOLA is still alone, drinking.

VALENTINA  
She won't go for you.

GRINGO  
Attached?

VALENTINA  
She doesn't trust people who can't speak Spanish.

GRINGO flashes her a "look".

She makes him another drink. BAR-BACK stares daggers.

VALENTINA (CONT)  
So who is "**she**". The one you "work"  
for.

GRINGO  
Reneta Machuca.

Sinks in his seat; wishes he didn't say that.

VALENTINA  
Never heard of her.

GRINGO  
Yeah. This city seems to forget  
'bout a lot of people, huh?

VALENTINA  
Not if you are important.

Our GRINGO gets the hint, raises his glass again: touché.

GRINGO  
I'm going to Phoenix tomorrow.

VALENTINA  
Okay. Why the fuck do I care?

GRINGO  
Just want to change the subject.

VALENTINA  
What's in Phoenix?

GRINGO  
My mother. She's dying of liver  
cancer.

VALENTINA  
I'm sorry.

He finishes off his drink.

GRINGO  
She can't afford the chemo therapy.

VALENTINA  
Then you pay for it.

GRINGO  
I don't have that kind of money.

VALENTINA  
When you coming back?

GRINGO  
Never.

PHONE RINGS. BAR-BACK hands VALENTINA the phone. She steps in the back.

BAR-BACK pushes the GRINGO off his stole.

BAR-BACK	BAR-BACK
<i>Get the fuck out of here,</i>	Lárgate pendejo! No
<i>asshole, you don't belong</i>	perteneces aquí.
<i>here.</i>	

GRINGO gets back onto his stool.

BAR-BACK (CONT)  
I don't think you heard me. **In**  
**Juarez we don't ask twice.**

She wipes the bar top with GRINGO's face. GRINGO bounces up. She takes a swing at him; he blocks her, presses his finger against her parotid lymph node, brings her to her knees.

GRINGO turns, where he's now face-to-face with VALENTINA.

VALENTINA  
Where did you learn that?

GRINGO  
Army.

VALENTINA  
Want to fuck?

CUT TO:

20     EXT. OSCURO MOTEL -- JUAREZ -- SHORTLY AFTER     20

Soft aqua paint job. Single-story roach motel.

21     INT. GRINGO'S ROOM -- OSCURO MOTEL - CONTINUOUS     21

We are on VALENTINA, waist up, bobbing up and down. She's almost there --

-- PHONE RINGS --

She ignores it for a second, tries to finish, but her concentration is now broke.



VALENTINA  
 Son-of-a-bitch, can I get off just  
 once!?

She hobbles to the phone, sheet wrapped around her naked  
 body. GRINGO sprawled out on the bed like an eagle.

VALENTINA  
 (into phone)  
 What!??

22      EXT. OSCURO MOTEL -- DIFFERENT ROOM -- LATER      22

TIGHT ON a key card inserted into a lock on the door.  
 VALENTINA holds the door open, pushes two people, who are in  
 silhouette, inside

She looks over her shoulder -- closes door behind her.

23      INT. BATHROOM -- MOTEL -- SHORTLY AFTER      23

VALENTINA squirts a generous portion of shampoo into the palm  
 of her hand.

She moves to the edge of the tub. PALOMA's head is popping  
 out of the water, covered in make-shift bubbles and brownish-  
 water. She applies the shampoo to PALOMA's hair.

VALENTINA	VALENTINA
<i>You know you get that shine</i>	<i>Si sabes que sacaste ese</i>
<i>from your Auntie, right?</i>	<i>brillo de tu tía, verdad?</i>

PALOMA looks utterly defeated and terrified.

24      INT. ROOM -- MOTEL -- MOMENTS LATER      24

VALENTINA gently closes bathroom door behind her.

BUZZING, as the exhaust fans purrs, spewing dust from its  
 fan. Stains on carpet and walls. No drawers in the dresser.

At the edge of the bed sits ESTRELLA. She manically smokes a  
 cigarette, using the carpet as her ashtray. She is putrid,  
 filth all up and down her body.

ESTRELLA	ESTRELLA
<i>How'd you end up in this</i>	<i>Cómo terminaste en este</i>
<i>barrio?</i>	<i>barrio?</i>

Sees her bite marks, stockings ripped. ESTRELLA gets it.

ESTRELLA (CONT)	ESTRELLA (CONT)
<i>Are you going to be okay?</i>	<i>Vas a estar bien?</i>

VALENTINA  
*I'm fine. I'm more worried  
 about you.*

VALENTINA  
 Estoy bien. La que me  
 preocupa eres tú.

ESTRELLA  
*How can you be so calm  
 knowing **Diego** was murdered!?*

ESTRELLA  
 Cómo puedes estar tan  
 tranquila sabiendo que  
 asesinaron a Diego?

VALENTINA  
*Ah, he had it coming.*

VALENTINA  
 Ah, él ya lo veía venir.

ESTRELLA  
*Jesus, Valentina. He was the  
**father** of your kids!? Where  
 are they?*

ESTRELLA  
 Por Dios Valentina. Era el  
 papá de tus hijos?! Dónde  
 están?

VALENTINA  
*Eh, he was the father of many  
 kids.  
 (beat)  
 They're in Guatemala visiting  
 my dad.*

VALENTINA  
 Eh, era el papá de varios.  
 Están en Guatemala visitando  
 a mi papá.

VALENTINA cracks door open, hears PALOMA singing. VAL speaks:

VALENTINA (CONT)  
 What are you going to do?

ESTRELLA  
 Cross tonight.

VALENTINA  
 No, you aren't.

ESTRELLA  
 I have too! His slew of holigan  
 retinues shot at my car. We smashed  
 into a fucking pole! My fucking  
 daughter was in the car.

VALENTINA  
 You two can't cross together.

She takes a drag of ESTRELLA's cig.

VALENTINA (CONT.)  
 One crosses tonight. The other  
 tomorrow.

ESTRELLA  
 You think I'm handing by seven year-  
 old girl to some drug-induced  
 coyote?

VALENTINA

You might as well be the "most wanted" woman in North America. They will shoot you in the face when you cross. You want Paloma to see that?

She scoots closer to ESTRELLA.

ESTRELLA

You're out of your fucking mind, Val. It's out of the question. We both cross tonight.

ESTRELLA walks to a smeared mirror. Dabs a little water from a bottle into her hands, tries to rub off some of the dirt.

VAL stands behind ESTRELLA. Pulls out a hair tie and pulls ESTRELLA's hair out of her eyes.

VALENTINA

You want my help?

ESTRELLA

(unsure now)  
Yes?

VALENTINA

You and Paloma can't cross together.

ESTRELLA

You can't take her. There will be eyes on you, too.

VAL closes the bathroom door.

VALENTINA

*How much money do you have on you?*

VALENTINA

Cuanto dinero tienes?

ESTRELLA

*I'm **not** paying a **coyote**.*

ESTRELLA

No voy a pagar un coyote.

VALENTINA

*What if **he** wasn't a coyote?*

VALENTINA

Y qué si no es un coyote?

FADE TO:

25

INT. GRINGO'S ROOM -- OSCURO MOTEL - EARLY MORNING

25

A thick, colorful substance sprays on the screen.

ANGLE ON GRINGO puking in the toilet -- this is a morning ritual for the lad.

With his face still in the toilet, he turns the shower faucet on to scolding **hot** unintentionally.

Once throwing Mexican's finest beer back into Mexico's sewage system, he peels himself up, scoots into the shower -- SCREAMS from his hair being singed off.

QUICK SHOTS of him washing his hair and under his arms. He sticks his arm out of the shower curtain, reaches for a towel. He feels around towel rack, knowing damn-well there was one there. Peeved, he pulls back the curtain --

-- VALENTINA is holding the last towel, twirling it.

She gazes at his nude body.

VALENTINA

Last night I felt like you were bigger.

Off his look...

26

INT. OSCURO MOTEL ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

26

By the looks of it, this isn't just his room -- but his home. GRINGO finishes shaving over a bowl of water on his dresser with a mirror bolted to it. He applies aftershave.

GRINGO

There's no way in hell.

VALENTINA

She's prepared to pay upwards of 5 grand.

GRINGO

(pause, shakes head "no")  
It's suicide.

VALENTINA

Your mom, she will need chemo treatment.

GRINGO

We are past chemo -- but wouldn't cover it anyhow.

VALENTINA

How 'bout funeral arrangements?

This gets his attention -- shortly.

VALENTINA (V.O.)

Embalming. Casket. Priest.

GRINGO  
I'm more spiritual than religious.

VALENTINA  
Hearse. Cost of the lot! It's your  
mother's funeral, for Christ's sake!  
(had enough)  
We are talking big money here! **8**  
**grand**. Final offer.

Gringo gets into VALENTINA's face to make this crystal clear:

GRINGO  
I move drugs from Central Mexico to  
Northern Mexico. I'm not even good  
at that. I've never once moved an  
ounce of coke into the US, let alone  
a child.

GRINGO takes her by the arm and escorts her to the door.

He throws her out, shuts the door, but she blocks it with her  
arm, wiggles her way back in.

VALENTINA  
I know about **Letizia**.

27 EXT. STREETS -- JUAREZ -- SAME

27

TITLE CARD: **PUERTO DE ANAPRA**

We are in a carpet of slums. Loose homes stacked on top of  
each other, some hoisted by rubber tires. Shapeless, blank  
faces wander the streets. Black exhaust everywhere. Trees,  
leaves struggle to survive. Unleashed dogs barking, snarling,  
roaming around.

28 INT. RENETA'S CAR -- MOVING -- SAME

28

RENETA at the wheel, JORGE in the passenger's seat, clipping  
his dirty toe nails on the dashboard.

JORGE  
*You know I don't like coming  
to Anapra.  
(waits)  
Fuckin' place reeks.*

JORGE  
*Sabes que no me gusta venir a  
Anapra.  
(waits)  
Pinche lugar apesta.*

RENETA  
*Stop clipping your God damn  
toenails!*

RENETA  
*Deja de cortarte las malditas  
uñas de los pies!*

JORGE backs off, put his arms in the air. Beat. Then tosses  
the toe nail clipper out the window.

-- RENETA SLAMS ON THE BREAKS --

RENETA  
Go get it.

RENETÉ  
Ve por él.

JORGE  
*Fuck off, Reneta. This place  
is littered with waste.*

JORGE  
No chingues, Renata. Éste  
lugar esta lleno de basura.

She draws a gun on him. Her eyes tell us she's never been  
more serious in her life.

He opens the car door...

29

EXT. CHURCH -- LATER

29

An elderly priest, FATHER GABARAIN, a man who has aged well,  
speaks with RENETA. They both sit on a crumbling staircase.

FATHER GABARAIN  
*Reneta, while your gesture  
does not go unnoticed, I can  
not accept this.*

FATHER GABARAIN  
Renata, es un gran gesto,  
pero no puedo aceptarlo.

GABARAIN hands an envelope of cash back to RENETA.

RENETA  
*Father, please.*

RENETA  
Padre, por favor.

GABARAIN shakes his head "no".

RENETA  
*Does the congregation know?*

RENETA  
La congregación sabe?

FATHER GABARAIN  
*They know. But what can one  
do?*

FATHER GABARAIN  
Lo saben. Pero que podemos  
hacer?

RENETA  
*Tithe.*

RENETA  
Diezmo.

She opens his coat jacket and slips the envelope in.

JORGE BACK AT THE CAR

chats it up with someone on the phone while chugging a beer,  
but it's not a casual convo, but more formal. Then -- a KNOCK  
on the window.

MEXICAN BOY (10) holds out his palms...

JORGE  
No dinero.

The BOY, sunken eyes, clearly suffers from vitamin deficiencies, pleads...

JORGE reaches under the driver's seat, pops the HOOD.

BOY bolts to trunk. Bins on top of bins. In it: papayas, pears, bananas. BOY knows what the fruit is there for (he's seen this before).

He tears into them as if it's Christmas morning. The fruit is covering bricks of coke (and baggies), PEACOCK label exposed. The BOY is careful not to disturb the coke. He takes as much fruit as his little arms can carry.

LITTLE BOY  
(as he runs off)  
Gracias señor!!!

RENETA, GABARAIN

FATHER GABARÁIN  
*I can not take drug money. It is not right.*

FATHER GABARÁIN  
No puedo aceptar dinero de las drogas. No es correcto.

RENETA  
*Armendarez already has eyes on this place. This will just be another death house or stash house once you foreclose.*

RENETA  
Armendariz ya sabe de éste lugar. Después de que se anuncie la hipoteca, este lugar solo sera usado clandestinamente... prostitución, drogas...

She points to the evident poverty surrounding this barrio.

RENETA (CONT)  
*It's not up for discussion, father. These people need this church. I needed this church. What you did for me and my mother, and then when I got **pregnant**... (chokes up) ...deserves... no, demands this money.*

RENETA (CONT)  
No está a discusión, padre. La gente necesita ésta Iglesia. Yo necesité ésta Iglesia. Lo que usted hizo por mi mamá y por mi, y cuando me embaracé... (chokes up) ...merece... no, necesita éste dinero.

GABARAIN removes the money from his jacket. Throws it on the step below them.

FATHER GABARÁIN  
*"Needed" is the key word, Reneta. You must always "need" the Lord.*

FATHER GABARAIN  
"Necesité" es la palabra clave, Renata. Siempre debes necesitar al Señor.

RENETA gets up, moves about...

RENETA (CONT)  
No, I know, but --

RENETA  
No, lo sé, pero --

-- PHONE RINGS --

RENETA (CONT)  
Sorry, about that.

RENETA  
Perdón.

She reaches in her pocket, MUTES the call.

