

ACROSS

Based on a True Story

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EXT. US/MEXICO BORDER CROSSING AT NOGALES -- DAY

Here on the United States side, a large white CHARTER BUS has pulled to a stop just a few feet in front of a large steel gate that blocks the road. Above that gate is a walkway, and beyond it: Nogales.

A sidewalk runs along the side of the road, and a BORDER PATROL AGENT in a green uniform stands ready to open a gate door that provides pedestrian access into Mexico.

A group of DEPORTEES, Mexican, stand in a single-file line beside the Charter Bus, each with a clear plastic garbage bag containing whatever belongings they could carry with them, which they cradle or carry or have slung over their shoulder.

Next to them, another BORDER PATROL AGENT, bored, sizes up the line for a moment before nodding at the Agent standing by at the gate--giving the signal to open it.

BORDER PATROL #2
(to the Mexicans)
Muévelo, move it.

As the line of Deportees shuffle toward the open gate, we follow one in particular: A MAN WITH A PALM LEAF HAT. He is short which is average height for his country. We see his hat, wind-breaker, blue jeans, white sneakers and the plastic bag slung over his shoulder, but never see his face.

EXT. NOGALES/SONORA, MEXICO -- DAY

The Man With a Palm Leaf Hat walks through the bustling streets of Nogales, passing by his countrymen and women, carrying his plastic bag of belongings. No one pays him much notice as he presses on...

...past the city limits and the outskirts of town, the man continues along the highway and onward down the road.

The Man walks along the hilly, barren countryside. His white hat distinguishes him from the handful of other random PEDESTRIANS he passes. Large Trucks roll past him on the highway.

An OLD PICK-UP TRUCK carrying a bunch of RANCH HANDS in the back pulls to the side of the road--offering him a lift.

Later, the Man sits in the back with the Ranch Hands as the truck rolls down the bumpy highway. He smiles and swaps stories with the others, who inquire to him about the United States. They all seem fascinated in what he has to say.

Several miles down the road, the truck has stopped in one of the "speed bump" towns, allowing the Man With A Palm Leaf Hat to hop out before continuing on in a different direction.

GROUPS of people stand at the bumps and hold cups out to ask for change from passing motorists.

The Sun hangs over the Western Hills, and the Man With A Palm Leaf Hat pushes along the side of the road, alone. He passes a large blue sign that, underneath graffiti, reads "Bienvenido/Welcome to Magdalena de Kino".

EXT. MAGDALENA, SONORA, MEXICO -- EVENING

The population here is about 25,000, making it one of the larger cities in the Northern desert state of Sonora. Houses and buildings are much older here, and some are in quite a state of disrepair.

A church in the center of town is the main attraction for people, and here in the evening there is a festival going on out on the streets surrounding the church and courtyard.

The Man With a Palm Leaf Hat walks past the CITIZENS of Magdalena, recognized by a few who stop him to shake hands with him--but for the most part go about their normal business.

Walking up a busier street, the Man passes a POOL HALL where a group of YOUNGER MEN mill around outside--smoking cigarettes and exchanging passionate stories about women and money.

One of the Younger Men is MANUEL (30), a short (although average height here in Mexico), wiry man with a weathered face, close-cropped black hair and European features. Manuel looks younger than his real age, and wears a faded sport-shirt and blue jeans. He is laughing at another Younger Man's story when he notices the plastic bag being carried by the Man With a Palm Leaf Hat.

For a moment, Manuel watches the man as he walks up the street, his attention piqued. Suddenly his focus is shattered when one of his lively buddies gives him a slap on the arm. Manuel laughs as if he had not been paying attention to anything but the stories being told by his friends.

FADE OUT

MANUEL

FADE IN:

INT. POOL HALL - MAGDALENA -- LATER

Manuel sits at the bar, carefully tearing the label off an almost-empty beer, while listening to another of the Younger Men.

YOUNGER MAN

(in Spanish)

...so she told me to go straight to hell!

LAUGHTER comes from everyone around, including Manuel.

Behind them at a table, a DRUNK has just passed out, face first into a table. The others around him LAUGH at their fellow patron's inability to hold his alcohol.

BARTENDER

(to Manuel)

One more?

Manuel looks up smiling and shaking his head "no." The Bartender smiles back with gold-teeth displayed, playfully.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

You can't fool me, Manuel. You've only had two.

The Bartender reaches for another beer--Manuel's brand, but before he can put his hand on it, the sound of a loud CRASH fills the hall and everyone turns to look. The DRUNK has pushed the table over and is now face down on the floor. Within seconds, LAUGHTER spills out from every corner of the room.

No one rushes to any immediate aid or action on behalf of the DRUNK, lying in beer on the dirty floor. Several DOLLAR BILLS hang out of his pocket, loosely. The Bartender isn't too happy about the sight.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Somebody give that asshole a hand!

LAUGHTER ERUPTS again inside the pool hall, but no one springs to action on the Bartender's behalf--except for Manuel.

Another PATRON moves beside the Drunk on the floor, but rather than help, the Patron --down on all fours-- mimics a dog and pretends to be lapping up the beer spilled by the Drunk. More LAUGHTER.

Still laughing himself, Manuel crouches down and puts his arm around the drunk, then helps him to his feet.

MANUEL
(to the Drunk)
Damn, you're heavy.

Even more LAUGHTER from Manuel's comment.

MANUEL (CONT'D)
Let's go.

EXT. POOL HALL - MAGDALENA -- MOMENTS LATER

Many people are still out and about on the streets of Magdalena as the sun has now nearly disappeared behind the mountains to the West.

Manuel pushes out the bar door and out onto the street with the Drunk's arm draped over his shoulder. Manuel struggles to keep both his own balance as well as the Drunk's as they turn up the street.

A few steps away from the pool hall, the Dollar Bills that had been hanging loosely from the Drunk's pocket free themselves and fall out onto the sidewalk.

Moments later, two CHILDREN race toward the bills, one of them scooping them up with his hand, then the other child pushes the first one fiercely, staking a claim that he had seen them fall and therefore is entitled to half.

Neither Manuel or the Drunk are aware of any of this, and together, oblivious, they stumble homeward.

EXT. DRUNK'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The last bit of light illuminates a very humble house where a light is on inside.

Manuel stands in front of the house alone.

BARFING can be heard from the bushes along the sidewalk. Manuel looks over to see the Drunk, bent over and spitting out the last of his upheaval.

Manuel looks up at the sky--it is a clear night and the stars are out. Once again, Manuel is transfixed in thought.

Suddenly Manuel is TACKLED to the ground.

DRUNK
Fucking thief!

Manuel looks alarmed and confused, pinned down to the sidewalk by the Drunk. A quick BLOW to the face by the Drunk catches Manuel by surprise, but he manages to speak:

MANUEL
Fucking asshole, what are you
talking about?

DRUNK
You stole all my money. I know you
did! Give it back!

The Drunk tries to land another punch, but Manuel writhes away from the Drunk's fist before getting hit. Manuel pushes himself away from, rolling the Drunk to the ground in the process.

DRUNK (CONT'D)
That was my food money you piece of
shit.

Manuel gets to his knees, while the Drunk holds himself up on all fours.

MANUEL
I don't know what you're talking
about, you fucking drunk.

DRUNK
Yes, you do.

The Drunk manages to straighten up on his knees for a moment before taking another wild swing at Manuel, missing by a wide margin and spinning himself to the ground in the process. The Drunk lets out a MOAN.

Manuel looks at the pathetic sight of the Drunk, who has apparently paralyzed himself by throwing his inebriated body around this much.

DRUNK (CONT'D)
Fucking thief!

Before saying anything else, Manuel gets to his feet, and starts off back down the street, still breathing heavily from the fight.

MANUEL
Fuck you, Javier.

INT. MARIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The humble, tiny house is lit by a single light in the kitchen. The walls are cracked and in need of paint, and the furniture could pass for scrap.

Manuel enters through the front door quietly, and moves straight for the kitchen. He bends down over the sink and helps himself to a drink of water from the faucet.

Wiping his mouth, he looks at his own reflection in the window above the sink, touching his face right below his eye--where a fresh shiner is forming, thanks to the punch he took in the face.

MANUEL
Hola, Maria.

Behind him, Maria (20) stands in the entranceway to the kitchen. She is pretty, and dressed simply in a tee-shirt and soccer shorts. Her arms are crossed, her face is carrying a look of disdain.

MARIA
(speaking softly)
Another fight?

Manuel turns to look at her, the eye grabbing her attention. Rather than rush to his aid, she shifts her weight.

MARIA (CONT'D)
I thought you would be late, but not this late. I'm tired of having to deal with this penchant of yours to act like such a little boy.

MANUEL
It's not like that at all.

MARIA
Not like what? You didn't have too many beers tonight? You didn't get into a fight with one of your friends over soccer, or women, or pool...or what?

MANUEL
No--I didn't have too many beers, and no--I didn't--

Maria shushes Manuel and nods toward a bedroom. Manuel gets the signal: there are children sleeping in the house. He continues, speaking a little softer.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Javier had too much to drink and I
had to walk him home.

Maria isn't sold on the story, and crosses her arms a little tighter.

MARIA

And the black eye?

MANUEL

He accused me of stealing his money.

Maria stares at Manuel, putting the rest of the story together in her head. Finally, without a final reaction, she turns and walks out of the kitchen and into the bedroom.

Manuel turns back toward the sink and leaning on one hand, rubs his face with the other.

JOSE

Papa?

He spins around to see two boys, JOSE (10) and LUIS (6), standing in the entranceway to the kitchen. Both boys wear tee-shirts and soccer shorts.

MANUEL

You two are supposed to be in bed.

LUIS

What happened to your face, dad?

Manuel looks at the two inquisitive boys for a moment, before finally giving an answer.

MANUEL

Well, don't tell your mother this...

Manuel looks at the bedroom entrance and then nods for the boys to come into the kitchen and closer.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

...tonight, our beautiful little
town of Magdalena had a very special
visitor. He's known around the world
as a prize champion fighter. He was
(MORE)

MANUEL (CONT'D)
only staying for the evening to have
dinner at El Vaquero--with all the
rich people, before continuing on to
Mexico City...

LUIS
(enraptured)
Who was he?

Manuel signals for them to come closer. Once they are in
close:

MANUEL
De la Hoya.

JOSE & LUIS
(too loud)
No way! Oscar de la Hoya!?

Manuel shushes the boys as he looks at the bedroom entrance.

MANUEL
He wanted to warm up for his fight,
and I was--

MARIA
(from the bedroom)
Manuel, stop telling lies to your
family! Boys, come to bed right now.

The Boys, and Manuel, look dejected.

MANUEL
Come on, do as your mother says.

The Boys shuffle back to the bedroom and disappear. Manuel
smiles a little, and shakes his head before hitting the
light switch and killing the kitchen light.

EXT. RANCH - MAGDALENA -- MORNING

It is just past dawn, and the hazy blue sky is crystal
clear. Manuel stands with a group of other DAY LABORERS
waiting outside of the gate to a Ranch. The group waits
anxiously. It seems a little chilly this morning, in the
lower 50s.

Beyond the gate, a dirt road stretches over a hill, and
SPRINKLERS arch over the crest of the hill--watering the
fields on the other side.

Manuel is wearing a tank-top tee-shirt, and blue jeans. His arms are muscular, and he rubs them with his hands to stay warm. His eye is still blackened.

Off to the east, the sun peeks out over the hills. Manuel turns to look there, and sees a RADIO TOWER sitting up on the top of one particular crest.

A white, late model pick-up truck rolls up the road toward the gate, kicking up dust into the thin November air.

A FOREMAN gets out from the cab of the truck, concealing his face with a dirty baseball cap. After looking at the ground for a few moments, he raises three fingers in the air.

Suddenly the Day Laborers start SHOUTING, trying to get the Foreman's attention. Manuel SHOUTS, too.

The Foreman points one by one at two of the Day Laborers, and then points at Manuel. The three men jog toward the truck and hop in the back.

EXT. RANCH - MAGDALENA -- DAY

The sun is high, and fields of lettuce stretch out to the dusty hills here on the ranch. DAY LABORERS dot the landscape, many hunched over the lettuce, picking the vegetables and throwing them in rickety wooden carts, or pulling up the weeds that are growing unwanted in the fertile soil.

Manuel, sweating and dirty, wipes his brow. The temperature has gone up as the sun hangs high in the clear sky.

Before returning to work, he catches a glimpse of his own shadow in the dirt. Curiously, Manuel stares at his own silhouette for a moment. Then, looking to his left he sees the radio tower--and looking to his right he sees the mountains.

Looking back down at the dirt, he carves a line in the soil with his foot. Then, he looks at his shadow once again, observing the angle the shadow casts from the line in the dirt.

Suddenly sensing the watchful eye of the foreman, he continues his work: carefully pulling heads of lettuce out from the soil and loading them into his own full cart.

Manuel looks at another particular LABORER, pushing his full cart down the path toward a barn. Manuel takes a look at his cart which is nearly spilling over with the lettuce. He wipes his hands on his shirt and crouches down to pick up

the handle of the cart--a heavy load, but not a problem for him.

The Foreman nods approvingly at the "fruit" of Manuel's labor.

EXT. RANCH - MAGDALENA -- LATER

It's later in the afternoon now, and Manuel hoses off the dirty heads of lettuce from another load. He helps himself to a drink of water, and then continues.

EXT. RANCH - MAGDALENA -- EVENING

The sun is dipping back over the western hills, and the Laborers are dispersing.

Manuel and the other three men stand by the white truck with the Foreman--who flips through a fold of bills. One by one he hands out the pay for today's work to each of the men.

FOREMAN

Come back on Monday and there will
be more work.

He stops at Manuel and nods at him to drive home his statement.

MANUEL

Thank you.

The Foreman heads back to the truck and the three Men stand, watching--expectant.

FOREMAN

Good night.

Manuel and the two Day Laborers watch as the Foreman starts the truck, shifts into gear and drives away.

For several more moments Manuel and the others stand still, watching the truck drive away.

DAY LABORER #1

(to the Foreman)

Fucking asshole. Doesn't even give
us a ride back to town.

The other Day Laborer shakes his head and starts to walk up the road alone.

DAY LABORER #2
Gas is not cheap, my friend.

DAY LABORER #1
(to Day Laborer #2)
You're a brainwashed half-wit.

Manuel looks at the agitated Day Laborer, who flips through his day's pay.

DAY LABORER #1 (CONT'D)
This is less than I made last week
for half the amount of work. *Fucking
asshole!*

Manuel bows his head and starts to walk up the road,
following the understanding Day Laborer.

EXT. BUSY STREET - MAGDALENA -- NIGHT

Manuel walks down a CROWDED sidewalk, lit by street lights and neon light pouring out of the windows of bars. The people here are lively, as this is the seedier side of the small town of Magdalena.

Manuel turns down an alleyway. DOGS bark from somewhere nearby.

INT. COCK-PIT -- MOMENTS LATER

A CROWD has swelled in this dirty enclosed arena, all of the people here are men, many are dirty Day Laborers, although a few are well-dressed.

Cages containing Roosters line one wall, and Manuel, still wearing the clothes he was wearing in the fields, makes his way past them, stopping for a moment to watch the current bout, but then continuing on.

CHEERS turn to BOOS and WHISTLES before the crowd noise returns to a dull roar. The BARKING of dogs is even louder now.

Manuel looks around for someone or something. In one of the cages on the wall, he spots a WHITE ROOSTER WITH ONE BLACK FEATHER on it's wing, and he stares at the bird as if he knew something about it. The rooster looks well-fed and distinguished, very intense. His head bobs back and forth as he looks right back at Manuel. A hand grabs Manuel's shoulder from behind.

GUSTAVO
 Manuel, my friend! Good to see you
 again!

Manuel spins around to see GUSTAVO, an older man with gold-rimmed glasses and a broad smile. The two shake hands.

GUSTAVO (CONT'D)
 I see you've met *Surya*. The "Sun
 God". You should put money on this
 one, he's fighting a Kentucky Fried
 Chicken tonight.

Gustavo LAUGHS heartily. Manuel only shakes his head and smiles, then hands Gustavo some of the bills that the Foreman paid him earlier.

MANUEL
 This is for **our** friend.

Gustavo looks at the money, nodding at subtle reference.

GUSTAVO
 And for *Surya*?

MANUEL
 Maybe next time, Gustavo.

Manuel smiles and shakes Gustavo's hand once more, then starts to make his way out.

EXT. THE MISSION PLAZA - MAGDALENA -- MORNING

The old Mission here is surrounded by small shops. The area is well kept, and the cobblestone streets are free of dirt and debris.

The CHURCH BELL rings from the Mission's tower.

EXT. OPEN-AIR BUTCHER SHOP -- CONTINUOUS

Surya, wet and dead, hangs from a rack upside down. Other meats are hanging nearby. A BUTCHER grabs the legs of the dead rooster and pulls it down from the rack. Within moments, there is the sound of a KNIFE HITTING A CHOPPING BLOCK.

INT. THE MISSION -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel sits in Church, with Maria who is cradling a BABY. the COLLECTION PLATE is being passed around.

The PRIEST sits by the altar, watching his CONGREGATION like a hawk.

The Collection Plate stops in front of Manuel, who tosses in his tithe, then sits up in the pew.

INT. THE MISSION -- MOMENTS LATER

The USHERS pool together their collection plates into a larger basket.

One Usher reaches down into the bevy of bills and coins and removes a piece of white paper.

Unwrapping it, he sees that it is the label from a beer bottle (the same label Manuel had removed from his beer a few nights ago).

INT. THE MISSION -- CONTINUOUS

The Priest stands and Manuel stands quickly, ahead of the rest of the Congregation by a full second.

EXT. THE MISSION -- LATER

CHURCH-GOERS spill out of the Mission, mass service has just concluded. Most men are dressed in khaki pants and most of the women wear dresses, but like in the United States, some people are wearing blue jeans.

Amidst the Church-Goers, Manuel appears, walking out to the courtyard in a button down short-sleeve shirt and blue-jeans. Maria carries the baby, followed by little Luis and Jose. All are towing behind Manuel.

Manuel stops, as do the others. He looks at Maria

MANUEL

I will see you tonight.

Jose steps forward.

JOSE

Can we come to play with our
brothers and sister?

Manuel smiles and shakes his head.

MANUEL

Not today, son. Next time we will
have them come to our house.

Jose is visibly dejected, but shows acceptance.

About twenty yards from Manuel, a female figure stands circled by THREE CHILDREN. She watches Manuel, waiting. This is ROSA (30), a shorter, plump woman with a very pretty face. The Children: MANNY (14) a wiry, handsome boy, BONITA (12) a shy little girl, and JUAN (11) who is plump like his mother.

JUAN

Can't Luis and Jose come with, mom?

Rosa shakes her head, no.