RENETA (CONT)  
I don't want the people here  
to know what I do, it would  
be --

RENETA  
No quiero que la gente de  
aquí sepa a lo que me dedico  
ahora, sería--

-- PHONE RINGS AGAIN --

RENETA (CONT)  
Fuck.

RENETA  
Mierda.

Realizes what she said. She checks phone. She holds up her  
finger for FATHER to wait a short second.

RENETA  
(on phone)  
This isn't a good time.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
What are you doin'?

RENETA politely smiles at the FATHER, turns so he can't read  
her lips.

RENETA  
This isn't a good fucking time,  
Gringo

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Did you hear Armendarez's wife and  
girl are missing?

RENETA  
That's old news, Gringo.

CUT TO:

30 INT. CAR -- DRIVING -- SAME

30

GRINGO driving.

GRINGO  
Ya, yeah it is.  
(looks in rear view mirror)  
What if I told you I had her?



We now see a GIRL (6ish) in the rear view mirror, we've never seen her before. AND THEN she morphs into PALOMA. Gringo's eyes play tricks on him. Paloma studies this white boy...

31 EXT. CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

31

RENETA takes the envelope and slams it against GABARAIN's chest. Moves out of earshot.

RENETA  
No, you don't.  
(silence on his end)  
Don't fuck with me.

RENETA marches down the sidewalk --

RENETA (CONT)  
If you have her, describe her!

32 INT. CAR -- SAME

32

GRINGO turns his head back to her. PALOMA's hair is shorter, with **blonde** streaks.

GRINGO  
**Black.**

RENETA (V.O.)  
We all have black hair, asshole.

GRINGO  
I met a girl in Monterrey who had red hair once.

RENETA (V.O.)  
Gringo, how drunk are you?

GRINGO reaches for his flask, takes a swig. PALOMA gives him an eyeful of discontent.

GRINGO  
I'm sobering up.

RENETA (V.O.)  
Call me when you make it into Phoenix, alright?

GRINGO  
(pause)  
Reneta?

RENETA (V.O.)  
What!?

GRINGO  
What should I do?

He takes another gander back at the girl.

RENETA (V.O.)  
Put down the bottle and sober up for  
your mother.

GRINGO's knuckles cling white on the wheel, makes a sharp  
turn, accelerates.

GRINGO  
Reneta, I fucked up. I have **Paloma**.  
(sighs)  
She looks like **you know who**.

33

EXT. STREETS -- PUERTO DE ANAPRA -- JUAREZ -- SAME

33

That gets RENETA's attention.

RENETA  
You need to be real clear. Do you  
have her or not?  
(off long silence)  
Gringo!!??

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Have I ever lied to you.

RENETA  
**No.**

GRINGO (V.O.)  
I have her, Reneta.

RENETA turns on her heel. Waves to JORGE to start car. He  
climbers over the gear shift.

RENETA  
Do you realize what kind of cargo  
you are carrying?

Determined and focused, RENETA darts to the car. Hops in.

RENETA (CONT)  
We're on our way!

GRINGO (V.O.)  
That won't be necessary.

RENETA  
What the fuck are you saying,  
Gringo?

34      EXT/INT. CAR -- DAY

34

In front of us the EL PASO SKYLINE. PORT OF ENTRY SIGNS, all in SPANISH, pass us as we drive. As we move toward the clots of traffic blocking the streets --

GRINGO takes one more look at PALOMA, and then:

GRINGO  
Because I'm taking her to her mom.

We hear HOLLERING from the other end of the phone. He slowly moves the phone from his ear, hangs up...

Looks back at PALOMA. They study each other, neither flinch.

35      INT. CAR -- MOVING -- SAME

35

RENETA lowers phone, jaw dropped, stunned...

JORGE  
You want me to kill the  
bastard?

JORGE  
Quieres que mate a este hijo  
de puta?

JORGE cocks his gun...

VALENTINA (**PRE-LAP**)  
I know why you were discharged from  
FORT BLISS...

36      FLASHBACK -- INT. OSCURO MOTEL - EARLIER

36

VALENTINA  
... and I know about your 18 months  
in ROGELIO SANCHEZ STATE JAIL...

GRINGO lets go of the door. VALENTINA makes her way in.

VALENTINA  
And **I know why you did it**. Letizia's  
mom doesn't know, does she?  
(off his spooked look)  
I made a call last night.

GRINGO looks her in the eye, a million mile stare, a weight he hasn't felt in awhile... long beat, and then --

-- still nothing, speechless, skin flushed, liquid film around his eye --

She knows she has won over the "room". She takes out a vinyl deposit bag, counts, tosses 4k on bed.

VALENTINA (CONT)  
 You will stay on I-10, just like you  
 would if you were going to Phoenix.

GRINGO  
 I am still going to Phoenix.

VALENTINA  
 Exactly. You will take Interstate 10  
 and right when you reach the New  
 Mexico-Texas state line, you will  
 pass by an area called REMCON.

GRINGO starts counting cash.

VALENTINA (CONT)  
 You will see an office off the  
 freeway called **WHITE MAGIC**.  
 (off his look)  
 It's a "teeth whitening" place. An  
 Israeli man will meet you out front.  
 You will not exit the car. Only  
 Paloma.

GRINGO  
 What's her mom's number?

VALENTINA  
 (adamant)  
 No. You only talk with me. Here.

She hands him a zip-lock bag, which includes Valentina's  
 contact info, among other things. GRINGO rifles through it.

GRINGO  
 When is the girl getting here?

VALENTINA  
 She's already in your car.

VALENTINA waves his keys in front of him, swings open door.

And, for the first time, our GRINGO and POLIMA make eye  
 contact, albeit through a plate of glass.

END FLASHBACK.

37

EXT. CITY OF JUAREZ -- DAY -- PRESENT

37

SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS from fast to slow motion of the city,  
 weaving in and out of affluent to working-class barrios.

VALENTINA (V.O.)

There is a private lane when you cross into the Bridge of Americas that is only available for Americans who "hold" capital in Juarez.

(beat)

We have several custom agents on the payroll that work that station.

GRINGO (V.O.)

Won't the drug dogs sniff her out if she's hiding in the trunk?

VALENTINA (V.O.)

She won't be in the trunk. She will be in the backseat, behind you.

38

INT. CAR -- MOVING -- SAME

38

PALOMA in back, GRINGO at wheel. EL PASO SKYLINE visible through window.

GRINGO (V.O.)

She have a passport?

VALENTINA (V.O.)

No. She will be using a **fake** one.

GRINGO reaches into the baggie, pulls out a passport, opens it, it's a fair-skinned, light-haired SPANISH GIRL.

A roll of sweat rolls off GRINGO's brow. He sticks it on the dashboard.

VALENTINA (V.O.) (CONT)

You are to hand the customs both passports. Only one will be logged in the computer.

PALOMA steals looks at the GRINGO, carries a calmness that our GRINGO does not currently carry. He catches her gaze:

GRINGO

I'm not making any pit stops. That goes for food, stretching, and shitting.

PALOMO shrugs:

PALOMA

(soft voice)  
Qué?

GRINGO (V.O.)  
 (under breath)  
 Shit.

FADE TO:

39

EXT/INT. CAR -- SIDE ROAD -- JUAREZ -- MOMENTS LATER

39

SIGNS TO PORT OF ENTRY. GRINGO/PALOMA's car comes to a stop. While not overly congested, there are a few cars at a complete stop, waiting to turn on the main drag.

A single MEXICAN NATIONAL GUARD, armed and loaded, zigzags in and out of the light traffic.

GRINGO pulls focus to the GUARD. PALOMA catches the GRINGO'S gape, and takes stock of the GUARD, too.

PAN HANDLER (O.S.)  
*I got prescription drugs,  
 nopales, bracelets,  
 necklaces. Need Vicodin?*

PAN HANDLER  
*Tengo medicinas, nopales,  
 pulseras, collares. Necesita  
 Vicodin?*

GRINGO turns to find a MALE PAN HANDLER (15) who has his head through the passenger's side window. GRINGO waves him off.

PAN HANDLER spots PALOMA in backseat, grins at both of them.

PAN HANDLER  
*Ah, you mother fucker.*

PAN HANDLER  
*Ah, que cabrón.*

He pulls out a dozen roses from his jacket like a magician.

PAN HANDLER  
 (to Gringo, winks)  
*Here. Flowers for your  
 "lady".*

PAN HANDLER  
 (to Gringo, winks)  
*Ten. Flores para la "dama".*

PALOMA  
*Move on, mamón!*

PALOMA  
*Váyase, mamón!*

PAN HANDLER taken back by her forwardness.

PAN HANDLER  
*Ah, your handler don't speak  
 Spanish?*

PAN HANDLER  
*Ah, tu encargado no habla  
 Español?*

GRINGO rolls up window on the guy, focused on GUARD.

GUARD and a DRIVER a few cars ahead of them chat.

PAN HANDLER now aggravated, pounds on window. GRINGO cracks window open. Pulls out his empty jean pockets, shows him:

GRINGO  
I got nothing. Fuck off.

GRINGO turns to road -- M16 RIFLE is now pointed at him through the driver's side window. GRINGO looks back at PAN HANDLER who now has a HANDGUN pointed at him. PANHANDLER and GUARD nod to each other...

MEXICAN GUARD  
You own *this* car?  
(off Gringo shrugging)  
Let me see your TITLE and  
MEXICAN AUTO INSURANCE.

MEXICAN GUARD  
El carro es tuyo?  
(off Gringo shrugging)  
Let me see your TITLE and  
MEXICAN AUTO INSURANCE.

GRINGO reaches into glove box -- he has all the paperwork. GUARD scans it over, spots PALOMA in the back.

MEXICAN GUARD (CONT.)  
(to Paloma)  
*Tu hablas español?*  
(nods "yes")  
*Let me see identification.*

MEXICAN GUARD  
(to Paloma)  
*Tu hablas español?*  
(nods "yes")  
*Muéstrame tu identificación.*

She nods at windshield. GUARD takes passport, watches GRINGO's reaction as he reviews it. GUARD pops her head through the window, gets a better look at her. Not convinced.

GUARD reaches for her transceiver. Goes to speak, when PALOMA unbuckles seat belt, slides to the middle.

Both the GUARD and PAN HANDLER train their guns at her --

-- GRINGO reaches under seat, grabs his PISTOL, puts a bullet right between the eyes of the PAN HANDLER.

Before the GUARD can shift the gun towards GRINGO, our GRINGO grabs the center part of the GUARD's vest and jerks her towards him, GUARD's nose smashes into cracked window, frontal bone going into the skull cavity. Dead.

GRINGO does a u-turn, flees post-haste. Silence, until --

-- POP! POP! From a docile car, someone opens FIRE on them!

WE TRACK GRINGO's car as it zips through residential neighborhoods, to a more abandoned, meager quarter of town.

CUT TO:

40

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- OUTSKIRTS -- SHORTLY AFTER

40

GRINGO leans against car. ON THE PHONE. He appraises the vehicle as he walks and talks, sees BULLET holes.

GRINGO  
I'm out. This is utter bull shit!

POUNDS the car hood.

POLIMA, unfazed, sits in the back seat.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
You need to calm down.

GRINGO  
Calm down?

GRINGO abandons the car, speed-walks down the ally.

GRINGO (CONT)  
I killed a fucking Mexican Official.  
Did you hear that, Valentina? I  
murdered two Mexican Nationals in  
broad daylight.

He bends over, dry heaves. He drips in sweat.

GRINGO (CONT)  
My ass is grass.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
Where are you now?

GRINGO  
I don't know. Outskirts, west side.  
(off her silence)  
You're going to need to come pick  
her up. Deal is off.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
No can do, white boy.

GRINGO  
(hysterical)  
No can do? HA! I'll fucking drop  
her ass here.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
(short beat)  
**They burned down my bar** this  
morning. I had to leave town.

GRINGO lets that sink in for a second. He doesn't care.

GRINGO  
Tough shit. Tell Estrella to cross  
her ass right back into Mexico.



VALENTINA (V.O.)  
I don't know where she is. She calls  
me, not the other way around.

GRINGO pulls out a cig, smokes it all in about five puffs.

GRINGO  
You're tellin' me, you don't even  
know if she made it into El Paso!?!?

LONG SILENCE. Gringo manic. He starts KICKING the shit out of  
a dumpster. He's nearly in tears -- anger, fear...

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
What are you going to do?

GRINGO  
Leave her here. I'll text you her  
location.

He waits for her to respond -- something, anything!

GRINGO (CONT)  
Then, it's settled?

As he's about to hang up:

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
Do me a favor. In fact, do her a  
favor: put a bullet through her  
head. Better she dies that way than  
getting gang-raped by the homeboys  
down the street.  
(pause)  
At least let her die with dignity.

GRINGO  
Deal.

GRINGO hangs up. Checks gun's chamber. Loaded.

Mad as hell, he marches to the car, gun out in front of him.

BACK AT THE CAR, our GRINGO swings open the back door. Much  
to his chagrin, PALOMA is gone.

GRINGO  
Ah, fuck!

He looks under the car. Pops the trunk. She's gone.

MURMURING (or CHANTING?) can be heard just beyond the alley.

He tucks his gun into his back pocket, follows the commotion.

SIDE STREET

Just beyond the alley's shadows, GRINGO finds PALOMA. He presses his hand hard on her shoulder.

GRINGO

Let's go.

He tugs; she doesn't budge. Her attention is on something much more transcendent. GRINGO now sees what she sees.

-- A WOMEN'S MARCH --

GROUP OF WOMEN, all ages, somewhere around a dozen or so, take the streets. They hold PINK CROSSES and SIGNS.

GROUP OF WOMEN

*Ni una más, ni una más, ni una  
muerta más!!*

They march in tandem, look straight ahead, resolute.