Maria reaches down and grabs Luis by the hand and leads him and Jose off toward home. Manuel turns and walks over toward Rosa with an awkward smile on his face. Halfway to her, Juan rushes to him and grabs his legs, Bonita shyly makes her way over to give him a hug and a kiss. Manny hangs back with Rosa.

MANUEL

Aye! Hello little ones!

Manuel looks up at Rosa.

ROSA

Let's go, your children are hungry.

Rosa turns abruptly and starts to walk away. Juan clenches Manuel's leg, making it hard to move quickly.

MANUEL

Come on, little Juan. Your mother
wants us to go, and we go! You're
hungry, right?

Juan looks up at Manuel and nods his head.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Well, come on then! We have to hurry
up!

Juan lets go of the Manuel's leg, and grabs his hand. Bonita grabs the other, and the two start off.

Suddenly from across the courtyard, the Drunk appears in front of Manuel--sober, and looking like he wants to talk.

Manuel notices the Drunk, and stops--looking at him, and then looking around to be sure they are still in the church courtyard as if for safety-sake.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Juan, Bonita--run and catch up to your mother.

The two obey Manuel's order and scurry off as the Drunk approaches.

DRUNK

Manuel.

MANUEL

Javier.

There is a moment of silence between the two, then finally:

DRUNK

I really had a lot to drink the other night--didn't I?

MANUEL

Yes.

DRUNK

Would you believe that I lost two hundred pesos somewhere between the bar and home?

Manuel touches his black-eye with his thumb.

MANUEL

Yes--I remember.

Another moment of silence.

DRUNK

It turns out that two little kids robbed me. Little bastards. When their mother found the two hundred pesos and asked them where it came from, they said that they had seen it "fall" from some Drunk's pocket. Great story, huh? Fucking little pick-pocket thieves.

Suddenly, realizing he just swore while standing in a Church Courtyard, the Drunk shakes a little, faces the church bell tower and makes a quick sign-of-the-cross, looking up to the sky and saying:

DRUNK (CONT'D)
Forgive me, God.

The Drunk looks at Manuel's eye with curiosity:

DRUNK (CONT'D)
I hit you pretty hard, huh?

Manuel looks at the Drunk with pity before putting a hand on his shoulder.

MANUEL
I have to go, Javier.

FADE OUT

CHRISTOPHER

FADE IN:

INT. CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Inside a pastel colored waiting room, we see a young boy, CHRISTOPHER (9), who looks to be your typical blonde-hair, blue-eyed all-American boy. He sits on a chair that's too big for him, but eyes a Playskool chair that seems like it's not quite his size.

THERAPIST (O.S.)
Christopher seems to be coming along fine, but there are some things to be concerned about.

Christopher picks up a magazine, and mimics a PARENT sitting across the room--crossing his legs just like the Parent and sticking his nose into the open magazine.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)
As I'm sure you can imagine, at 9 years-old, having something like this happen to him can dramatically narrow the line he's going to walk down later in life.

DAWN (O.S.)
I'm a teacher, doctor--I know a little something about that.

Christopher looks around--bored quickly by his copy-cat routine.

Next to his chair, a window-door looks into a Consultation where two figures can be seen having a conversation.

INT. CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST'S CONSULTATION ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

DAWN (40), a Caucasian woman who is pretty in an approachable way, sits across the desk from a THERAPIST, who with his hands folded and leaning toward Dawn appears really wanting to connect with her.

THERAPIST

(nodding at her)

I know. What I'm getting at, is that Christopher really needs time to grieve. I know it's not quite been three months now since everything happened, and he seems to be getting back to normal--but you are the only one he seems to be talking with.

DAWN

--and that's not too often.

THERAPIST

Right. Since we last talked has he mentioned anything about his father?

DAWN

No.

THERAPIST

What kinds of things has he been talking about?

DAWN

Well, when he does talk, it's mainly about video games.

The Therapist looks at the door--Christopher is peering in. Dawn turns and looks, smiling at him. He smiles back.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Everything else seems normal with him.

THERAPIST

Yes, he's not drifting too far away from the rest of the world, which is outstanding. A lot of kids in similar situations shut everything and everyone out.

DAWN

It's not just kids that do that.

THERAPIST

You're right. Speaking of which, how are you doing?

Dawn sighs and smirks. She doesn't really have an answer.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

He's looking at you and seeing how you're dealing with it, and that's what he's learning how to do.

Suddenly Dawn seems a little agitated--perhaps put on the spot.

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

I don't want to imply that you're dealing with things the wrong way. Everyone's different in the ways that they cope. As long as you're taking care of yourself in the process though, Christopher's going to get through this--and a lot of the credit will go to your strength, Dawn.

Dawn loosens up a little.

INT. CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Christopher swings his feet up on the chair next to his, and then lays across two seats, crossing his legs again casually in the process. He then picks up a magazine and holds it above his head to read it.

THERAPIST (O.S.)

Nine years old is a very tumultuous age. He's half child, half young adult right now.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD -- DAY

A group of PROUD PARENTS stand on the sideline behind two COACHES, while their little 9 year-old SOCCER PLAYERS run rampant up and down the field. Christopher stands out among them, playing with an intensity matched by no other.

The Proud Parents CHEER on their kids. Dawn is there, as into the game as any of the other Moms and Dads.

On the field, Christopher hustles after the ball when it's anywhere near to him.

COACH
(yelling)
Christopher! Stay in position!

Dawn looks at the Coach immediately after hearing Christopher's name.

Christopher backs off a little.

DAWN
(yelling)
Doing good, Chris!

An OPPOSING PLAYER dribbles the ball into Christopher's "zone." Christopher comes up to engage the Opposing Player, who in turn, passes the ball errantly to a TEAMMATE of Christopher's.

COACH
(yelling)
That's the way, Chris!

Dawn shakes her fists positively.

DAWN
Good job sweetheart!

The Teammate dribbles the ball forward, but is engaged by ANOTHER OPPOSING PLAYER. He passes it off to Christopher, who is wide open.

Dawn holds her breath.

On the field, Christopher controls the ball and dribbles it over to the opposing team's side.

COACH
(yelling)
You've got an open guy!

Down the field, an OPEN TEAMMATE is standing in front of Christopher, but Christopher continues to dribble--not yet being engaged by any of the OPPOSING PLAYERS.

DAWN
Take it down, Chris!

Christopher continues to dribble the ball toward the opposition's goal--the Open Teammate waves his hand for Christopher to pass, but Christopher focuses on the GOALTENDER.

COACH
(yelling)
Dish it off, Christopher!

Suddenly Christopher stops and looks around for someone to pass to.

COACH (CONT'D)
Jonathan! Pass it to Jonathan!

Christopher is confused, perhaps due to tunnel-vision. Without warning, an OPPOSING DEFENSEMAN kicks the ball away from Christopher's feet--kicking Christopher in the shin in the process. Even through the shin guard, the leg connects a blow to the bone. Christopher writhes in pain, and falls to knee to grab the affected area.

The REFEREE blows the WHISTLE, and checks Christopher as he gets to his feet.

REFEREE
Are you okay?

CHRISTOPHER
Yeah.

Dawn stands on the sidelines, hands cupped over her mouth. Christopher hobbles off the field. The Coach comes immediately up to him.

COACH
You all right, Chris?

CHRISTOPHER
(angry)
I said, I'm fine, okay?

The Coach backs off, surprised. Dawn wants to rush to her son's aid, but holds back.

INT. BUCHLEITNER HOUSE - CAMP VERDE, AZ -- NIGHT

Christopher sits on the floor of the living room, an ice pack on his shin.

TELEVISION
Live From New York, it's Saturday
Night!

The familiar music of television's longest running variety show echoes softly throughout the room.

Dawn lies on the couch, legs crossed, holding a magazine above her head. She stops reading and looks at Christopher, who has zeroed in on the television.

DAWN

Chris? Why did you get mad at Coach Smith today?

Chris doesn't answer. Did he hear her?

DAWN (CONT'D)

Chris?

CHRISTOPHER

I was all right. Why does everyone keep asking that?

Dawn is speechless. Finally, almost to herself alone:

DAWN

I know.

Christopher doesn't really react to Dawn.

TELEVISION

...We've got a really good show planned for tonight. The Smashing Pumpkins are here...

APPLAUSE from the Television Crowd, but neither Dawn or Christopher show any excitement.

EXT. BUCHLEITNER HOUSE - CAMP VERDE, AZ -- MORNING

This quiet neighborhood street is located in the hills near Camp Verde, AZ, just south of Sedona. Like so many other neighborhoods in this area, the houses that line the dusty road are sitting on dirt lots with sparse vegetation. They are one-story, single family dwellings.

INT. BUCHLEITNER HOUSE - CAMP VERDE, AZ -- CONTINUOUS

Inside of the house, we see a wall covered with twelve years worth of pictures of three people:

Dawn: The pictures she appears in feature her in an Arizona Park Service uniform in her 20s, her standing by a desert lake with a fishing rod, or her "relaxing" and having fun.

JACK (40), a Caucasian man who is a handsome fellow. He looks happy in the photographs, but doesn't appear in many-- he may have been behind the camera.

Christopher: Baby pictures with his mother show a precious little boy. Older, around 8 years-of age, he mugs for a soccer photograph in another shot. In pictures with his mom, Dawn, he looks to be very happy.

The house is quiet, save the sound of SILVERWARE SCRAPING ON PLATES from the kitchen. Here we find Christopher and Dawn, sitting together at the table. They're both dressed in pajamas.

They look at each other from time to time while eating the last bits of their plates of pancakes: Dawn wears her affection for her son on her sleeve. Christopher appears bored as he cuts the pancakes with his fork.

There is a strong sense that someone is missing from the kitchen, but the two continue to eat, forced to be content with themselves.

Dawn chews her food and stares at her son for a long while. Then she speaks up:

DAWN

How about we go down south a little early?

Christopher puts his fork down.

CHRISTOPHER

Can we take Tanner and Jade?

DAWN

Yeah, of course.

Dawn picks up what's left of a sausage link and eats it--not letting down her glance at Christopher. Christopher looks at his plate for a few moments.

CHRISTOPHER

Can we go now?

Dawn swallows her food, and without much regard to the gravity of the question:

DAWN

Absolutely.

Christopher BOLTS from the table, scampering away joyfully through the living room and down the hall.

CHRISTOPHER

Tanner! Jade! We're going camping!

Two dogs race to Christopher's side as he runs into a bedroom at the end of the hall.

Back at the kitchen table, Dawn looks at what Christopher had left on his plate.

She smiles.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- LATER

Dawn, wearing sunglasses, tends the wheel of a newer model green Chevy full-size Van, while Christopher rides shotgun--soaking in the sight of the surrounding landscape.

Behind the two, Tanner and Jade fight for a spot next to the propped-open side window.

The Radio plays DRIVING MUSIC.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

The Van, pop-up trailer hooked up to the back, races down the road, passing a "Interstate 19 South, Arizona" sign.

We ride along for awhile as the Van passes the scenic Arizona landscape: desert and cactus dotted.

MOTORCYCLISTS travel past the Van in a group, Christopher eyes each one of them passing by.

On the side of the road, a rabbit watches the traffic rolling down the Interstate.

There is plenty to see: mountain ranges that seem to spring up and then disappear out of and into nowhere. Billboard signs that proclaim everything from cheap gas and food to the redeeming power of Jesus.

From his window, Christopher takes it all in: perhaps it's very therapeutic.

On her side of the Van, Dawn also seems to be enjoying the drive. She notices flocks of birds circling above and follows them with her eyes while paying attention to the road ahead.

EXT. GAS STATION - I-19, RIO RICO, AZ -- LATER

It is afternoon now. Dawn has parked the van at a gas island here at this roadside fueling station.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Christopher sits in the passenger seat, his legs propped up on the dash, playing a game on a Nintendo Game-Boy. The Dogs are exhausted in the back seat.

EXT. GAS STATION - I-19, RIO RICO, AZ -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn has walked away from the van several paces and talks into her cell phone. She waits for someone to pick up on the other line.

DAWN
(into the cell
phone)
Yeah, hey Mary--it's Dawn...I'm
good, I'm good. Listen, I know it's
a short week and all, and I know
this is last minute, but--
(sighs)
--can you get me a sub?...Yeah, I
know it's tough, but with everything
we've been through...Yeah...Boy, I'd
really appreciate it...well, I'm
actually going to be out of cell
phone range here in a few minutes.
Try Mrs. Philips first, the kids
really like her and she doesn't just
sit there and tell them to read. No,
I'm going to be out of cell phone
range...I tell you what, I'll call
you back in twenty minutes, okay?
Thanks, Mary...

Dawn presses the CANCEL button on her phone, then turns and looks at the van. Christopher looks out at her. She shrugs right back at him.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- LATER

Time has passed, and Christopher has pressed his head against the window--bored.

Suddenly Dawn's cell phone rings.

DAWN
(into the cellphone)
Yeah, Mary?...You did! That's
Great...

Dawn turns the keys in the ignition and the van ROARS to life.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Thanks, Mary! Have a Happy
Thanksgiving, too!

Dawn presses the CANCEL button again, and looks over at Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER
Well?

DAWN
We're in business.

Both smile broadly.

EXT. GAS STATION - I-19, RIO RICO, AZ -- MOMENTS LATER

The Green Van with the pop-up camper towing behind it pulls out of the gas station and turn back onto the highway.

The sun still hangs high.

EXT. CALABASAS CAMP AREA - PENA BLANCA LAKE, AZ -- EVENING

Pena Blanca Lake is a fairly large man-made lake near the southwest "angle" of Arizona. Surrounded by dust-covered sparsely-vegetated hills, the Lake and it's surroundings are something of an oasis here in the desert. Trees and brush grow around the shore of the lake.

There are several campgrounds on the Lake, and at the Calabasas Camp Ground, other campers have made their perch, whether in an RV or a pop-up model like Dawn and Christopher's, which is pulled into an empty spot underneath a tree.

Not too far from their site, Christopher wanders along through the trees with his Dogs. He spots another camp site nearby, where he sees a FATHER, MOTHER and SON are located. They all look happy--perfectly happy. Christopher stops dead in his tracks to watch.

Outside of their RV, the Mother tends to a smoking grill while the Father and Son toss a baseball back and forth.

Christopher stands for awhile, soaking the family camp site in. It looks as if something is haunting him about the scene.

DAWN (O.S.)

CHRIS!

Christopher snaps his head around to look back at the direction of the voice.

DAWN (CONT'D)

TIME FOR DINNER!

Quickly he shuffles back toward his own camp site. The Dogs follow.

EXT. CALABASAS CAMP AREA - PENA BLANCA LAKE, AZ -- MORNING

Christopher sits at the shore of the Lake, wearing a windbreaker, jeans and tennis shoes--holding a fishing pole and waiting for a bite.

Out on the Lake, a lone FISHERMAN stands in his flat-bottom bass boat, casting off and reeling right back in. No bites for him either.

Christopher watches the Fisherman. Dawn has quietly walked up behind him.

DAWN

Catching anything yet, sweetheart?

Christopher looks back.

CHRISTOPHER

Nope, not yet.

Dawn nods her head and smiles at his optimistic response.

DAWN

What do you say we go for a hike
after breakfast?

Christopher nods his head approvingly as he looks back at the end of his line sitting in the Lake.

Dawn starts back toward the pop-up camper, but stops when she hears her son speak more:

CHRISTOPHER

I know dad's not coming back, mom.

Dawn looks back at Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

I mean, it's okay to miss him.

Dawn looks as though she might cry. She steps down to Christopher's side at the edge of the Lake, then crouches down behind him and wraps him in her arms.

DAWN

Oh, sweetie. I know it is. I know it is.

Christopher stares out at the line.

CHRISTOPHER

Mom?

DAWN

Yes?

CHRISTOPHER

I think I've got a bite.

Dawn releases Christopher, and he tugs on the line.

Out on the Lake, the Fisherman looks over at Christopher's line, shielding the sun with his hand.

EXT. CALABASAS CAMP AREA - PENA BLANCA LAKE, AZ -- LATER

It is late in the afternoon. TROUT, freshly cleaned and cut, lands on the Charcoal grill that Christopher and Dawn brought with them.

Tanner and Jade are nearby, playing with Christopher who tosses a tennis ball out for them to fetch.

EXT. CALABASAS CAMP AREA - PENA BLANCA LAKE, AZ -- EVENING

Christopher and Dawn sit in folding lawn chairs holding paper plates containing red potatoes, corn on the cob and char-grilled lake trout.

CHRISTOPHER

Mom, can we just live like this from now on? I like it a lot better. I can fish and you can cook. I know it's a crazy idea but we won't have to go back Camp Verde if you just give it a shot.

Dawn is kind of stunned by Christopher's thinking.

DAWN

Well, it certainly sounds like a good idea, but I have a teaching

contract which I have to abide by.
And you have to get back to the 3rd
grade. It's not like you can keep
skipping school forever.

CHRISTOPHER
But I'm learning so much more here
than I do in school. Besides, I
don't like my teacher.

DAWN
And why not?

CHRISTOPHER
I don't think she likes me.

DAWN
So you don't like Mrs. Parsons
because--she doesn't like you.

CHRISTOPHER
Well, I can't think of a better
reason.

DAWN
Maybe why you don't like Mrs.
Parsons is because she's not like
Miss Abbott.

CHRISTOPHER
I like Miss Abbott. I miss the 2nd
grade. Can I go back?

DAWN
We'll talk about it when we get back
to Camp Verde.

CHRISTOPHER
Okay.

Dawn chuckles to herself, Christopher's logic is not all
there, but he's starting to make just a little sense at this
age--and he's changing, too. Just like the therapist said he
was.

FADE OUT

ANTHONY

ANTHONY (V.O.)
Tonks. That's the sound that's made
when you hit them on the head with
your flashlight.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Tonks?

FADE IN:

EXT. INTERSTATE 19 -- DAY

Cars HUM along the Interstate, past yellow flags and cones sitting on the northbound side of the freeway.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

So how long you been in the Border
Patrol?

We see two men wearing green border patrol uniforms. One of them ANTHONY (late 20s), and the other is IVAN (early 20s), who we'll come to find has just asked the question. The two men are manning a CHECKPOINT, in which every vehicle is stopped and Border Patrol Agents ask a few questions of each MOTORIST as they drive Northward.

Anthony is a handsome looking guy, wearing sunglasses. His face still looks young, but he speaks in the tone of someone with wisdom.

ANTHONY

'Bout a year now. Been out here
since January.

IVAN

Huh.

Ivan accepts the response, and after a few moments, also accepts the fact that Anthony isn't too talkative.

A VEHICLE PULLS FORWARD, Anthony approaches the window to have a word with the MOTORIST, a Caucasian man in his 40s.

ANTHONY

Good afternoon. Where you heading
today?

MOTORIST

Back to Phoenix.

ANTHONY

Coming up from Mexico?

MOTORIST

Yeah. Doing some shopping down in
Nogales.

Anthony nods his head.