GRINGO loosens his grip, equally as transfixed as PALOMA.

MEXICAN WOMEN hold signs that say: **NO MORE SEXUAL ASSAULT; NO MORE TORTURE; NO MORE SYSTEMATIC MURDER; NO MORE MUTILATION.**

These WOMEN have PAINTED **HAND PRINTS** (WHITE, BLACK, BROWN) on their buttocks, chest, and necks, parlayed with PAINTED **BLOOD MARKS** around their wrists and ankles.

Like an elite marching-band, they never lose their focus.

As the group slowly leaves us, one woman, let's call her FUERZA (translation: STRENGTH), turns her head and, with sullen and suspicious eyes, looks at our GRINGO, "whispers" something....

FUERZA's beautiful eyes cocooned in makeup throw him off.

And, before he can make out her cryptic message, the WOMEN, including FUERZA, are gone... vanished...

Overwhelmed, he looks to PALOMA, who is now gone, too...

BACK AT THE CAR, he sees PALOMA is in the backseat.

He opens up his door, reaches in a compartment under the wheel, and pulls out a FLASK. He takes a generous swig...

PRE-LAP - PHONE RINGING:

41

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- SOMEWHERE MEXICO -- SAME

41

TIGHT ON FLIP PHONE as it rings and rings and rings...

HAND ENTERS FRAME, opens it, then shuts it.

A cloud of SMOKE engulfs the phone. It RINGS again.

The same hand opens it again, this time answers. It's VALENTINA. Her hair is a mess. Eye make-up smeared. Cig in hand, half-empty bottle of tequila rested in-between her sprawled legs.

She's on a bed. A 3-star hotel in Mexico; more like a 2-star hotel (if that) in the States.

She puts the phone against her ear, waits, in no hurry...

GRINGO (V.O.)  
(after a long pause)  
Where to?

VALENTINA  
20 miles west of **Puerto Palomas**.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
What's there?

VALENTINA  
Nothing. An **Indian Reservation**. You can only reach it by dirt road.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
But the only port of entry anywhere near Puerto Palomas is **Columbus, New Mexico?**

FADE TO:

42 EXT. MEXICAN ROADS -- DAY

42

WE ARE HIGH IN THE AIR. Pylons surrounded by a cactus-covered desert that stretches as far as the eye can see.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
You are to take Cd Juarez -  
Ascensión México 2 all the way in.

We drift away from the city. PUSH IN ON GRINGO'S CAR as a plume of dust launches in the air.

VALENTINA (V.O.) (CONT)  
**Tribes** have jurisdiction within their land. U.S. law doesn't apply. So you two are safe.

SERIES OF SHOTS of the scenery along one of Northern Mexico's most remote (and controlled) stretches of roads.

VALENTINA (V.O.) (CONT)  
An old woman will be selling  
**slippers** when you reach Palomas.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Every border has a string of old  
women selling shoes.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
She will be the only one selling  
ones with soles **that don't leave  
footprints...**

43      INT. CAR -- SAME

43

GRINGO at the wheel; PALOMA in back. GRINGO can't help but to  
keep looking at her. She's in a whole other world, watching  
the countryside zoom past her.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
The woman will be your escort when  
crossing.

GRINGO  
Estrella will be on the Reservation  
waiting?

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
I'm still not sure where she is.

GRINGO slinks in his seat, uneasy...

44      EXT. CD JUAREZ - ASCENSIÓN MÉXICO 2 -- SAME

44

We are practically driving through ghost towns...

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
You are being watched by Juarez  
members. Keep your eyes open. And,  
white boy... if you can't tell if  
someone is good or bad, call on  
Paloma. She will know.

FADE TO:

45      INT. CAR -- LATER

45

GRINGO must use his windshield wipers to fight off the  
torrent sandstorm sweeping over the car.

Through the dust, a SIGN: **PUERTO PALOMAS 60 MILES.**

GRINGO look back at PALOMA.

GRINGO  
 Hungry?  
 (off her confused look)  
 Umm... Co..comme..

PALOMA  
 Comer?

GRINGO  
 Si.

She rolls her eyes.

46      EXT. LOWLY CANTINA -- DAY

46

A dusty adobe. Rose pink, with grey bars over the windows. Not their first choice, but their ONLY choice of dining.

GRINGO gets out of the car. Takes stock of his surroundings. It's sparse. PALOMA slides out. He pushes her right back in.

GRINGO  
 No, sit. Stay there.

She's not an animal, and doesn't appreciate being talked to like one. She makes her way back out. This time he uses force.

PALOMA  
 Baño!

He sticks her in the middle seat, puts a seat belt around her. You'd think he would know that word -- but he's not listening.

He cracks the windows. Points at her; he's serious.

47      INT. LOWLY CANTINA -- MOMENTS LATER

47

500 SQFT, if that. No dining area, except a square bar area front and center.

GRINGO shuffles through a greasy menu, points to two dishes.

JOSE, bartender, barks orders in the back. Then picks his nose, inspects it, wipes it on his short. He pours GRINGO a generous beer, with a shot of something on the side.

GRINGO sees missed calls. DIALS:

INTERCUT - INT. RENETA'S CAR / INT. LOWLY CANTINA -- SAME

JORGE drives... **FIZZZZ**... pops a beer can open. Takes a big long guzzle. RENETA in passenger's seat. PHONE RINGS. She turns down music. Answers phone:

RENETA  
Gringo!? Where the hell are you?

JORGE tries to take the phone away from her --

JORGE  
Let me talk to the cock-sucker!

RENETA pushes him away.

RENETA  
I've been trying to call all morning! What is going on!???

GRINGO  
Drinking.

JORGE  
Ask him if he has the girl!

RENETA waves him off - she knows.

RENETA  
Gringo, where is the girl?

GRINGO  
I have her in my possession.

GRINGO walks to window, pulls back curtain to check on her. She's fine. He goes back to the bar.

RENETA  
You may have just started a war.

GRINGO  
Typical American, huh? Always starting wars.

RENETA  
There is a healthy bounty on your head.  
(beat)  
What were you thinking, Gringo?

GRINGO finishes his beer, lights a cig.

GRINGO  
Have Jorge pull over. Call me back when you are outside, alone.

He HANGS UP. Waves to JOSE for another beer.

RENETA stares at her phone -- the nerve of this guy.

JORGE  
What happened?

JORGE  
Que pasó?

RENETA  
Pull over.

RENETA  
Párate.

JORGE  
Why?

JORGE  
Porqué?

RENETA  
PULL THE FUCKING CAR OVER!!!

RENETA  
QUE TE PARES CHINGADO!!!

MOMENTS LATER

**INTERCUT** - OUTSIDE DIRT ROAD / CANTINA

GRINGO'S phone rings. He answers.

RENETA  
I'm alone, start talking.

RENETA is alone in a field.

GRINGO  
I'm in over my head.

RENETA  
How much did they pay you?

GRINGO  
4k. Mother will pay me another 4k  
when we cross

RENETA  
Where is the mom?

GRINGO  
Dunno.

RENETA  
So the person who is supposed to pay  
you 4Gs could be anywhere -- even  
still in Juarez?

GRINGO  
(she has a point)  
Potentially.

RENETA  
Ah, Gringo. If you needed the money,  
why didn't you come to me?

GRINGO  
It's not about the money. If it was,  
I'd have taken the 10K from you  
yesterday.

RENETA  
Gringo, help me understand. I'm  
trying, honestly. You've put me and  
Jorge at risk! Why are you doing  
this?

GRINGO  
**For her.**

She crunches her hand into a fist...

RENETA  
It won't bring **her** back.

GRINGO takes a long drag. LONG BEAT.

GRINGO  
Can you help me?

RENETA  
Can you bring me the girl?

GRINGO  
I can't.

RENETA  
Then I'm afraid I can't help.

GRINGO  
I understand

RENETA  
(long pause)  
Gringo?

GRINGO  
Yeah?

RENETA  
What's next?

GRINGO feels someone tug on his shirt -- it's PALOMA.

HE ENDS CALL. Spins her around, hides her behind a stool.

GRINGO  
What are you doing in here!?  
(lowers voice)  
I said stay in the car. Stay in the  
fucking car.



JOSE comes out with bags of food. PALOMA is dancing and spinning around.

GRINGO (CONT)

Stop!

She holds her tummy. Points to RESTROOM.

GRINGO (CONT)

You got to be kidding?

JOSE pulls food away. GRINGO feigns a smile at him.

He escorts PALOMA to the RESTROOM. She shuts it; locks it.

MINUTES LATER - GRINGO checks his watch. She's been in there forever. Patience running out. He knocks on the door.

GRINGO (CONT)

Let's go.

He hears banging around. Then, FLUSH. Shortly after -- another FLUSH. She still hasn't come out...

GRINGO shakes on the doorknob violently -- finally, she comes out; she grins. He grabs her arm, then grabs the food...

JOSE

Problema, señor?

GRINGO

No.

He pulls out a wad of cash, slams down what he owes, then leaves a generous tip. JOSE smiles.

He drags PALOMA by the wrist, escorts her to the door.

48 EXT/INT. LOWLY CANTINA -- CONTINUOUS

48

The sun pounding on their face, temporarily blinding them. PALOMA is uncooperative, tries to pull him back in.

Through the orange haze of dust and fog, THREE MALE NARCOS, arms folded, lean against their car, which is parked right next to our GRINGO's car.

GRINGO looks down at PALOMA. She glares back, her eyes saying: "see, I told you".

Before the THREE MEN can spot them, she pulls him back in.

She reaches into the bag, pulls out a carnita taco. The taco is as big as her head -- she takes an adult-sized bite.

He takes what's left from her, and tosses it back in the bag.

GRINGO  
Did they see you!?

She shrugs, not understanding. So he points outside, then at his eyes, then back at her: "did they see you?".

PALOMA  
No.

She reaches back in the bag, grabs her taco, finishes it.

GRINGO pulls back a curtain, spies on them. He glistens in sweat. Turns to PALOMA -- who is now at the BAR speaking to JOSE in **Spanish**.

GRINGO  
Fuck.

He takes her by the hand, apologizes for her.

JOSE	JOSE
<i>Let her go, señor.</i>	<i>Suéltela, señor.</i>

He lets go. PALOMA reaches into GRINGO's pocket and takes out his wad of cash. She grabs a hundred, tucks the rest back into his pocket. She slides it to JOSE.

JOSE grins. Him and PALOMA shake on it.

OFF GRINGO's bewildered look --

CUT TO:

49     EXT. LOWLY CANTINA -- SHORTLY AFTER

49

GRINGO exits bar, holds just one container of food. Looks inside. Pleased, he closes it.

All THREE NARCOS watch him. He looks up, smiles at them.

GRINGO  
Hey, do one of you think you can  
help me?

They look to each other, then back at the GRINGO.

GRINGO takes out his phone, pulls up GOOGLE MAPS, zooms in.

GRINGO (CONT)  
I'm trying to get here. Little get  
away to the beach.

None of the NARCOS seem overly interested, but NARCO #1, let's call him MARIO, glances at the phone:

MARIO  
Puerto Peñasco?

GRINGO  
Yeah! Sorry, I have trouble with my Spanish.

MARIO  
You here by yourself?

Gringo points to his food, overcompensating:

GRINGO  
Uno. Just me.

MARIO  
Then you wouldn't mind if I searched your car?

GRINGO  
(nervous laugh)  
What are you, Federales?

MARIO  
Sure.

NARCO #2 walks to car. Before GRINGO can respond, NARCO #2 has already opened up the front door, pops trunk. SNAPS his fingers for NARCO #3 to check trunk.

GRINGO feigns a smile at MARIO during the search. Casually takes a bite of his taco.

-- SEARCH IS OVER --

As GRINGO gets into car --

MARIO  
Stay on Ascensión 2, until you get to Calle 5.

GRINGO  
Gracias!

Takes out a \$20 bill from his pocket.

GRINGO  
Here. Get a couple beers on me!

MARIO's insulted. Shakes his head "no".

50                      EXT/INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS                      50

He starts the car. Without them seeing, he removes his gun from his back pocket, puts it on his lap. Drives off.

BACK OF BUILDING

ON A SIDE STEP that leads into the KITCHEN, sits PALOMA. She has her container of food on her lap, devours it. She takes a giant sip of SUNKIST from a glass bottle.

GRINGO'S CAR pulls up.

Before she hops in, JOSE stops her.

JOSE		JOSE
You're good. Good luck...		Estarás bien. Buena suerte...

He hands the **\$100** back to her. She hops in the car.

CUT TO:

51                      INT. CAR -- MOVING -- MOMENTS LATER                      51

Coasting along. Windows down. A rush comes over our GRINGO. He spots PALOMA watching him. He grins.

GRINGO  
You did good!

Not impressed, she looks away...

FADE TO:

52                      EXT. CAR -- MOVING -- LATER                      52

TITLE CARD: **Los Tríos, Chihuahua, Mexico**

WE TRACK GRINGO'S CAR as it enters a town that looks like the atomic bomb was dropped on it.

They pass a SIGN: **30 KILOMETERS - U.S. PORT OF ENTRY, NEXT RIGHT ONLY.**

53                      INT. CAR -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS                      53

They approach AV 5 DE MAYO road. GRINGO turns his RIGHT BLINKER on, then immediately turns it off. He keeps driving...

GRINGO  
Shit. Get down.

He points to the floorboard. PALOMA follows his orders. GRINGO drives forward, looks straight, both hands on the wheel. He misses the only road to **COLUMBUS, NEW MEXICO**.

54      EXT. AV 5 DE MAYO ROAD -- SAME      54

An UNMARKED SUV blocks all incoming traffic coming from INTERSTATE 2. TWO MEN, black balaclavas over their face, full tactical gear, AK-47S -- they look like SWAT, but they are something far more sinister.