ANTHONY

All right. Have a safe trip home.

Anthony waves the vehicle forward and watches for the next in line.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Meds.

IVAN

What's that?

ANTHONY

Went to Mexico to get cheaper prescription drugs, don't need the prescription either. Probably Viagra.

Ivan CHUCKLES.

IVAN

Can't get it up.

ANTHONY

Yeah. So how long were you in training?

IVAN

Six months.

ANTHONY

(shaking his head)

Ridiculous that it takes so long just to get do this job.

(to the NEXT
MOTORIST)

Afternoon, ma'am. Where are you heading?

Anthony engages the NEXT MOTORIST as he did the first. Ivan takes a look around at the Checkpoint--there are other Border Patrol Officers and a HIGHWAY PATROLMAN milling about. A CANINE COP holds onto the leash of a German Shepherd.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

All right, have a safe trip home, ma'am.

While soaking in the surroundings, Ivan has forgotten about his post.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Ivan--you wanna grab the next one?

Ivan snaps his head back around.

IVAN
Sure.

Anthony nods his head and steps off the road to pick up some bottled water.

ANTHONY
(under his breath)
The US Border Patrol wants YOU.

Anthony is reading from a billboard on the side of the road, and underneath the sign it reads "NOW HIRING!"

INT. BAR -- EVENING

Anthony sits down at the bar, wearing civilian clothes now, facing a shot and a beer. Ivan is next to him.

ANTHONY
...so then I asked him for papers
and he says, "No Papers...took a
shit in the desert man, needed to
wipe my ass," and he was totally
acting serious.

Ivan and Anthony both heartily LAUGH.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
No really, man...Ivan...this job is
total bullshit. Turn around and go
back home, work in a restaurant.
This shit's far from fun. There's a
few good stories here and there, but
it's really just a boring-ass-JOB.

INT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Anthony opens the door and light pours in from the hallway outside.

ANTHONY
Baby?

No answer in the house.

Anthony walks in, shuts the door behind him, and turns on a light.

On the Coffee Table in the living room, Anthony spots a hand written note.

He reads out loud:

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Tony--decided to take a flight back to Jersey for the holiday, missed my parents. Might stay for awhile. I'm not mad at you, just frustrated with myself.

(under his breath)

Yeah, right.

(back to reading)

I'll call you soon. Jenny.

(commenting on the signature)

Just "Jenny"? No love?

Anthony tosses the letter back onto the coffee table and leaves the room.

FADE OUT

ACROSS

FADE IN:

EXT. SOMEWHERE WEST OF NOGALES -- EVENING

Somewhere up in the mountains, there is very little here, except brush and cacti.

There's HUMMING noise growing louder and louder, and suddenly an old Thunderbird Station-wagon reveals that it is the source of the sound.

The rickety wagon chugs up a hill in low gear and then skids to a stop underneath what passes for the area's only tree, tires kicking dust up into the late November sky.

The DRIVER, dressed in a black shirt and a baseball cap gets out of the car, and opens the tailgate: SEVEN BORDER CROSSERS spill out from the back of the vehicle. All are wearing jeans and have long sleeve shirts or jackets, and they are all carrying full backpacks.

The DRIVER scans the surrounding area impatiently. Meanwhile, another man gets out from the passenger side of the car. He is a COYOTE, wearing jeans and a long sleeve t-shirt. He wears a gold chain around his neck, and he looks young and perhaps even dangerous.

DRIVER

Come on, let's go--let's go.

As the Driver walks back to the driver's side door, Manuel crawls out over the tailgate, one of the Seven who are crossing in this group. He's no different than the other six Border Crossers, with his backpack, soccer jacket and blue jeans.

Once all are out of the car, the Coyote shuts the tailgate and in a second the car peels away, making a giant u-turn back to where it came from.

The Seven look at the Coyote.

COYOTE

Okay my friends. Just like we talked about.

And without another word, the Coyote starts walking North. The Border Crossers and Manuel follow behind him.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

Anyone sees anything, you know what to do.

As they walk across the dusty terrain, all of the Men scan the sky ahead of them.

EXT. SOMEWHERE ELSE WEST OF NOGALES -- LATER

The group of Border Crossers, the Coyote and Manuel continue onward. The sky hangs to the West, it is nearly an hour before sunset.

Back towards the rear of the pack, TWO CROSSERS are talking to each other in low tones.

COYOTE

No Talking!

The Men shut up, and keep walking.

EXT. CANYON RIDGE WEST OF NOGALES -- LATER

The sun is about to dip below the hills to the West now, and the group continues to press northward.

Out in front of them, a post-fence about four feet high stretches outward, seven strands of barbed wire delineate the border between the US and Mexico. There is nothing else

to give the appearance of protection for the land beyond the line.

It is colder, several Border Crossers are now wearing light jackets like Manuel's.

The Coyote leads Manuel and the Border Crossers on.

EXT. BORDER FENCE -- MOMENTS LATER

The group of Border Crossers make their way one by one through and over the fence, the Coyote watchfully standing just on the other side.

COYOTE
(to the Crossers)
Stay close.

With a stick in his hand, the Coyote points to small patch of dirt not far from where the group stands.

On closer look, the Coyote is pointing to the edge of a metal plate laying partially uncovered by the dusty soil--it is most likely a pressure plate, used by the US Border Patrol like a traffic light sensor.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
Form a line.

The motley crew of Border Crossers fall in beyond the Coyote, and continue northward.

EXT. NORTH OF THE BORDER FENCE -- NIGHT

The stars are out en force this evening, and the clear sky and half moon provide ample light to make at least outlines of the eight Mexican men as they ramble onward across the mountainous terrain, through the canyons and river washes.

EXT. CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST -- MORNING

The group of Border Crossers stumble behind the Coyote, they have been walking all night but there are no signs that they are to let up.

The Coronado National Forest is actually densely-vegetated, but the shrubs and cactus that grow here do not spread wide branches from their trunks and roots. It is a hilly desert highland area.

EXT. COYOTE'S PATH - DESERT -- LATER

The eight men press onward. Although it's not uncommon to find trash in these parts, plastic bags and water bottles that have been discarded by other crossers, the men seem to take notice of an empty PLASTIC MILK BOTTLE, dangling from the branch of a barren tree. It's suspended over the path as if it were a road-mark.

One particular member of the group, an OLDER CROSSER, barrel-chested with a thick black mustache, starts to lag behind the others, hobbling.

Slowly the others notice that the Older Crosser can't keep up--and his situation is only getting worse.

The Coyote senses the disturbance and turns to look back at the suffering Older Crosser.

COYOTE
Let's go, old man.

The entire group stops as the Coyote does the same. The Older Crosser is doubled over in pain. MUMBLING starts among the other six Border Crossers. The Coyote walks to the Older Crosser's side.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
I said, let's go.

OLDER CROSSER
Heart attack.

Manuel and the other Border Crossers surround the Older Crosser as he falls to the ground.

The Coyote backs away, rolling his eyes. One Crosser speaks up:

CROSSER #1
Does anyone have medicine?

All the men look at each other, no one was prepared for this. Someone offers the Older Crosser his jug of water, but the Older Crosser refuses.

Meanwhile, the Coyote looks all around at the surrounding hills, growing more and more impatient.

COYOTE
I knew this would happen.

EXT. CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST -- LATER

The sun is now at about 10 o'clock high on this morning, and high clouds provide a little relief.

The group of Border Crossers press forth into a river wash where brush is sparse. There is one less person here, making the entire group of Mexicans seven instead of eight.

The Coyote urges expediency. This is a dangerous leg of their journey.

COYOTE

Come, quickly.

Suddenly, somewhere nearby, a SHOTGUN blasts.

The Border Crossers freeze dead in their tracks. One of the Border Crossers MUMBLES something fearful. The Coyote scans the open land surrounding the group to find the source of the blast.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

Quiet! Be still.

Several tense moments pass. Hearts pound in the chests of the men. One particular Border Crosser makes a sign-of-the-Cross. Manuel looks all around him and can not find the source of the blast either. Finally:

MEGAPHONE VOICE

(in Spanish)

Attention trespassers. We have you surrounded. Do not move.

The Coyote tilts his head and peering out away from the other men, flashes a coy smile.

The Border Crossers, and Manuel, look at the Coyote for instruction, but receive none.

MEGAPHONE VOICE (CONT'D)

Stay right where you are!

Suddenly ONE BORDER CROSSER peels away from the immobilized group of men, scampering off into the brush away from the river wash. ANOTHER CROSSER does the same, going in a similar direction, but different than the One.

The Coyote, somewhat expectantly, turns to look at what's left: Three Border Crossers and Manuel.

Manuel sees something in the Coyote's eye that sets him apart from his other countrymen. Something wicked.

MEGAPHONE VOICE (CONT'D)
 This is the United States Border
 Patrol. Do not attempt to flee.

Nothing has happened yet, and almost a minute has gone by.
 Manuel stares expectantly at the Coyote, who appears to have
 dropped his guard and looks down at the ground.

With a burst of energy, Manuel scampers off into the brush.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE THE RIVER WASH -- MOMENTS LATER

Manuel hustles up the hill, which provides ample cover.
 Turning a corner on the ridge, he stops to look back at the
 river wash below him.

A white late model Nissan Pathfinder SUV--far cry from a
 U.S. Government vehicle--has pulled up to the spot where the
 Coyote and the Three remaining Border Crossers stand. Manuel
 watches as TWO AMERICAN MEN load the four men into the back
 of the truck. They are not rough with the men.