55      INT. CAR -- PARKED -- MOMENTS LATER      55

Parked near a puny GAS STATION. GRINGO'S car sits behind a wild bush.

GRINGO'S POV -- from afar, he watches the ARMED MEN.

ON PHONE:

GRINGO

The two guys are letting traffic from Palomas through, but no one heading into town.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD we see them turn someone away.

VALENTINA (V.O.)

They have to know. Policia, Military?

GRINGO

Neither. Might be members of the Sinaloa Cartel

VALENTINA (V.O.)

No. They travel in larger groups. This is **JUAREZ**'s route. They know better.

GRINGO

It's the only paved road into town.

VALENTINA (V.O.)

Are you positive it's not just a police check point?

GRINGO

I'm FUCKING positive, Valentina.

(beat)

Stop jerking me around. You better come up with a plan ASAP. You got 5 minutes.

56

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- SOMEWHERE MEXICO -- SAME

56

VALENTINA is in a pair of panties and bra. Her room is flooded with empty beer cans and tequila.

-- GRINGO HANGS UP --

She rubs her hands through her hair, takes a deep and concentrated breath.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

VALENTINA  
Jesus Christ.

She throws on a bath robe and walks to the door. She looks through the peephole.

THROUGH PEEPHOLE -- a round, bull-necked KITCHEN STAFF WORKER hovers over a cart of food.

She lets him in.

VALENTINA	VALENTINA
<i>I ordered this two hours ago.</i>	Ordené esto hace dos horas.

WORKER pushes cart into room. Starts to unload some of the condiments on a small table.

KITCHEN WORKER	KITCHEN WORKER
<i>Sorry, Miss. We are short-staffed today.</i>	Disculpe señorita. Hoy andamos cortos de personal.

He removes the lid of one of the dishes, steam rises.

KITCHEN WORKER	KITCHEN WORKER
<i>It's warm, I swear.</i>	Sigue caliente.

She "nods" for him to continue.

He continues... THROUGH HIS REFLECTION IN A MIRROR, we watch as he lays out each plate of food. He removes the plastic off her water and glass of wine. He's fast and well-trained.

He then unfolds a white napkin. But there are no utensils in it, ONLY a GLOCK. As he reaches for it --

-- VALENTINA appears in the mirror behind WORKER. She shoots him from behind, BLOOD SPLATTERS OVER THE MIRROR. WE PUSH into his blood until it's finally obscuring everything.

SMASH CUT TO:

57      INT. GRINGO'S CAR - PARKED -- CONTINUOUS

57

PHONE RINGS. GRINGO answers.

                         VALENTINA (V.O.)  
Get out of Chihuahua! Drive until  
you get to Sonora! Then find the  
first motel.

                         GRINGO  
Fuck, no. That's another 2 hours!

                         VALENTINA (V.O.)  
Do it!!!

GRINGO adjusts in his seat, he doesn't like being yelled at.

                         GRINGO  
Now, you listen here --

                         VALENTINA (V.O.)  
-- no, you listen! You want to see  
your mother again?

Gringo moves the phone to the other ear. *The nerve of her...*

                         VALENTINA (V.O.) (CONT)  
Then, you better listen to me.  
Otherwise, **Juarez Cartel will kill  
your mother before the cancer does.**

And on that lovely note, we PUSH IN on GRINGO, thinking...

FADE TO:

58      EXT. EL SOL MOTEL -- SUNSET

58

The THRASHING SOUND of ice being spit into a bucket. At an  
ICE MACHINE, our GRINGO pours ice into a dirty steel bucket.

He pins his cell phone against his ear using his chin.

                         GRINGO  
Remember back in the day when we  
would travel by bus for nearly 20  
hours for **Indios** games?

59      EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- MEXICO -- SUNSET

59

RENETA is sprawled out on the hood of her car. Inside the car  
is JORGE, seat reclined back, sleeping (or passed out).

RENETA

I'm pretty sure you drove the bus back -- you were the only sober one.

GRINGO (V.O.)

Imagine that. What did our group call ourselves?

RENETA

**El Kartel**, right?

60 EXT. EL SOL MOTEL -- SAME

60

GRINGO walks through parking lot.

GRINGO

That's right. Remember in Mexico City when they wouldn't let us into the game. Said we were **drug dealers** since we were from Juarez.

RENETA (V.O.)

Imagine that.

GRINGO

We were clean then. It probably didn't help I was the only white guy on a bus coming from Juarez, either.

61 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- MEXICO -- SAME

61

RENETA pulls a beer free from a six-pack.

RENETA

Hey. You were the most patriotic futbol fan -- as far as Gringos go.  
(remembers)  
Not speaking Spanish didn't help, though.

They both share a laugh.

RENETA (CONT)

How come you never learned Spanish?

GRINGO (V.O.)

Didn't need to. You all always speak English to me.

Her brain churns -- crazy Gringo has a point...

GRINGO (V.O.)

Reneta, you think I'll see you again?



She takes a big gulp.

RENETA  
Depends. You goin' to hand over the  
girl to me?

62 INT. EL SOL MOTEL -- ROOM -- SAME

62

GRINGO enters his room. Walks past a sound asleep PALOMA, who has her own bed. Bedsheets dotted with cigarette marks.

GRINGO  
What's your fascination with her?  
**Same as mine?**

He buries his hand into the ice and pulls out a chunk of cubes and puts them in a styrofoam cup, pours a fifth of whiskey into it.

RENETA (V.O.)  
Gringo, **CIA** and DEA arrested Los Aztecas' top two men today. Juarez need someone to run Aztecas organization now. And Ahumada, Sinaloa moved in.

GRINGO  
(excited!)  
I told you there were new faces.

63 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- MEXICO -- CONTINUOUS

63

Reneta is now standing.

RENETA  
Amilcar Armendarez is crumbling.  
Juarez needs us more than ever  
before!

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Uh-huh.

RENETA  
Could you imagine if I brought his  
daughter unscathed to him? **We'd** be  
GODS.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
You mean you and Jorge.

RENETA  
And you!

64      INT. EL SOL MOTEL -- ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

64

GRINGO dives into his bed, flips through channels.

GRINGO

Yeah. Right after he sticks an ice pick into my spine. You know, "ice tickling", then pour gasoline over my naked body, light a match.

(pause)

Disappear like the other thousands in Juarez.

RENETA (V.O.)

No. We can fix this.

He looks over at PALOMA. She embodies innocence, even though she's seen more than anyone her age (or, hell, our age).

GRINGO

She's better off with her mom. Of all people, **you** should understand that.

65      EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- MEXICO -- CONTINUOUS

65

RENETA smashes her beer on the ground.

RENETA

Fuck you, Gringo!

GRINGO (V.O.)

(a long beat)

I'm going to bed.

RENETA

Gringo?

GRINGO (V.O.)

What?

RENETA

Juarez ain't the only place you shouldn't roll through red lights. Wherever you are in Mexico, remember, every red light is --

GRINGO (V.O.)

-- a sure way to get murdered. I know.

(beat)

Good night, Reneta.

CALL DISCONNECTED. Reneta stares at her phone, torn.

Then -- she hits the roof of the car.

RENETA  
*Jorge, let's go.*  
 (smiles)  
*He's not in Juarez!*

RENETA  
*Jorge, vámonos.*  
 (smiles)  
*No está en Juárez!*

RENETA jumps in. JORGE presses the metal flat. Off they go.

66

INT. EL SOL MOTEL -- DINING ROOM -- MORNING - NEXT DAY

66

A colorful dining area. None of the colors blend. It's a slim continental breakfast.

GRINGO and PALOMA pick at their food.

GRINGO ON PHONE:

GRINGO  
*Nogales* is out of the question. Did  
 you confirm her mom was in the  
 States?  
 (beat)  
 Good.

PALOMA stabs her fork into a flabby, un-cooked piece of bacon.

He sticks his finger in his throat, like he's about to puke.

She giggles -- she agrees: GROSS!

From under his shirt, he pulls out a bag of CHEETOS and slide it over to her.

She smiles from cheek to cheek -- *Cheetos for breakfast!*

He hands her the key card. As she hurries off --

GRINGO  
 Hey, your aunt wants to talk to you.

She takes the phone. Talks fast, elated to be talking to kin.

GRINGO decides to be a trooper, attempts to finish his meal.

FEMALE VOICE/ALANA (O.S.)  
 Mexico will never understand  
 biscuits and gravy. Maybe it's a  
 Midwest thing.

ALANA (37), clean cut, clean shoes -- clean all around, which is strange around these parts. **MIXED RACE.**

She takes a seat next to GRINGO, with her flimsy plate full of soggy biscuits and gravy.

ALANA  
Agent Alana Wesley, nice to meet you.

She flashes GRINGO her **CIA** badge. GRINGO goes for his gun --

ALANA (CONT)  
Relax, I'm here alone.

GRINGO still checks over his shoulder, trained.

ALANA (CONT)  
Finish eating.

He does. He takes a bite, his focus never leaves ALANA.

ALANA (CONT)  
Ever heard of **LEY GUA**?  
(Gringo nods "no")  
It's an ole military game still practiced in Mexico.

She takes bite of her biscuits. Lowers fork -- it's awful.

ALANA (CONT)  
They kidnap you. But unlike in America where you get a trial, they actually give you a chance to escape.  
(off his look)  
They give you a head start. You run. Then a line of trained gunslingers mow you down with bullets.

ALANA takes a bite, this time chews it.

ALANA (CONT)  
Fascinating, huh? Almost sexy?

GRINGO fidgets.

ALANA (CONT)  
MEXICAN GENERAL E. LOPEZ is looking for you. The people you passed off of DE MAYO ROAD, he contracted.

GRINGO pulls out his gun, sticks it under ALANA's chin.

GRINGO  
You threatening me?

ALANA

Relax. I'm on your side. I want to  
give you a way out.  
(mouth full of food)  
Witness protection.

GRINGO lowers gun, considers.

GRINGO

And the girl?

ALANA

We are going to coax Estrella to  
cross back into Mexico where she  
will reunite with Paloma. Then file  
for **asylum**.

GRINGO

They wont grant it. And, if they  
did, they would release Paloma back  
into Mexico and hold Estrella in  
some dank cell in the States.

(off Alana's look)

Sorry, but **the border is all about  
divide and conquer**. Both will be  
dead before sundown.

(gets up)

ALANA

I want what's best for everybody --  
including reuniting a mother and  
daughter. Its AMILCAR I'm after  
anyhow, **Gringo**.

GRINGO freezes on hearing the word "GRINGO".

ALANA (CONT)

(too suave)

Your mom, her name is Emma, right? I  
can make sure your mother has full  
protection and has top doctors  
around her in her last days. **That's  
my promise to you.**

GRINGO

And in return?

ALANA

The **girl**.

GRINGO studies this mysterious woman...

67

EXT/INT. ROOM -- EL SOL MOTEL -- SECONDS LATER

67

GRINGO punches the card into the holder. FLASHES GREEN. He opens it, but is stopped by a bolt.

GRINGO  
It's me, open up.

GRINGO waits. Then, the door cracks open.

INSIDE - GRINGO enters and, right behind him, ALANA, who storms in front of him.

PALOMA, with **Cheeto** cheese all around her lips, freezes...

CRACK!

GRINGO slams the back-end of his gun against ALANA's head, knocking her out cold. PALOMA ducts out of the way.

They both stand over her.

GRINGO  
Grab her legs.

He pulls ALANA by her hair. PALOMA grabs her legs/feet, wanting to help -- she's not strong enough.

GRINGO grabs a pillow case.

BATHROOM -- SECONDS LATER

GRINGO takes off his belt. Pulls ALANA against the toilet. Uses the belt to tie her arms around the toilet. Sticks a pillow case over her face. He turns on the sink faucet, then the tub facet -- *creating as much noise as possible*.

He takes PALOMA's hand, let's go, considers...

He feels around ALANA's neck. Then, the midline of her body. He's not finding what he's looking for, until he feels around her index finger. Bingo!

He pulls out a pocket knife, digs deep into skin: a micro "tracking" chip. He removes it, tosses it into the toilet, flushes it.

Looks to PALOMA, speaks to her, but he's really speaking out loud to himself:

GRINGO  
All informants are micro-chipped  
these days.

He grabs her hand as they dash out --

68      EXT. EL SOL MOTEL -- BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

68

As they exit, PALOMA stops when she sees a HOUSEKEEPER. They share a look.

She holds up her finger: "wait a sec'". Goes back inside, comes out with a "DO NOT DISTURB" sign. She positions it perfectly on the door knob.

GRINGO, PALOMA smile at each other, burst into LAUGHTER. They make a great team.

69      INT. VALENTINA'S CAR -- MOVING -- MORNING

69

VALENTINA drives as she loads shells into her gun's chamber. On the passenger's seat sits a semi automatic and half dozen **grenades**. She drives with purpose. ON SPEAKER PHONE:

GRINGO (V.O.)

My mother's nurse called. She's not doing well. I need to get to my mom ASAP.

VALENTINA

You're not the **only** one. You need to cross in Nogales. Arizona is your best option.

GRINGO (V.O.)

I already told you, Nogales is a no. Too congested and dangerous.

(here's gun)

Where are you?

VALENTINA

Torreón.

GRINGO (V.O.)

Jesus.

VALENTINA

I'm heading to Guatemala.

70      INT. GRINGO'S CAR -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

70

GRINGO looks back at PALOMA, who was stealing a look, but swiftly turns her gaze outside.

GRINGO

What's in Guatemala?

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
 Options. I don't have time to  
 explain, I just have to get out of  
 Mexico.  
 (loads gun)  
 And so do you.