Manuel watches as the truck stays parked for some time.
 Finally, having caught his breath and sensing safety, he
 lets out a loud SIGH.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Those are not Border Patrolmen.

Manuel spins around to see one of the Border Crossers
 crouching behind him: MIGUEL. He is an average looking man,
 in his late twenties.

MIGUEL
 It's all a set-up is what I think.
 That Coyote is nothing more than a
 slave trader. He tells his
 transporters where to meet him and
 then he leads us right into the lion
 pit.

MANUEL
 How do you know that?

MIGUEL
 I've only heard about it working
 that way but never seen it actually
 happen. There's plenty that can
 happen here in the desert. Our
 Coyote will walk back across the
 (MORE)

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

border by the end of today, and turn around tomorrow and do it again. My name is Miguel. Is this your first time across?

MANUEL

Yes.

MIGUEL

You did the right thing by running. All those poor bastards are going to get is robbed and then shipped off to someplace where they have no idea how to get home. Once you get to Rio Rico you're in the homestretch my friend, but until then it's pretty dangerous.

MANUEL

Rio Rico?

Miguel looks at Manuel--who is still watching the SUV in the river wash below them. He appears to be sizing him up. After a few moments.

MIGUEL

As a word of advice, don't trust anyone here the United States. Not the Americans, not the Police--not even our countrymen, they'll stab you in the back to save themselves if they have to. I've been across five times now--thank God I've only been caught once. By the real Border Patrol, not these fucking gringos.

MANUEL

When they catch you--

MIGUEL

The first time they'll send you on the next bus seat to Nogales. The second time they put you in jail. I don't want to go to jail.

MANUEL

(referring to the other Crossers)
But, they--we--paid.

MIGUEL

Sure.

The two stare down at the scene as the truck does not move.
What are they waiting for?

MIGUEL

Stupid. Look at him...

Suddenly the Other Border Crosser who had rushed up into the hills, comes walking back out of the brush toward the Pathfinder, with his hands in the air.

One of the American Men gets out of the SUV and ushers the surrendering Border Crosser into the back of the truck with the others.

Miguel watches, silently.

Loaded up, the Pathfinder drives off.

MIGUEL

How far is Rio Rico?

There is no answer. Manuel turns and looks at where Miguel had crouched down in the brush--but he is no longer there. Miguel hadn't even heard him leave.

Quickly it sets in: Manuel is alone. He looks around him and realizes that he is also lost.

EXT. DESERT -- LATER

Manuel walks along the hills, careful of his step as he creates his own pathway.

The sky is hazy, and the sun does not offer any comfort for Manuel. Beads of sweat pour down his face, and he stumbles occasionally across the more jagged rocks that time has gathered together from place to place.

EXT. SHADY TREE - DESERT -- LATER

Coming up on some low lying brush, Manuel finds a place to sit in the shade of a mostly barren tree. He takes a jug of water out to drink from, and notices that he is not too far from a SCORPION.

Manuel kicks the Scorpion away, drinks his water, and places his hands around his knees while scanning the area around the tree.

Fatigue has started to set in on Manuel.

His eyelids hang open barely.

After rocking back and forth several times, arms wrapped around his knees, Manuel stands back up and continues on his way.

EXT. COYOTE'S PATH - DESERT -- LATER

Manuel comes through some low-lying brush, and finds a treaded path perpendicular to that of his own. He decides to take the road more traveled.

Ahead of him, Manuel sees the empty Plastic Milk Carton, dangling from the barren tree. His eyes widen, and his glance shifts--recognizing that he had been here before.

As he walks, the sound of FLIES buzzing grows louder and louder.

Manuel catches sight of what what lies ahead on the path:

The Older Crosser, motionless.

Manuel stands over the Older Crosser. It has been about five hours since the group of Border Crossers parted ways with him.

With his left foot, Manuel tries to stir the Older Crosser, but there is no response.

Manuel looks all around him, frustrated by not only who he has found, but--as he looks up and down the Coyote path--that he has apparently walked in a circle, to get back to where they had left the heart attack victim.

Manuel SIGHS deeply. What can he do?

Not too far from the body of the Older Crosser, Manuel spots the old man's supplies: backpack and jug of water.

Again, Manuel nudges the Older Crosser with his foot. Again, there is no response.

EXT. COYOTE'S PATH - DESERT -- MOMENTS LATER

Manuel pours water from the Older Crosser's water jug into his, but leaves the other jug far from empty as he sets it down beside to the old man.

MANUEL
(referring to the
jug)
Thank you, my friend.

Manuel stands up, and we see that he has laid a blanket over the Older Crosser.

Looking around at the sky, the sun has dipped to the West-- Manuel knows which direction he will travel in now.

As he did when he was working, he drags his foot in the dirt to draw a line. At the top of the line, he makes it an "N", covering the top right line of the letter with an arrow. He looks at the Older Crosser as if to say, "when you wake up, this will tell you where to go."

Not surprisingly, Manuel notices the "N" does not point in the same direction of the path. The Coyote led them on a path that was going almost directly West.

Then, he looks back down at the motionless Older Crosser.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

May you make it home, sir.

And with that, Manuel starts off, following the arrow on top of the "N", and veering off the Coyote's Path and into the brush.

EXT. FURTHER NORTHWARD -- EVENING

Manuel struggles to press onward. He has come across no one for hours now, and looks to be battling his own urges to stop and rest.

With the sun about to dip under the sky, Manuel puts his jacket back on (it had been off), and continues to walk on.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE JOURNEY -- LATER

The sun has dipped under the mountains, and only a sliver of light is left for Manuel to navigate with.

Above him, the stars are out and shining. The moon appears overhead--not much of a guide.

MANUEL

Stupid moon! Good for nothing.

EXT. PATCH OF BRUSH -- NIGHT

Manuel falls into an area of ample covering. He removes his shoes and rubs his feet through his white socks.

The desert air has cooled off, and the sky is clear.

Manuel rubs his eyes.

Suddenly a bright white light shines in his face, and Manuel shimmies back into the cover of the bush. Whatever it is that is "looking at him" takes it's time to introduce itself. He hears voices, speaking in Spanish.

A CAR DOOR OPENS, and then ANOTHER.

DEEP MALE VOICE

Take the stuff to Phoenix like we talked about.

ANOTHER MALE VOICE

No, you told me to take it to Tucson.

As the two converse, Manuel leans back a little, trying to be quiet. A BRANCH SNAPS under the pressure of his hand.

DEEP MALE VOICE

What the fuck was that?

There is a long, silent pause.

ANOTHER MALE VOICE

Nothing. We're alone, I'm positive. Probably someone's burro, wandering out here lost.

There is silence between the men, as they listen again.

DEEP MALE VOICE

You know, I don't believe you. I know you too well, you're a snake.

ANOTHER MALE VOICE

Look, I don't know what you're talking about. If you want me to take it to Phoenix, I'll take it to Phoenix--but you have to promise me--

DEEP MALE VOICE

We made a deal to go to Phoenix. Now if you think you were told something else, that's your problem, not mine. We're done here.

A DOOR SLAMS SHUT, and then ANOTHER. The light that had been shining on Manuel moves away from him, as two VEHICLES drive off into the night.

Manuel, who had been frozen the whole time in the bush, relaxes a bit. He blinks in disbelief at what has just happened, and perhaps because of all that has happened to him on this day.

He wraps his arms around his legs and closes his eyes. All around him the sounds of the night call out: crickets, wolves, owls.

Manuel falls asleep.

EXT. NOGALES/SONORA, MEXICO -- NIGHT

A MOTORCYCLE pulls into a parking lot, just a hundred yards away from the Border Fence. The lights of both cities provide ample illumination.

Anthony gets off the motorcycle, and pays the ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT

Gracias.

ANTHONY

Yeah, stick it up your ass.

Anthony is drunk--probably dangerous, too.

EXT. BORDER CROSSING -- MOMENTS LATER

Anthony, slightly stumbling, heads down the walk-way and into Mexico.

TAXI DRIVERS call out to him: TAXI? TAXI?

Anthony shrugs as walks past them.

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT OF NOGALES -- LATER

Anthony makes his way past the bustling crowd. There are many CITIZENS OF NOGALES out tonight, on the streets. Most are selling, some are buying.

PIMP

Hey, muchacho. Looking for a good time?

Anthony stops.

ANTHONY

As a matter of fact I am.

PIMP

Well, then no more questions asked!
Come with me, amigo!

FADE OUT

THANKSGIVING

FADE IN:

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT OF NOGALES -- MORNING

Dawn has reared it's ugly head here in the dirty town of Nogales, Mexico. Anthony makes his way into the street from a building displaying a "GIRLS" sign in the window.

The Neon lights are off. The street is mostly empty save a few POOR PEOPLE, scouring the streets for change or trash--anything they can get their hands on.

Anthony notices this happening, and perhaps with his drunkenness still in tact, spins around a little. He tries for the attention of one of them:

ANTHONY

(in English)

Hey!

A Poor Person looks up:

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hey--why don't you make a run for the border today! The Border Patrol took the day off! It's Thanksgiving in my country. I came down here to fuck your women! Now it's your turn to go and fuck mine!

The Poor Person looks away.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hey! What's the matter, is my Spanish rusty?

The Pimp emerges from the building--half awake.

PIMP

Hey, go home man.

Anthony turns back around.

ANTHONY

What? I came here to work!

Anthony pumps his fists like he was engaging in a sexual act.

PIMP

Hey--you better get out of here now
or things are going to get bad.

ANTHONY

What are you going to do, deport me?

Anthony looks up at the sky and LAUGHS, turning away from the Pimp:

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You can't do anything about it, you
want me here! That's not how it is
in my country, we don't want you
there. Say...