CUT TO:

71            EXT. GRINGO'S CAR -- MEXICO COUNTRYSIDE -- MOMENTS LATER            71

HIGH IN THE AIR as we TRACK GRINGO's car sweep through the  
 countryside -- we are in the middle of fucking nowhere...

GRINGO (V.O.)  
 The closes port of entry is in Agua  
Prieta, 'bout an hour from here.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
 That's shaky land, white boy.  
 That's where those Mormon moms and  
 kids were slaughtered.

Not a single cloud in the sky. The blistering sun smacking  
 the mountains as GRINGO's car pushes up a large mound.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
 I have an old buddy from Phoenix  
 that now lives in Douglas. He might  
 be able to help...

DISSOLVE TO:

72            EXT. DOUGLAS, ARIZONA -- BORDER -- DAY            72

A paper map of COCHISE COUNTY is sprawled on the dirt, size  
 of a quilt. RED marks, X's and O's, the whole nine yards.

TONS OF CHATTER. Spanish and English. Someone uses their FOOT  
 to point at a specific mark.

TONY  
 God dammit! Don't smudge the bitch!

TONY (34) pushes BORDER AGENT #1 (LARKIN) away. We have a  
 better grip of our bearings -- gravel sand, brush, cacti --  
 we are in the middle of the desert.

TONY is surrounded by TWO BORDER AGENTS and SANTIAGO and his  
 PARTNER, both MEXICAN COYOTES. LARKIN uses his finger this  
 time to point:

AGENT LARKIN  
 I can let 4 in right here.



SANTIAGO  
*Tony, we talked about this, I sa--*

SANTIAGO  
*Tony, ya hablamos de esto, dije que-*

TONY  
*-- I know, I know!*  
 (to Larkin)  
*10, okay? There's no money in 4.*

TONY  
*-- ya se, ya se!*  
 (to Agent #1)  
*10, okay? There's no money in 4.*

COYOTE PARTNER  
 (points at map)  
*I got 25 coming in here. Half are Chinese. Their family lives in SEDONA and are paying good money.*

COYOTE PARTNER  
 (points at map)  
*Vienen 25 en camino. La mitad son chinos. Sus familias viven en SEDONA y pagan buena lana.*

TONY  
 What 'bout the cartel?

COYOTE PARTNER (CONT)  
*We got to pay them 10%, but we will still get our fair share -- and then some!*

COYOTE PARTNER  
*Les tenemos que dar el 10%, pero aún así nos llevamos buena feria.*

TONY  
 (to Agent #2)  
 What time does Terry's shift end?

AGENT #2  
 Nine tonight.

TONY  
 Good. Let's move the group from Salvador at 11PM then. Gives Michaels time to do his rounds.  
 (to Santiago)  
 You said we got a group at 3AM?

SANTIAGO  
*Si. But in total they can only pay 7 grand, amigo.*

SANTIAGO  
*Si. Pero en total solo pueden pagar 7 mil, amigo.*

TONY  
 Shit. Only 7?

AGENT LARKIN  
 Oh, hell no. Tony, I got a wife and kids, man.

TONY  
 And a **mistress**.

AGENT LARKIN  
 Exactly. 7k ain't worth the risk.

SANTIAGO

(to Tony)  
*They are relatives of a  
 family I help cross before;  
 they got more family coming  
 in from Belize. It's a **good  
 gesture run**. There will be  
 plenty more!*

SANTIAGO

(to Tony)  
 Son parientes de unos que ya  
 ayudé a cruzar antes; tienen  
 mas familia viniendo de  
 Belize. Nos conviene. Luego  
 habrá más!

Tony thinks on it -- it doesn't take him long. TO AGENT:

TONY

It's fine.

AGENT LARKIN looks to AGENT #2. They share a look of agreement.

AGENT LARKIN

I don't like them not speaking  
 English. I know these wetbacks speak  
 the language!  
 (looks directly at Coyotes)  
*Comprende?*

SANTIAGO, COYOTE go after AGENT LARKIN's juggler. They step all over the map. AGENT #2 tries to break it up -- not taking sides.

TONY grabs AGENT LARKIN, takes him to the side --

TONY

You ever call them that again and  
 I'll get you where it hurts -- your  
 MEXICAN mistress. Cut her fucking  
 tits off!

AGENT LARKIN nods his head -- it won't happen again.

-- TONY'S PHONE RINGS --

TONY

(not looking at caller)  
 What? Wait, who is this?  
 (beat)  
 Get the fuck out of here!

TONY walks right on top of the map, heads north. We get a better look at where they actually are -- **BORDER WALL**.

Tony casually leans against the WALL.

GRINGO (V.O.)

I'm on my way to Phoenix, bro. You  
 free, by chance?

TONY  
Shit, man. If I would have known,  
I'd of driven my ass up there. I'm  
still down here in Douglas.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Still go into Auga Prieta?

TONY  
(proud)  
You know it.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Border Patrol in Douglas still  
corrupt as fuck?

TONY  
(even prouder)  
You know it.

CUT TO:

73

EXT. BAR -- PATIO -- AUGA PRIETA -- AFTERNOON

73

GRINGO and PALOMA sit on plastic chairs around a table top  
the size of a basketball. A painting of **The Virgin of  
Guadalupe** directly behind them -- the sunlight nearly gives  
her a halo. Place is hopping, which is a welcoming change.

GRINGO's face lights up:

GRINGO  
Tony fuckin' Tatum! You, old dog!

TONY enters. He fits the part. Mexico is his second home.

TONY  
You son-of-a-bitch.

They bear hug; it's been a LONG time. GRINGO pulls up a chair  
for TONY.

TONY spots the girl.

TONY  
I knew you liked them Latin girls,  
but ain't she a little young?

GRINGO raises his hand, stops him before he goes any further.

GRINGO  
I'm going to cut to the chase.

TONY waves down WAITRESS. TONY's phone won't stop **vibrating**.

TONY  
 Scotch on the rocks.  
 (to Gringo)  
 You'd be surprised how good the  
 Scotch is out here.

FEDERALE HUMMER prowls down a street littered with packing-  
 crate houses. GRINGO grabs onto PALOMA's hand, his "antenna"  
 goes up. TONY catches this.

GRINGO  
 We need to cross.

TONY  
You got a passport.

GRINGO  
 She doesn't.

TONY gives her a once over.

TONY  
 Who is she?

GRINGO  
 My girlfriend's little girl. We are  
 trying to get her across.

TONY  
 (waving his hands)  
 Wow, wow. Didn't your stupid ass get  
 in trouble for doing this befo--

GRINGO  
 -- stop. This is different. And what  
 you are about to say is totally  
 ancient history.

WAITRESS brings TONY drink.

TONY  
 You ain't drinkin'?

GRINGO  
 No.  
 (to Waitress)  
 Actually, yeah -- get me three  
 finger Casa Noble. **Neat.**

PALOMA shakes her head in disgust. TONY'S phone **buzzes** again.

GRINGO  
 Jesus, that phone ever stop ringing?

TONY

The day this phone stops ringing, is the day "they" kill me...

GRINGO studies TONY'S stone-cold face...

GRINGO

Look. I know you are the cowboy, and this is your rodeo.

TONY admires his drink, like an expert. Then -- downs it, like a frat boy.

TONY

Well, fuck. I may be, but to be a "cowboy", you got to look the part. You got clothing and gear. Don't forget the hat. A good bull rider got to get a mouthpiece, so his teeth don't get knocked out. You got the glove tie and glove. Spurs. Chaps. And --

GRINGO

-- I get it. I'm not asking you to do this for free. I can give you a lil up front, an additional 4K once you get us across.  
(off his look)  
I might be able to finagle a lil more once we cross.

WAITRESS brings GRINGO his drink. He downs it.

TONY

How much upfront?

GRINGO

.. \$500?

TONY

Ah. Damn.  
(calculates)  
Okay. I can throw **her** in with a group leaving tonight.

GRINGO leans in, serious as ever:

GRINGO

No, Tony. We cross alone. And we travel by car.

TONY

No way.

He pulls his chair next to TONY, practically on his knees:

GRINGO

Tony, please. For old times. My mom is dying. I need to get up there. And you know **a little girl cant cross in those groups.**

TONY

They do all the time.

GRINGO

Yeah, with big brother or big mama bear. But never by themselves or with some pasty-ass white boy.

TONY finds humor in that. He pulls out a baggie -- he rolls his own cigs - unless it's Mary Jane?

TONY

Tonight's out of the question, but I can get you two across tomorrow at 3PM by car. You will have to find your own place to stay.

Good enough! GRINGO kisses him on the forehead, exuberant.

He steps away to make a phone call:

GRINGO

We are golden. Tomorrow, we cross.

VALENTINA (V.O.)

You have to cross tonight.

GRINGO

No. Listen --

VALENTINA (V.O.)

-- no, you listen. Estrella is expecting a drop off in Agua Parieta. Don't fuck this up!

GRINGO

Then have her fucking wait!

VALENTINA (V.O.)

I'll be in Guatemala by tomorrow morning. I'll have no way to communicate.

(beat)

It. Has. To. Happen. Tonight.

GRINGO bites his upper lip, does circles, furious.

TONY, while trying all he can do to avoid the girl, accidentally makes eye contact with PALOMA.

TONY  
 (referring to phone call)  
 Trouble in paradise?

TONY fakes a laugh. PALOMA not impressed. She picks up on something, her six sense -- she doesn't like him.

More ARGUING can be heard. And, then --

GRINGO  
 Tony, is there any other options?

TONY takes a small sip, grins:

TONY  
 There is always **NACO**.

DISSOLVE TO:

74

EXT. NACO, MEXICO -- LATE AFTERNOON

74

**NOTE: The following VOICE OVER will be done over jump cuts, lightening-fast montages, changes in color saturation and focal depth/length.**

VARIOUS SHOTS of the drive from AGUA PRIETA to NACO, MEXICO.

TONY (V.O.)  
 You're know when you are in Naco --  
 'bout every other house still has  
 bullet holes from the Mexican  
 Revolutionary war... seriously.

We drive up against the BORDER WALL, until the road drifts off into a more desolate setting in the mountains.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 Naco's port of entry only has 2  
 lanes; and at 8PM it goes to 1 lane.  
 (beat)  
 We will have a **fall guy** driving in a  
 car in front of you. The tires of  
 his car will be sprayed in **synthetic  
 deer scent urine**, which will drive  
 the drug dogs nuts; prompting them  
 to pull the car over.

PORT OF ENTRY SIGNS begin to appear as we coast down a one-lane road: **Av. Francisco I. Madero**.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 You will be smuggling **4 people** in  
 the back of your trunk.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
I'm not comfortable with that.

The tiny town of NACO, SONORA, can be seen ahead. QUICK SHOTS of cars entering and leaving PORT OF ENTRY.

GRINGO's car pulls next to a MAKE-SHIFT WAREHOUSE nearby.

GRINGO and PALOMA get out of the car. Hand keys over to a hairy, shirtless "MECHANIC".

TONY (V.O.)  
We have a guy who will create more room in your car. It's either that, or you two walk.  
(beat)  
Take it or leave it.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
I'm trusting you, Tony.

2 ELDERLY HONDURAN WOMEN, a HONDURAN TEENAGER (17) and a MIDDLE-AGED CUBAN MAN are handed JUGS OF WATER, clammy FOOD on a paper plate, and a WOOL BLANKET by a SMUGGLER.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
Human smuggling is different in Naco. Coyotes are paranoid.

GRINGO and PALOMA take the handouts.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
In order to not provoke suspicion, you 2 will go **through the process**.

75      INT. TINY ROOM -- MAKESHIFT WAREHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

75

TONY (V.O.)  
Understand, that after you drop these 4 off, they still have a long trek ahead, so --

This damp room has a ribbon of fresh blood trails on the floor and walls. Curtains are drawn tight, with just slivers of light illuminating this hell hole.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
-- a man that goes only by "S" will prepare them psychologically before crossing. Including noise control.

"S" enters, takes their food away. He slaps the CUBAN. He takes a piss against the wall as he barks orders at them. It's inhumane. Following "S" orders, a SCRAWNY NACRO enters.



TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 Once "S" is done, some low-level  
 scum bag who works for **Sinaloa** will  
 arrive.

GRINGO and PALOMA slide to a part of the room with the least  
 amount of light, concealing their identity. GRINGO subtly  
 reaches down to his ankle, feels around -- **gun** strapped.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 He's just doing a **head count**, making  
 sure "S" is paying the fair amount  
 for their protection.

Once the SCRAWNY NARCO leaves, "S" shouts slurs their way,  
 pulls out his phone, slams it up against the TEENAGER's ear.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 Coyotes triple prices when  
 immigrants get this close,  
 especially if they know they got  
 family on the other end.

TEENAGER pleads with someone over the phone for more money.

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 You're the driver, so you're exempt.

PALOMA curls up next to GRINGO, overwhelmed...

TONY (V.O.) (CONT)  
 Other than that, you 2 are aces.

FADE TO BLACK.

TINY ROOM/WAREHOUSE -- LATER

GRINGO, PALOMA, OUR 4 IMMIGRANTS, and "S" sit in silence.

"S" carves the letter "S" into the damp concrete floor. He  
 spits sunflower seeds as he digs his switchblade deeper and  
 deeper into the ground. He then removes a baggie of coke from  
 his pocket, using his knife to do a line. GRINGO notices a  
 tiny **PEACOCK LOGO** on the bag, recalls seeing that before  
 (start of film), and then --

DOOR OPENS. A liberal stretch of sunlight blasts through.

-- HERMETIC THUDDING SOUND --

WE ADJUST TO THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF LIGHT.

SCRAWNY NARCO comes back. Behind him SANTIAGO.

WHISPERS, as both stare at PALOMA.