(looking around him)

Where's your country's Border
Patrol, amigo?

A gun COCKS, and the barrel points at Anthony.

PIMP

Right here, pinche asshole.

Anthony frowns.

ANTHONY

What? You don't think I've got a
gun? Hell, I've got a badge, too!

Anthony removes a gun that he had tucked into the back of his pants, and holds out his wallet and badge.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

See?

The Pimp stands down.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Even here, in your own country,
you're nothing. Nothing!

THWONK!

Anthony slumps to the ground.

Right behind him, the Poor Person who he had just berated stands defiantly above him, holding a wood plank.

The Pimp and the Poor Person exchange glances.

EXT. BORDER FOOT CROSSING INTO THE U.S. -- MOMENTS LATER

The gates are empty this early in the morning, but a GUARD stands watch on the US side.

The Pimp and Poor Person drag Anthony, by his feet, to the feet of the Guard, and then turn and walk away.

GUARD
(to Anthony)
Rough night last night?

Anthony is motionless, but manages to MOAN.

EXT. CALABASAS CAMP AREA - PENA BLANCA LAKE, AZ -- AFTERNOON

Christopher stands out on a patch of grass by the Lake.

A soccer ball lies at his feet.

Carefully he takes a few steps backward, and lines up to make a kick.

CHRISTOPHER
Renaldo is set for the penalty kick.
This is for the World Cup. The crowd
goes nuts.

Christopher makes a CHEERING SOUND like kids do, trying to imitate an entire stadium full of sports fans.

Dawn amplifies it with a CHEERING SOUND of her own. She stands in between two trees, serving as goal posts.

Jade and Tanner are in on it too, standing between mother and son.

Christopher takes a few steps and slashes the ball right past Dawn.

He raises his arms triumphantly.

DAWN
(like the announcer
that made it famous)
GGOOOOOOAAAALLLL!

CHRISTOPHER
(starts to sing)
Ole...Ole, ole, o-lay...

EXT. CALABASAS CAMP AREA - PENA BLANCA LAKE, AZ -- LATER

The Chevy Van has been disconnected from the pop-up camper, and sits by the dirt road.

CHRISTOPHER

Tanner! Come on, boy!

Christopher stands next to the Van with the side door open for Tanner, who hops inside and joins the other dog, Jade.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Good boy.

At the Camper, Dawn exits, carrying some Tupperware containers, and looking a little bit hurried. She locks the door behind her and walks toward the Van.

DAWN

We got everything?

CHRISTOPHER

Yup.

DAWN

You ready?

CHRISTOPHER

Yup.

Both get into the van.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

The van ROARS to life as dawn turns the key. She immediately notices the time: 3:15.

DAWN

We're going to be late for dinner.

CHRISTOPHER

Uncle David is used to it by now.

Dawn looks over at Christopher and smiles, knowingly.

DAWN

Maybe he'll save us a drumstick so we can split it.

CHRISTOPHER

And some cranberry sauce.

Dawn reaches and turns the radio on: STATIC. Christopher hands her a CD. She looks at it.

DAWN
Good choice.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

The Van rolls away from the campsite.

DAWN
Seatbelts.

After a few CLICKS, they are on their way.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- LATER

Dawn keeps her hands at ten and two, navigating the narrow mountain road, which winds in every direction from the Camp Site. The scenery around them is spectacular.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39 -- CONTINUOUS

A Service road at best, the shoulders are tight, the turns are hairpin, and the ground is gravel. The Green Chevy Van rolls slowly up and down the slight grades.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

The breeze from the open windows of the Van blows through Dawn's hair.

Christopher plays his Game Boy. He stops for a moment.

Struck by a thought, Christopher looks up at his mother:

CHRISTOPHER
Mom, what are you thankful for?

DAWN
What's that?

CHRISTOPHER
It's Thanksgiving. We're supposed to be thankful.

Dawn--paying attention more to the road--gives the question a few seconds of thought.

DAWN

Well, I'm thankful for a lot, Chris.
What about you?

Christopher pauses to look out the window before beginning:

CHRISTOPHER

I'm thankful for my game boy. And
for this van and our pop-up camper.
I'm thankful for you.

Dawn smiles.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

And for Tanner and Jade. I'm
thankful for Doctor Joe and helping
me to deal with what happened to
dad.

Christopher pauses again, perhaps thinking about his dad.
Dawn glances quickly over.

DAWN

Hmmm. I'm thankful for you, and for
Doctor Joe. I'm thankful for this
great van, and our pop-up camper.
I'm thankful for my teaching job,
and all of my friends.

CHRISTOPHER

(immediately
chiming)

I'm thankful for my friends, too.

DAWN

And I'm thankful for your Uncle
David who's having us over for
Thanksgiving dinner tonight.

CHRISTOPHER

Me too.

Dawn nods, satisfied with their conversation.

After a few moments of contemplation:

DAWN

You know, Chris--when you were a
little baby you used to smile all
the time. It was always nice to see
you with that little smile on your
face. I used to have to take you to
(MORE)

DAWN (CONT'D)
work with me when I worked for the
park service in Sedona. No one liked
me taking you to work like that, but
once everyone saw that little smile
on your face...

The two drive on in silence for a while. Dawn realizes that
she has lost Christopher's attention. Then:

DAWN (CONT'D)
Ohh--look, isn't that pretty?

Christopher looks up to see a painted landscape in front of
them to the East--purples and oranges under the blue skies.
Magnificent.

CHRISTOPHER
Yeah.

Dawn takes a quick glance at her son as he gazes out at the
scenery.

As she turns her concentration back on the road, Dawn smiles
just a little. Christopher hasn't been this happy in months.

DAWN
You know what Doctor Joe says?

CHRISTOPHER
(mocking adult
voice)
"You can trust me?"

DAWN
Yeah, he says that a lot.

Christopher nods in agreement.

DAWN (CONT'D)
He also says that you're growing up
really fast. Right now you're about
to travel across a big change in
your life, and you're as prepared to
do it as anyone else your age.

CHRISTOPHER
Like what kind of change?

DAWN
You're going to be a young man soon.
And you're going to start thinking
about so many new things.

CHRISTOPHER
Like what kinds of things?

DAWN
Well, girls.

CHRISTOPHER
Yuck.

DAWN
..mostly grown-up things.

Christopher and Dawn share some silence.

CHRISTOPHER
So does that mean I can drive?

DAWN
Well, you have to be able to reach
the pedals first.

Christopher looks down at his feet--they dangle about a foot
from the floorboard.

CHRISTOPHER
Huh.

This point has given Christopher a lot to think about.

After a few moments Dawn begins to scan the surrounding
area.

DAWN
Wait a second, this isn't right.

EXT. UNKNOWN FOREST ROAD -- MOMENTS LATER

The Van pulls to a stop.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn looks at the road.

DAWN
I think I missed a turn somewhere.
This isn't the road we wanted.

Christopher doesn't offer a response.

DAWN (CONT'D)
I'm pretty sure, at least.

EXT. UNKNOWN FOREST ROAD -- MOMENTS LATER

The Van reverses onto the shoulder, and turns to head back up the road.

DAWN
Your uncle is gonna have a fit about
this.

The Van pulls away.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- LATER

The Van creeps along the winding road, growing more and more treacherous with every foot.

DAWN
Why don't you put another CD in,
sweetie?

INT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher obligingly places a new CD into the deck, then turns the volume knob up. He tugs at his seat-belt, which restrains him back into the seat.

Through the windshield, he watches as his mother navigates along the road, hugging the steep side of a mountain, traveling slowly.

P.O.V. CHRISTOPHER -- CONTINUOUS

They are coming around a bend and turning westward. Bright orange-white sunlight fills the car on the driver's side.

Dawn, temporarily blinded, reaches her arm up to pull down the visor.

Suddenly the car BUMPS over something, and everything lunges slightly forward.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn clenches at the wheel, and slams her foot on the brake. Her eyes widen as the car slowly falls forward. Christopher shields his eyes from the sunlight.

DAWN
Oh shit.

Christopher looks over at his mom.

Time slows down...

Dawn quickly turns the steering wheel back.

CHRISTOPHER

Mom?

The car continues to fall forward, the map on the dashboard slips forward until it hits the windshield.

DAWN

Hold on, baby.

The car continues to skid forward.

Dawn slams the car into reverse and applies the gas.

The car is teetering now.

CHRISTOPHER

Mom!?

DAWN

Oh God--just hold on, baby.

The dogs in the back of the Van clench to the bench seat with their claws.

Dawn GASPS.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Hold on, Chris...

There is a loud SCRAPE, like the car has bottomed out on something.

Then, in almost an instant, every loose object in the car is airborne on the inside.

FADE TO WHITE

The Van's TURN SIGNAL BLINKS incessantly.

The sound is almost deafening.

EXT. CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

The Van has come to stop, laying on the driver's side, precariously perched on the stump of an old mesquite tree, ready to roll farther down the canyon.

ROCKS and GRAVEL slide down the 50 degree slope next to the Van.

Tanner hobbles away from the car, and digs into the side of the canyon, making it's way further down.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Christopher claws at the door of the Van.

DAWN
Chris? Are you okay?

CHRISTOPHER
I think so.

Christopher looks down at Dawn, on her side and resting on a rock that her open window has now made into a bed.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Mom?

Dawn cannot move her neck, and looks straight ahead through the shattered windshield.

The Steering column is broken, and Dawn appears to be trapped under the collapsed dashboard.

DAWN
(mumbling, in pain)
It's okay, baby.