SANTIAGO pulls out a flip phone from his pocket, already open, screen lit -- someone on hold. SANTIAGO turns his back against us, speaks softly into phone...

AND THEN --

SANTIAGO  
 (to "S")  
*Change of plans! Move,  
 fuckers!*  
 (to Immigrants)  
*We're crossing by foot!*

SANTIAGO  
 (to "S")  
 Cambio de planes! Muévanse  
 cabrones!  
 (to Immigrants)  
 Cruzaremos a pie!

"S" rounds up the immigrants, minus PALOMA and GRINGO, prods them as if they were cattle, marshalled out.

GRINGO follows behind (not understanding Spanish), as POLIMA stays back -- knows. The door closes behind GRINGO. NARCO stands in his way.

GRINGO  
 I'm on a schedule, amigo. Move.

NARCO pulls up his shirt, reveals a GLOCK.

From corner, SANTIAGO shouts at PALOMA -- it's all so fast, it's impossible to make out what he just said.

GRINGO (CONT)  
 What the hell is going on here!?

He looks to PALOMA... then to SANTIAGO, NARCO.

GRINGO (CONT)  
 Someone needs to speak **English** to me  
 right now. I know how the border  
 works, assholes.

SANTIAGO still has his flip phone open (someone on the line).

SANTIAGO  
 (beat)  
 Change of plans.

GRINGO  
 Bull shit. Tony and I --

SANTIAGO  
 -- Tony is no longer in charge.

GRINGO  
 (re: phone)  
 Who is that?

SANTIAGO  
 Tony.

GRINGO  
Give me the phone!

SANTIAGO turns, speaks softly, LAUGHS, swings around, hands GRINGO phone. GRINGO turns his back on them, talks:

GRINGO (CONT)  
Tony, what the fuck is going on?  
(no answer)  
Tony!?!?

TONY (V.O.)  
I'm really sorry.

GRINGO  
About what!?

TONY (V.O.)  
This.

GRINGO turns around -- now has GUNS DRAWN ON HIM.

A moment of defeat in GRINGO's eyes -- he cant catch a break.

PALOMA picks up on this, reacts -- SCREAMS AT FULL FORCE!

Both MEN turn to the tumult of screaming.

GRINGO reaches for his gun strapped around his ankle. As BOTH MEN turn back, GRINGO grabs the closest person (NARCO), uses him as a shield as SANTIAGO fires multiple rounds. NARCO shakes as if he's being electrocuted.

Still using his body as a shield, GRINGO rapidly fires at SANTIAGO, shooting him point blank.

GRINGO  
FUCK!

GRINGO tries to make out what just happened. Looks to PALOMA who is now doused in BLOOD.

GRINGO (CONT)  
Grab your stuff, let's go!

GRINGO grabs his blanket/jugs of water. So does PALOMA.

76

EXT. CURB -- MAKESHIFT WAREHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

76

MECHANIC abandons his toolbox, leaves trunk wide open, runs to driver's side door...

GRINGO and PALOMA crash through warehouse side door...

GRINGO spots MECHANIC attempting to flee in their car. GRINGO shoots -- misses.

Instead of jumping into car, MECHANIC pauses to reach for his own firearm -- mistake.

GRINGO shoots again. GETS HIM. They hop in; take off.

CUT TO **BLACK**:

FEMALE NURSE (**PRE-LAP**)  
 It's Linda with **Hospice**.  
 (the longest beat ever)  
 ... your mother went to be with the  
**Lord** at 4:22 this afternoon...

77

INT. CAR -- NACO ABANDONED LOT -- SUNSET

77

Somewhere in the open desert, GRINGO's car is parked. Wherever they are it's barren and desolate -- something out of a horror movie.

GRINGO hangs up the phone, doesn't listen to the rest of the Voicemail...

He pounds the steering wheel, turns it into a pretzel. He attempts to pull the damn thing off the steering column.

He feels PALOMA's gaze. He looks at her through the rear-view mirror. Her eyes ooze with remorse.

She's strong, but even she can't hold back a tear. GRINGO isn't buying it, resents her...

BOTH AT A LOSS FOR WORDS; no noise, minus a faint chop of a distant U.S. BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER toeing the border.

THEN -- a LONE PERSON lugging what looks like a suitcase appears. He walks sluggishly down the broken "sidewalk".

GRINGO draws his gun, presses it against his chest. He's already created enough blood -- a little more won't hurt.

Our MAN now appears. He's lugging a large COOLER on wheels. He's an older fellow, a calm fellow. Let's call him BERTO.

GRINGO pulls focus to this strange man. Considers.

78

EXT. NACO ABANDONED LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

78

GRINGO races to BERTO. BERTO instantly notices the gun, stops, waves his arms up, surrenders. GRINGO tries to calm him -- but when you live on the US-MEXICO BORDER you can't take any chances.

GRINGO pulls out his phone. GOOGLE MAP already up. We are ZOOMED IN on the NACO-SIERRA VISTA (U.S.) map.

GRINGO  
I need to get here.  
(re: Sierra Vista)

Dripping in sweat, BERTO shakes his head "no".

GRINGO (CONT.)  
There is money in it. But I need you  
to speak English.

He takes a few steps back -- he really doesn't speak the language. GRINGO takes a second; he has to think fast - LIGHT BULB MOMENT --

-- he snatches PALOMA, drags her out of the car. GRINGO uses his fingers and hands (even his legs) to illustrate what he's asking for. It's like a game of charades.

STILL, NOTHING. BERTO makes the "sign of the cross". Fears for his life. When --

PALOMA	PALOMA
<i>Please, señor. We need your help.</i>	Por favor, señor. Necesitamos ayuda.

BERTO take's GRINGO's phone, willing to take a look-see.

GRINGO points at a spot on the map. BERTO nods "no". GRINGO points at another spot. BERTO nods "no" again.

GRINGO kicks the dirt, paces back and forth -- livid.

THEN -- PALOMA grabs BERTO's hand. They share a moment. BERTO gets it -- he has kids; hell, probably even granddaughters.

BERTO takes the phone, ZOOMS IN with his fingers. We get a CLOSE-UP of the area he's referring to. Looks to PALOMA:

BERTO	BERTO
<i>No walls. <u>Just a fence.</u> <b>Watch out for the "eye" in the sky.</b></i>	No hay muro ni cerca. Solo cuídense del "ojo" en el cielo.

GRINGO looks to PALOMA for a translation. She nods to the GRINGO -- she trusts him.

GRINGO, still suspect, kicks open the cooler. Now only water, at one time ice. He digs through. A single beer... and, wait, a bottle of TEQUILA?

GRINGO  
How much?

BERTO waves his hands. Hands him the Tequila. It's FREE.

GRINGO inserts a HUNDRED DOLLAR bill in man's breast pocket.

OVER BLACK:

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Listen closely. There is an old fort  
in Sierra Vista, Arizona. You can  
only get to it by foot.

CUT TO:

79 INT. TINY SANCTUARY -- SOMEWHERE MEXICO -- SAME

79

TIGHT ON **Virgin of Guadalupe**. Is she **burning**?

No, it's from the orange, yellow flames rising. VALENTINA  
lights a votive candle. *Maybe for Diego? Maybe herself...?*

She puts the phone under her ear discreetly...

GRINGO (V.O.)  
It's an 11-hour hike. Her and I are  
leaving at sunrise. Tell Estrella to  
be there -- I'm not playing.

She looks around, she's alone --

VALENTINA  
(soft/stern)  
Who do you think you are talking to?  
You are not the --

CUT TO:

80 INT. CAR -- NACO ABANDONED LOT -- CONTINUOUS

80

PALOMO in back seat. GRINGO in front, call on SPEAKER PHONE:

GRINGO  
-- I've NEVER been more fucking  
serious in my entire life. This is  
happening whether you like or not.  
Whether her God damn mother is there  
is up to you.  
(off her silence)  
You think I'm playin'?

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
Let me see if I can get a hold of  
Estrella --

GRINGO  
 -- you're not understanding me.  
 Maybe this will help you understand

GRINGO pulls out his gun, presses it against PALOMA's temple.  
 The two of them look deep into each other's eyes...

GRINGO (CONT.)  
 Your niece is feeling the metal of  
 my gun right now. I'll blow her  
 fucking brains out and no one would  
 even look twice!

VALENTINA doesn't budge -- says nothing.

Fine.  
 GRINGO (CONT.)

CUT TO:

81 INT. TINY SANCTUARY -- SOMEWHERE MEXICO -- CONTINUOUS 81

VALENTINA spots someone walk in.

FROM HER PHONE: **GUN FIRE**... not once, but MULTIPLE times!

VALENTINA  
 Paloma!!!!

Just as soon as the person enters, the person leaves!

CUT TO:

82 INT. CAR -- NACO ABANDONED LOT -- CONTINUOUS 82

GRINGO has his gun out the window, fires off one more shot.

PALOMA doesn't react to the sound. GRINGO nods at her.

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
*What's going on, baby!? Are  
 you okay?! Talk to me!*

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
*Qué esta pasando mi amor!?  
 Estás bien?! Dime algo!*

PALOMA  
 (looking at Gringo)  
*I want to see my mom.*

PALOMA  
 (looking at Gringo)  
*Quiero ver a mi mamá.*

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
*I know, sweetheart. And you  
 will! You just have to trust  
 me.*

VALENTINA  
*Yo se corazón. Y lo harás!  
 Solo tienes que confiar en  
 mí.*

A VERY LONG BEAT

VALENTINA (V.O.) (CONT)  
*Paloma, honey, are you  
 there!? I want to get you to  
 your mama so bad, I promise!!*

VALENTINA (V.O.)  
*Paloma, cielo, me escuchas!?  
 Te llevaré con tu mamá, lo  
 prometo!*

PALOMA  
 (still looking at Gringo)  
*Then **listen** to the crazy  
 white boy.*

PALOMA  
 (still looking at Gringo)  
 Entonces **hazle** caso al güero  
 loco.

CUT TO:

83      INT. TINY SANCTUARY -- SOMEWHERE MEXICO -- CONTINUOUS      83

-- CALL IS DISCONNECTED --

VALENTINA looks at her phone. Short of breath, she has to  
 take a moment to process all of this...

**She takes the candle lighter and lights a second candle...**

FADE TO:

84      INT. RENETA'S CAR -- NIGHT      84

JORGE and RENETA rest their eyes, semi-reclined.

-- CELL PHONE RINGS --

JORGE goes for his beer, while RENETA goes for the phone.

RENETA  
*Gringo, is that you!?*  
 (listens)  
*For Christ sake's, answer me when I  
 call!*

GRINGO (V.O.)  
*I need a favor.*

RENETA  
*Ah, Gringo. We are past favors.*

GRINGO (V.O.)  
*You want the girl?*

RENETA readjusts -- a loaded question she wasn't expecting.

85      EXT. GRINGO'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS      85

GRINGO is leaning against his car, takes a drag from a cig.



GRINGO  
My mom died. I need a ride up to  
Phoenix to handle the paperwork.

RENETA (V.O.)  
(a long pause)  
I'm sorry...

GRINGO  
We are walking on foot tomorrow.  
There is an old fort -- in **Naco,**  
**Arizona...**

RENETA  
Will the girl be there?

GRINGO ducts down, looks through back window, sees PALOMA.

GRINGO  
Ya.

CUT TO:

86 INT. RENETA'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

86

RENETA takes a swig from JORGE'S beer.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Be there right at sundown. Naco is a  
4 and a half hour drive. **Make sure**  
**to leave Juarez** no later than 2PM.  
There's an **hour time difference.**

RENETA  
Gringo, Sinaloa lives in those  
mountains.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
So?

RENETA  
If they find her before you cross,  
Juarez is crushed.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
FUCK. EVERY. LAST. ONE. OF. THEM.

-- CALL DISCONNECTED --

RENETA nods to JORGE to start the car. HEADLIGHTS come on.

EVERYTHING ILLUMINATED. They are parked on a side street near  
the PORT OF ENTRY: UNITED STATES BORDER STATION, **NACO, AZ.**

FADE TO:

87

INT. GRINGO'S CAR -- NIGHT

87

Like most nights in the desert, a tranquil landscape, small glints of moonlight paint the inside of the vehicle.

GRINGO has seat reclined all the way back. He's wrapped in the blanket from before.

UNDER his reclined seat: **PALOMA'S FEET**. She is stretched out in the back, also using her wool blanket.

GRINGO  
(like a kid)  
You asleep?

He turns his head, PALOMA is wide-awake. He takes a swig of his Tequila.

GRINGO (CONT)  
You know what's ironic?

She doesn't know. Hell, she doesn't speak the same language.

GRINGO (CONT)  
I won't get to see my mom on this trip.

Takes another liberal drink.

GRINGO (CONT)  
Messed up, huh? But I'm not gonna let that happen to you.

She studies him. Eyes wide -- she admires him, strangely.

Takes another swig. Puts it down on the center console.

PALOMA snatches it. Impressionable, she sips it.

GRINGO (CONT)  
No! That's not water!

She cringes. Eyes squinted -- that was rough.

GRINGO (CONT)  
See!

As if she's trying to one up him, she takes another swig. This time she doesn't cringe. Swirls it in her mouth as if it were wine -- swallows. Slams it on the console!

GRINGO (CONT)  
Good to know, because I never did trust a person who didn't drink.

He takes a drink. Puts it down. See reaches for it again. He swats at her small fingers.

GRINGO (CONT)  
You've reached your limit.

A LONG SILENCE -- but serene. AND THEN --

GRINGO (CONT)  
I guess now that we're drinkin'  
buddies, I can tell you somethin'.

She has no idea what this "crazy" GRINGO is babbling about, but he has stolen her heart -- she listens, childish grin.

GRINGO folds his hands behind his head.

TIGHT ON GRINGO -- million mile stare, eyes glaze over...

GRINGO (CONT)  
I was 23 when I was stationed at  
Fort Bliss in El Paso. I met this  
Mexican girl at a bar, she was 3  
years younger.

PALOMA all eyes and ears...

GRINGO (CONT)  
She was underage, of course, but  
they were not IDing, which was good  
since she was an **illegal**.

The word "illegal" triggers something in PALOMA.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
We hung out a few times after. It  
was clear she was only hanging out  
with me to develop her English.

A tiny glint in our GRINGO's eyes...

GRINGO (CONT)  
But, I didn't care. Just being in  
her presence was worth every second.  
(looks to backseat)  
I'm telling you, Paloma, this girl  
had it. And whatever "it" was, I  
desperately wanted **IT** in my life.

GRINGO enjoys another sip -- except this time it's out of necessity...

GRINGO (CONT)  
She introduced me to her 4-year old  
girl, **Letizia**. Dad was murdered a  
few years back.

I used to go to the Dollar Tree and stock up on toys. I didn't have much money then -- hell, I don't have it now, but I'd bring her something new every time.

88 FLASHBACK -- INT. PAWN SHOP - EL PASO -- 2013

88

Backside of a MEXICAN GIRL (20), long hair down to her hips, as she checks prices on products and does inventory. OUR FOCUS is on a 4 year-old (LETIZIA) who sits cross-legged by her mom's side, hands her price labels to stick on product. **LETIZIA was the girl in the backseat earlier.**

GRINGO (V.O.)

She worked at a 24-hour pawn shop that didn't go by the "books". HENRY DUGAS, I'll never forget his name. He owned it. He only had two employees -- both illegal.

END FLASHBACK.

89 INT. CAR -- ABANDONED LOT -- PRESENT DAY

89

Still a million mile stare from GRINGO...

GRINGO polishes off the bottle.

GRINGO

She came to my doorstep crying one day after John punched her in the eye. She went on to tell me that he was only paying her \$4 an hour, and made her work 16-hour shifts. If she went to the authorities, he'd have her **deported**. And she didn't want to risk her daughter being alone here.

The word "deported" grabs PALOMA's gaze again...

90 FLASHBACK -- INT. PAWN SHOP -- EL PASO -- 2013

90

We see HENRY DUGAS; a four-eyed bastard, white as fucking Christmas, no taller than five foot five.

We watch as he cons a LEBANESE MAN into buying a broken TV.

GRINGO (V.O.)

She asked me to promise her that I wouldn't overreact. She just needed somewhere safe for her and her daughter while everything blew over.

Her English still was poor, but she  
had never spoken more clearer  
ENGLISH then when she told me to **not  
get involved...**

AND, THEN --

A younger GRINGO marches into the PAWN SHOP. He knocks over  
stereos, ancient computers, even archery supplies.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
Being young and in the army, I had  
no idea how the world worked, let  
alone the border.

GRINGO picks HENRY up, slams him on top of a glass cabinet.  
CUSTOMER flees. While inaudible, we see GRINGO shout at him.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
All I remember telling him was if he  
ever touched her again **I'd kill him.**

We see GRINGO pull out his **M9 service gun**, points it... we  
then ZOOM OUT to see a SECURITY CAMERA has been recording.

DISSOLVE TO:

91 INT. PAWN SHOP -- NEXT MORNING

91

**ICE** (Immigration/Customs) come crashing in. Before we can get  
a look at the MEXICAN GIRL, she is moved out of the way.

What are we left with? LETIZIA. A gigantic ICE AGENT sweeps  
her off the ground, takes her out the door.

GRINGO (V.O.)  
The crooked bastard didn't call ICE  
on her, but rather on Letizia.  
(a LONG beat)  
**Letizia was sent back to Mexico.  
She's never seen her daughter since.**

END FLASHBACK.

92 INT. CAR -- ABANDONED LOT -- PRESENT DAY

92

GRINGO sits up, he's overwhelmed.

GRINGO  
I got discharged, and put behind  
bars for 18 months.  
(beat)

Funny thing is, being in an El Paso prison gives you street credit in Juarez. Her mom still doesn't know why I was put in the pin...

He takes another swig, sees drinks is all gone...

GRINGO (CONT)

There's one thing you can say about liars, Paloma. They are committed. If you tell a lie long enough, you are committed...

GRINGO head rested against his hands. PALOMA'S eyes still tightly shut.

FADE TO:

93      INT. GRINGO'S CAR -- ABANDONED LOT -- EARLY MORNING      93

PALOMA eyes open, stretches, yawns -- remembers why they are here. Sees GRINGO asleep, head pressed against the steering wheel, arms dangle.

She tugs on his collar. Nothing. She shakes him profusely until he's up.

Sees sunrise right in front of him. Looks to PALOMA; the side of his face has a steering wheel imprint.

CUT TO:

94      EXT. OUTSIDE OF CAR -- SONORAN DESERT -- EARLY MORNING      94

**QUICK JUMP CUTS:** GRINGO does jumping jacks, prepares physically and mentally. Then some quick push-ups. PALOMA, wanting to be like GRINGO, attempts a push-up herself...

GRINGO grabs gun, chambers a round. PALOMA gathers up their belongings (water/blankets). Behind the lot, GRINGO digs a ditch, tosses keys into hole.

95      EXT. EDGE OF DESERT -- CONTINUOUS      95

WE ARE BEHIND GRINGO, PALOMA as they take everything in. Breathtaking mountain ranges. They have to crane their neck just to see how vast it is. They share a look...

PALOMA kneels. Says a silent **PRAYER**.

Onward...

QUICK JUMP CUTS: Swaying grassland; rattlesnakes slither by; blankets of mesquite, saguaro and barrel cactus; dirt and sand flutter in the wind, temporarily blinds our two characters at times.

CREST OF THE MOUNTAINS

GRINGO has a step on PALOMA; she attempts to keep up. They take a short water break. Dangerous desert terrain as far as the eye can see.

ARIEL SHOT as we watch them climb the first mountain; they make it; look out -- this isn't even the largest mountain peak. Surrounded by low valleys. They are higher than the plethora of vultures buzzing below.

QUICK CUTAWAYS: mountain lion, coyotes, javelinas, herd of bighorn sheep -- lizards out of a Jurassic Park movie.

LATER

They sit under a mammoth JOSHUA TREE. They pass a jug of water back and forth. GRINGO checks phone: NO SERVICE... BATTERY ALREADY DRAINING.

SECONDS LATER

As they continue on, the sun shifts in the sky; goes from French sky blues to navy blues, back to vivid. Torrid, scorching heat pounding on our characters. GRINGO takes off his shirt.

SHORTLY AFTER

His back is blistering RED; puts shirt back on. PALOMA takes the lead; GRINGO sluggish... the heat (and hangover) take control...

AND THEN --

GRINGO **collapses**. PALOMA runs to him --

CUT TO:

96

INT. RENETA'S CAR -- PARKED -- NACO, ARIZONA -- SAME

96

JORGE, RENETA sit earnestly. Through the windshield we see FORT NACO (1917). Withered and faded adobe, wooden buildings, no roofs. Gated by barbed wire.

RENETA takes a big hit of her cig, holds it, lets it slither out of the corners of her mouth and nose -- almost sexual.

JORGE nurses a beer. Finishes. Tosses it out of the car.

A line of FEDERAL BORDER AGENT VEHICLES pass by. Once out of view, RENETA gets out, walks to FORT.

FADE TO:

97

EXT. SONORAN DESERT -- LATER

97

GRINGO rested under an alamos tree. Semi-unconscious. PALOMA presses the tip of the water jug against GRINGO's lips, lets it drip into his mouth... it trickles down his shirt...

-- MULTIPLE **FOOTSTEPS** --

Someone (or something) is nearby...

PALOMA tugs on GRINGO -- she really needs him alert. Nothing.

AND THEN --

THREE MEXICAN IMMIGRANT MEN congregate around PALOMA, GRINGO.

Labored breaths all around. Time stands still. The sound of crows and wind...

PALOMA stands her ground, stares down the THREE MEN...

One of the IMMIGRANT's removes his book bag. He pulls out an ammonia inhalant (AKA **smelling salts**). He walks to the GRINGO, presses it under GRINGO's nose.

AND WITHIN SECONDS, GRINGO sprouts up, attentive. He struggles to get his bearings, turns vigilant for a moment... that is, until he realizes the THREE MEN in front of him come in peace...

The same MAN reaches back into his bag, walks back over to PALOMA, GRINGO, dumps out its contents: whole-grain tortillas, granola bars, trail mix, and fruit.

IMMIGRANT  
*See you two on the other side.*

IMMIGRANT  
*Los veo del otro lado.*

And like a strike of lighting in a thunderstorm, the three immigrants desert us, disappear in the unforgiving desert.

GRINGO, PALOMA go to town on the food, as if it were Christmas morning. As GRINGO eats, he spots a stamp on the almos tree: **PEACOCK LOGO**. GRINGO ponders...

CUT TO:



98      EXT. NACO FORT -- SAME

98

RENETA peeps through the barbed wire. Studies this 100 year-old abandoned fort, contemplates...

Scans city. Trailer parks. Modest homes. Churches. THE WALL can be seen in the distance.

-- SOUND OF A MILITARY CHOPPER ABOVE --

A **woman's intuition**. This isn't right --

CUT TO:

99      INT. RENETA'S CAR -- PARKED -- CONTINUOUS

99

JORGE nurses a new beer, looks straight ahead:

JORGE  
*Why do you keep trusting this  
mother fucker?*

JORGE  
*Porqué sigues confiando en  
ese pendejo?*

RENETA  
*He's not crossing into Naco.*

RENETA  
*No va a cruzar por Naco.*

JORGE  
*No shit, Reneta. You're no  
longer in charge of finding  
the girl.*

JORGE  
*Mierda Renata. Ya no estas a  
cargo de encontrar a la niña.*

He sees what looks like a GIANT GOLD FISH (AKA **HOVER IN THE SKY**), a drone used by local military and borer patrol.

JORGE makes a phone call:

JORGE  
*What's the closest city near  
Naco without a wall?*

JORGE  
*Qué es lo mas cercano a Naco  
sin un muro?*

SPANISH MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Sierra Vista.

He studies this fish-like beast floating in the sky...

Pedal to the metal. CAR peels out, spits up rocks --

CUT TO:

100      EXT. SONORA DESERT -- LATE AFTERNOON

100

GRINGO, rejuvenated, carries PALOMA on his back. They are making up ground.

LATER

FLAT LAND. The sound of shoes crunching. AND THEN --

-- PALOMA SCREAMS --

PRICKLY PEAR tears through her shoe's sole. Foot bleeds.

He takes off her shoe, evaluates her foot. Nothing too bad; except the bottom of her shoe has a giant hole in it.

He takes off **his** shoe, removes the **insole**, tears it in half with his teeth, sticks half of it in her shoe. Like new.

Onward...

She sees GRINGO squinting his eyes -- he feels the "earth" under him, but he continues on, as the sun burns, sky aches pale orange... sunset is creeping closer...

He checks phone. No service. 5% battery...

SHORTLY AFTER

HOMELAND SECURITY INTEGRATED FIXED TOWERS glisten in the distance. A long stretch of THIN FENCE comes into focus.

"THE EYE IN THE SKY" (**HOVER IN THE SKY**) does her rounds. They watch; now know what Berto was talking about.

GRINGO, PALOMA wait, as this giant "ship" does its rounds.

FINALLY

It changes its course, departs high in the clouds, leaves us.

FENCE

It may seem too easy, but in this bleak and wild desert, where thousands have lost their lives along the way, a fence is fair; think of it as an award: **a rail, not a wall**.

GRINGO holds PALOMA up, lifts her over. GRINGO pads the fence with wool blankets, curving some of the "anti climb" spikes.

**FOR THE FIRST TIME, GRINGO/PALOMA ARE IN THE UNITED STATES...**

LONG DIRT ROAD from afar sits a BORDER JEEP. They freeze. Drop to ground, blend into the earth.

THEN -- JEEP hurries off, out of view.

Onward...

Passing yellow signs: CAUTION: ILLEGAL ALIEN CROSSING.

CUT TO:

101

EXT. CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST -- SAME

101

HIKING TRAIL. Picnic tables. An INFORMATION CENTER close by. A few FAMILIES exit the trails, hop in their car, head out before the sun starts to set.

JORGE leans against his car, lights a cig. RENETA approaches. They both eye a trail that leads up. A sign: BEAR COUNTRY.

JORGE  
You want me to come?

JORGE  
Quieres que te acompañe?

RENETA  
No. I need to do this alone.

RENETA  
No. Necesito hacer esto yo sola.

JORGE  
(points to watch)  
You got 10 minutes, or I'm doing it.

JORGE  
(points to watch)  
Tienes 10 minutos, o lo hago yo.

She understands. She makes her way up the trail.

A HIKER FEMALE (30's), HHIKER MALE (30's), total hipsters, come down the trail. They see JORGE smoking. They are genuinely outraged and beside themselves.

HIKER FEMALE  
Excuse me, sir, but this is protected land, and what you are doing...

Her dialogue picks up, muffled -- JORGE'S POV as he narrows in on her lips moving at lighting-speed. She's animated.

HIKER FEMALE (CONT)  
... I have no problem calling the park ranger. We hike here daily, and we know people...

JORGE reaches into his back pocket, grips his pistol. He wants nothing more than to put a bullet through her flapping gums. AND THEN -- he unclenches the gun. Puts out the cig.

The TWO HIPSTERS smile at each other, feeling accomplished.

CUT TO:

102

EXT. CAR CANYON FORT -- SIERRA VISTA -- SHORTLY AFTER

102

CARR CANYON HOUSE/FORT. All ruins. Only remains, old living quarters made of stone in the 1800s. Scattered about.

GRINGO, PALOMA appear. They stare ahead. Looks like a MOUSE MAZE. Sunset almost upon us...

GRINGO's military training comes back to him. He finds the nearest stone, stands behind it, peeks his head around.

SOMEONE'S POV -- eyes pinned on GRINGO, PALOMA.

-- SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS --

PALOMA reacts to the sound, chases after it --

-- GRINGO reels her back in. Pins her against him as if she were a third hip. He takes out his gun, presses it evenly against his thigh.

Puts his finger against his lips. PALOMA about to burst.

Together, in stride, they move to an open area. Grass is trimmed, plenty of walkways -- polar opposite of where they've just been.

SOMEONE'S POV -- still watching, but FOCUS now on PALOMA.

-- GRINGO WHISTLES --

Nothing. Just the sound of a few birds overhead.

	PALOMA		PALOMA
<i>Mama!</i>		<i>Mamá!</i>	

GRINGO grabs her mouth with his hand -- **shh!** Paloma frowns.

He opens up his phone -- dead. He tries starting it back up -  
- there's not enough juice.

FROM BEHIND --

	RENETA (O.S.)
Ah, Gringo.	

In unison, GRINGO and PALOMA turn around.

RENETA, hips even with arms, regal as ever. As if she built this fort with her bare hands.

GRINGO, RENETA stare, neither blink... and then --

GRINGO grips gun -- RENETA catches this -- and like an **old western**, she whips her gun out first, trains it on GRINGO.

With her free hand, she pulls out a FLASK from her back pocket. Waves it in front of GRINGO.

	RENETA (CONT)
Figured you'd be thirsty after a trek like that.	

GRINGO squints. RENETA nods at his gun.

RENETA (CONT)  
 Throw it over to me.

GRINGO obliges. Tosses it by her feet. RENETA returns the favor, tosses GRINGO flask.

He picks it up. Unscrews. Sniffs.

GRINGO  
 Bourbon?

RENETA  
 Just like you like it.

Takes a swig. This is the good stuff. He takes another sip.

RENETA (CONT)  
 You lied to me.

GRINGO  
 (wipes upper lip)  
 You **lied** to me.

RENETA  
 How so?

GRINGO  
 Jorge's load, 3 nights ago in Villa Ahumada, that was Sinaloa, wasn't it?

She walks over to GRINGO, takes the flask from him. Enjoys a gulp herself.

RENETA  
 Gringo, you're sober -- drink.

Hands it back.

GRINGO  
 The logo, Reneta. The peacock.

RENETA  
 You saw a peacock? Gringo, what the fuck you talkin' 'bout?  
 (hurries)  
 Hand me the girl. She's going back to her dad.

He slides PALOMA behind him so she won't see what's destined to happen...

RENETA has the perfect poker face. Shoot, don't shoot -- impossible to tell, and then --

-- raises her gun at GRINGO...

-- FOOTSTEPS --

As something fills the space behind RENETA..

ESTRELLA (O.S) ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
Drop it! Suéltala!

RENETA steadily pulls the trigger... closer and closer --

ESTRELLA (O.S.) ESTRELLA (O.S.)  
Drop the fucking gun, bitch! Suelta el arma!

RENETA, unflappable, takes her time to lower the gun.

AND THEN --

-- an **AR-17** is pressed against RENETA'S skull. Yes -- an assault rifle!

RENETA plays along, drops her gun...

ESTRELLA kicks gun over...

PALOMA's eyes flooded in tears. She goes to run to her mom, when GRINGO pulls her back.

RENETA casually beckons him with her eyes, last chance...

Too late. GRINGO releases PALOMA to her mother. They quickly embrace, and then ESTRELLA gets back into warrior-mode, appraises the situation.

ESTRELLA grabs RENETA's gun, pockets it.

She tosses GRINGO an envelope. It's thick as fuck.

GRINGO eyes the envelope -- uninterested.

ESTRELLA nods, insists GRINGO open it --

He finally does --

GRINGO shuffles through the "many" bills. Easily **\$20K**.

He looks at ESTRELLA... *he earned it*.

She hands GRINGO his gun back.

She takes PALOMA's hand and disappears into the vast woods.

GRINGO feels his gun as if it's the first time ever touching it... tucks the envelope into the front part of his jeans.

A real-life wild west showdown for what seems like minutes...

RENETA flashes GRINGO a sharp look. A eldritch tinge in her eyes. GRINGO now only a few feet away from her.

RENETA  
You stupid, fucking Americans. You think by sending her off with her mom she's now safe!?

She spits in his face. He handles it well. Slowly wipes her saliva off his cheek and nose.

RENETA (V.O.)  
You just gave her a death sentence.

GRINGO  
I know they took your daughter away, Reneta. But that doesn't mean they will do that with her.

She charges at him. Before she can attack him, he raises the gun up to her head, right between her eyes. Holds it there.

She's manic, seething. He waits until she composes herself; he knows she's strong.

AND THEN --

-- he tosses the ENVELOPE and GUN at RENETA'S feet. He turns on his heel, leisurely walks away from her.

12 FEET AWAY he freezes. Takes in the scenery.

GRINGO (PRE-LAP/V.O.)  
(from before)  
**There's one thing you can say about liars, Paloma. They are committed.**

103 EXT. COMMUNITY PARKING AREA -- SAME

103

ESTRELLA, PALOMA on the opposite side of park. They rush to a parked compact car. ESTRELLA tosses the assault rifle in the forest. Checks to make sure RENETA's gun is loaded. It is.

ESTRELLA opens door for PALOMA. PALOMA attempts to look back one last time for the GRINGO... And then she hears:

GRINGO (V.O.)  
(from before)  
**If you tell a lie long enough you are committed..**  
(and then)  
**... both sides of the border are committed...**

CUT TO:

104 EXT/INT. ESTRELLA'S CAR -- MOVING -- SHORTLY AFTER 104

Safety stickers everywhere. This is a rental. ESTRELLA driving. PALOMA in the back.

The sun drips like honey over the mountainside, as their car weaves in and out of lanes...

GRINGO (V.O.)

There is something your little ears will never understand until you are older....

CUT TO:

105 EXT. DESERT - DOUGLAS, ARIZONA -- CONTINUOUS 105

TONY divvies up a load of cash between the TWO BORDER AGENTS from before. All three share a laugh. LARKIN's phone **rings**. He holds up his "finger". TONY turns away, smiles as he counts his drug earnings.

GRINGO (V.O.)

There are those in Washington that subscribe to the theory that the border is contained. This allows States in far away places to sleep at night...

AGENT LARKIN puts a led bullet through TONY's head...

GRINGO (V.O.) (CONT.)

Each time a new troop is deployed to the border, a new corpse appears.

MATCH CUT TO:

106 EXT. SIERRA VISTA, CAR CANYON FORT -- CONTINUOUS 106

... GRINGO drops to his knees. He's measured, collective. Finishes off the rest of his whiskey; tosses the flask. Back still against RENETA.

RENETA raises the gun at GRINGO. She shivers as she grips the gun. RENETA is falling apart, liquid film around her eye lids, while the Gringo is finally at peace.

She quickly wipes the tears away... readjusts, tightens her grip. She can do this...

CUT TO:



107 INT. VALENTINA'S CAR -- DRIVING -- SAME

107

**TITLE CARD: 10 Kilometers from El Ceibo Mexico/Guatemala Border Port.**

With one hand on the wheel, VALENTINA uses her other hand to fish around for her passport in the glove box.

GRINGO (V.O.)

Then there are voices in Mexico that assure their people violence only comes to those who do bad things. So if you walk a straight line you will never catch a stray bullet...

VALENTINA rolls up to a stop light.

CAR to her right pulls up. She makes eye contact with the ELDERLY MAN driving.

To her left, a VAN pulls up beside her. An OMINOUS HOODED MAN in the passenger's seat, stares straight ahead. THEN --

-- VAN DOORS slide open. MAN IN SKI MASK wields a REMINGTON R4 ASSAULT RIFLE.

OVER BLACK.

-- THE SOUND OF HUNDREDS OF BULLETS SPRAYING THROUGH VALENTINA'S CAR --

GRINGO (V.O.)

Want the truth?

FADE TO:

108 EXT/INT. CAR -- INLAND CHECKPOINT -- CONTINUOUS

108

**TITLE CARD: 30 miles south of Tucson, Arizona.**

INLAND CHECK POINT up ahead. ESTRELLA nods for PALOMA to put down backseat, crawl in trunk.

GRINGO (V.O.)

Both sides of the border need the violence. Without it, there would be a lot of people out of business.

(beat)

And that is something neither side of the border can afford.

A pint-sized CHECK POINT. Only TWO BORDER AGENTS working. One is a HISPANIC FEMALE, the other WHITE MALE.

ESTRELLA comes to a complete stop. Rolls down the window. Makes eye contact with the HISPANIC AGENT, secretly praying she's the one that approaches them. Nope.

WHITE AGENT  
U.S. Citizen?

ESTRELLA  
Mexicana.

She goes to hand him her PASSPORT CARD, but he waves her off.

WHITE AGENT  
Bringing anything back?

She nods her head "no".

WHITE AGENT (CONT.)  
Mind if I check your trunk?

She pops the trunk from the inside. As he walks to the trunk, she slides the handgun out from under her ass and in between her inner thighs. She palms the weapon... ready...

WHITE AGENT opens hood...

Peers down, seems like forever...

His eyes move from side to side like a rotating fan...

We can hear PALOMA's heartbeat, THEN --

CUT TO:

109

EXT. SIERRA VISTA, CAR CANYON FORT -- CONTINUOUS

109

RENETA still has gun trained on GRINGO. She's pulled the trigger hundreds of times, but this time she struggles.

RENETA  
Why did you have to give the girl to  
her mom, Gringo!?

GRINGO  
(lightens mood)  
You think they serve whiskey neat in  
heaven?  
(re: second scene)

LONG BEAT -- we are losing sun rapidly.

GRINGO (CONT)  
For Christ's sake, Reneta, pull the  
fucking trigger!

TIGHT ON GRINGO -- he can feel her lower the gun. While out of focus, we also see her lower the gun...

STILL ON GRINGO... when:

GRINGO (CONT)  
(eyes wide open)  
So, you wanna know why? The night you came to my house with **Letizia**. I went to the pawn shop.

A calmness washes over him. Deep breath, then shuts eyes:

**POP! POP! POP! POP! POP!**

Birds fly every which way!

GRINGO falls in front of us, sucks in the sand... a maroon puddle forms around his head... dead.

ANGLE ON RENETA -- mouth foaming, eyes red as a Merlot. She shoots until she's out of bullets!

She throws the gun; speed walks down the trail, unarmed...

110

EXT. HIKING TRAIL -- PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

110

RENETA walks with urgency down the trail. JORGE spots her.

JORGE  
(nods at her)  
*Yeah?*

JORGE  
(nods at her)  
*Si?*

She nods "yes". She's visually shaken. She marches over to JORGE, grabs his arm, turns him to her:

RENETA  
*Jorge, what does peacock stand for?*

RENETA  
*Jorge, que quiere decir el pavo real?*

She sees a reflection in his eyes -- it's not hers.

**POP!**

RENETA falls forward. Pool of blood. Dead.

ALANA (CIA) holds a smoking gun. Bandage on head/finger.

CUT TO:

111

EXT. INLAND CHECKPOINT -- CONTINUOUS

111

-- WHITE AGENT eyes the inside one last time, then closes the trunk. Taps it twice.

WHITE AGENT #1  
You're good to go, Miss.

A sigh of relief from ESTRELLA, PALOMA. They go to leave --  
-- HISPANIC AGENT stands in front of their vehicle.

HISPANIC AGENT  
(to other Agent)  
There's a call for you on  
line 2.  
(to Estrella)  
Un minuto.

HISPANIC AGENT  
(to other Agent)  
There's a call for you on  
line 2.  
(to Estrella)  
Un minuto.

WHITE AGENT mumbles under his breath, walks to their tiny box  
and picks up the phone:

WHITE AGENT #1  
What?  
(listens)  
You told me to let them get to  
Tucson, someone would be there.

CUT TO:

112      EXT. HIKING TRAIL -- PARKING LOT -- SAME      112

ALANA on phone. JORGE throws RENETA's corpse in the truck.

ALANA  
Change of plans. They want the girl  
back in...  
(looks to **Jorge**)  
... **Mexico**.

WHITE AGENT (V.O.)  
What about the mom!?

ALANA  
I don't give a fuck! Make her  
disappear! Just hold on to the  
fucking **girl** until we get there!!!!

113      EXT. INLAND CHECKPOINT -- SAME      113

-- CALL DISCONNECTED -- WHITE AGENT lowers phone...

WHITE AGENT  
(under breath)  
Shit.

He shoots a look at ESTRELLA... and then, as if he just drank  
something cold too fast, blood rushes through his head --  
he's freaks out, turns away from them...

GRINGO (V.O.)  
 The funny thing is, though, I **love**  
 Ciudad Juárez. She's full of life.

AND THEN -- **GUN FIRE!!!**

HE TURNS --

-- ESTRELLA'S rental car descends into the sunset...

FADE TO:

114 **FLASHBACK** -- INT. CAR -- ABANDONED LOT -- NIGHT

114

GRINGO's head rested against his hands. PALOMA'S eyes still tightly shut. He turns to look at PALOMA:

GRINGO  
 You are Juárez, Paloma.  
 (he turns away)  
 Ensure she continues to shine...

PALOMA's eyes now **wide open**...

FADE TO BLACK.

**'DE GRINGO A LA TUMBA'**

**'FROM GRINGO TO GRAVE'**