In the back of the van, Jade WHIMPERS. The dog is favoring one of its hind legs.

Christopher looks around, taking all of this in.

He appears to be stunned, though he does not look to be in a state of shock.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Can you get out?

CHRISTOPHER
I think I can.

Christopher pulls at his seat belt, fumbling down the strap which has served it's purpose well--he's still harnessed into his seat.

Holding onto the door through his own open window, Christopher unbuckles the belt.

DAWN

Careful.

The belt springs loose, and Christopher grapples with the door to save himself from falling on Dawn below him.

Carefully he wedges his foot onto the passenger seat arm rest.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm gonna go get help.

Dawn MOANS a little as she nods her head.

DAWN

Okay, baby. Okay.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher climbs out of the passenger door window. Sunlight annoints his head immediately.

Scanning what's around him he sees that it is amazing that the car caught the tree.

Slowly, Christopher inches off the van and onto the dirt of the canyon wall.

CHRISTOPHER

(to Dawn)

I'll be right back.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn SNIFFLES a little bit as she listens to Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER

(repeating)

I'll be right back.

DAWN

Okay.

EXT. CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

Using hands and knees, Christopher starts to climb toward the road, carefully using the leverage of rocks.

Behind him Dawn YELPS in pain.

Christopher turns back, sliding backwards down the canyon wall and holding onto the van again.

CHRISTOPHER
Mom, what's wrong?

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

He cannot see inside, but can hear Dawn:

DAWN (O.S.)
It's okay, sweetheart. My leg is caught. I'll be all right though-- climb back to the road and get help.

Christopher becomes quickly paralyzed with fear.

He looks at the canyon floor below him, and then back up at the crest of the ridge above him--the road lies just over the top.

DAWN (CONT'D)
Go, Chris. It's okay.

Christopher looks back at the car, and then suddenly determined, begins to climb the canyon wall again.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- LATER

Christopher ascends to the road, where there are tire tracks from the Van that lies below.

He takes a quick glance both ways--no one is around.

His leg is bruised and bleeding, and his arm is scraped up.

Christopher looks over his wounds and brushes the dirt from them, but quickly forgets about them and ambles back around the bend.

EXT. DOWN FOREST ROAD 39 -- LATER

Christopher stands alone on the road.

Still no signs of help.

Christopher gathers his breath in, and then:

CHRISTOPHER
(yelling)
HELLO!?

Mustering all his energy, the sound of his nasally call ECHOES through the canyons.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
WE NEED HELP!

And it ECHOES again. Still nothing.

Behind Christopher, Jade hobbles up to where he stands.

Christopher turns around to the dog and reaches to pet him.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Good boy, Jade.

EXT. CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST -- MOMENTS LATER

The late afternoon sky casts shadows all about the wild terrain here. There is no breeze, but it is cool.

It is approaching four o'clock in the afternoon.

Birds CHIRP.

Crickets SING.

CHRISTOPHER
CAN ANYBODY HEAR ME?

Christopher's voice ECHOES again.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
HELLO?

EXT. CANYON -- LATER

Christopher has carefully made his way back down the canyon wall to the mangled Van.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher peers into the van at his mother, who is still lying there, motionless.

CHRISTOPHER
Mom?

Dawn RUSTLES just a little.

DAWN

Yeah, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER

Mom, I don't think that anyone's
going to come for us. I'm just going
to stay here with you.

Dawn's eyes squint a little, but she doesn't immediately
respond to Christopher.

Christopher looks directly at Dawn:

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

I wish dad was here, mom. I'm scared
no one will find us.

Dawn is still. Finally she GULPS and then starts to speak.

DAWN

Christopher Buchlietner. That is not
the right attitude. I want you to
get back up there on that road and
get help.

Christopher blinks in disbelief.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Go, sweetheart.

CHRISTOPHER

Okay.

Chris moves away from the window, but something inside the
Van catches his eye as he's moving away.

Slowly he lowers himself into the Van and grabs at
something.

Christopher's hand reaches for Dawn's CELL PHONE.

Finally he stretches far enough to reach the phone, and
snatches it up.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON

Christopher frantically scampers up the hill and onto the
road. He holds the cell phone up and hits a number into it,
before placing it up to his ear.

CHRISTOPHER

(into the phone)

Come on.

It is apparent there is no signal.

Christopher looks at the phone, having to think of what to do. He hit the number again.

And again it is apparent there is no signal.

Christopher eyes the ridge above the road.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE FOREST ROAD 39 -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher carefully scales up the side of the cliff, nearly slipping several times.

Finally he pulls himself to the flat table on top of the ridge.

It is is magnificent sight, but also a troubling one as Christopher stands alone at the top of the ridge, surrounded by the painted mountains, basking in purple and orange.

He holds the cell phone up to his ear again.

No signal.

Christopher looks all around him--

Lost.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, STRAIGHT STRETCH -- LATER

Manuel climbs up a craggy rock surface and sees the unpaved Forest Road 39 stretches before him.

It is about 5 in the evening now, and there is available light, but the sun is quickly dipping below the western ridges.

Cautiously, Manuel walks along the shoulder of the forest road. His pace is quick.

From time to time, he scouts out spots where he can duck for cover in the event a vehicle were to come rolling down the path.

But there is no noises from oncoming vehicles, only the sounds of MANUEL'S FEET, crushing pebbles as he strides along--hopefully northward.

Manuel steps along, a little less tense with every passing step.

In an instant, something catches his eye on the road in front of him.

Manuel squints a little to be sure of what he sees.

P.O.V. MANUEL -- CONTINUOUS

There, standing out in the middle of Forest Road 39, is Christopher.

From Manuel's perspective, Christopher appears to be looking right at him, perhaps sizing him up as well.

In the boy's hand is a side view mirror from the Van.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, STRAIGHT STRETCH -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel and Christopher stand about 100 yards apart.

Realizing what's this appears to be, Manuel looks around him for a place to duck and cover. It's too late.

CHRISTOPHER
(yelling)
Hello! We need help!

Christopher waves at Manuel, who--after a quick look around to make sure that the boy isn't signaling for someone coming up the road behind him--starts toward the boy.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Please!

As Manuel gets within range of talking to the boy, Christopher starts in:

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
We were in an accident. Our car is
down the road, and my mom's inside.

Manuel stares at Christopher, puzzled, yet aware that something is very wrong.

MANUEL
No comprende?

CHRISTOPHER
You don't speak English?

Manuel shakes his head, "no."

Christopher, frustrated, grabs the stranger by the hand and leads him up the road.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Come on.

Christopher lets go of the hand, but Manuel, surprised every step of the way, follows Christopher up the road in spite of better judgment.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

Manuel and Christopher jog toward the side of the canyon. Jade BARKS at the arrival of a new person.

MANUEL
(to Jade)
Hola perro.

Manuel follows the tire tracks and Christopher to the edge of the canyon wall.

Following Christopher's pointing finger, he takes a look below.

P.O.V. MANUEL -- CONTINUOUS

The mangled Green Van hangs on the side of the cliff.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Without any hesitation, Manuel steps down the steep grade toward the Van.

On his way down, Manuel's feet slide beneath him and he grabs at the canyon wall for balance.

Halfway there, he takes a quick look back at Christopher, who has taken several steps down the slope himself.

MANUEL
(waving Christopher
back)
No, no, un poco.

Although Christopher doesn't understand, he doesn't continue down the canyon wall. Rather, Christopher leans up against the canyon wall, supporting his back and safely holding himself from falling down.

Sliding down far enough to grab the car, Manuel tests the balance of the Van first to make sure that the car is safely wedged and not in danger of teetering.

Seeing that the vehicle is safe enough to support weight, Manuel peers over the side and in through the passenger window.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn is motionless.

Manuel looks around the inside of the van to see if anyone else is there.

Dawn MOANS.

MANUEL

¿Hola?

Dawn looks up at Manuel without being able to move her neck. Manuel stares at her, unflinching. She looks hurt. He can see that her leg has blood on it, and she is trapped.

Dawn blinks several times before forcing some words out:

DAWN

Can you get help? *¿Puede obtener ayuda?*

Manuel nods confidently.

MANUEL

Si. Si.

Manuel leans into the car and pushes at the collapsed steering column, but it's stuck. Dawn MOANS again, and closes her eyes.

DAWN

(weakly)

Christopher.

Manuel cocks his head, trying to understand. Dawn MOANS again, but then doesn't say anything else.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel navigates his way around the front of the van and toward the hood and windshield.

Although the glass is shattered on the windshield, it is not cracked. Manuel finds this as he pushes on it.

Through the glass he can see Dawn, eyes closed.

Christopher has navigated down the canyon in spite of Manuel's insisting not to act on the dangerous idea.

CHRISTOPHER

We can get her out.

MANUEL

(nervous)

Oh.

Manuel grapples back around the car to the window and Christopher. Christopher leans over into the van.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher's head appears through the window.

CHRISTOPHER

Hold on, mom. We can get you out,
okay?

There is no response from Dawn.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Christopher climbs up on the door and attempts to lower himself inside, before looking at Manuel.

CHRISTOPHER

(to Manuel)

Hold my ankles.

Christopher makes a signal to Manuel by grabbing onto his own ankles.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher dangles into the van through the window, being held at the ankles by Manuel.

Carefully, Christopher pulls at his mother's seatbelt, succeeding in un-buckling the belt, but struggling as he

tries to free the harness from underneath the collapsed steering column.

Christopher looks at his motionless mother as he grits his teeth and pulls harder. He clenches the belt with all the might his little hands can muster.

CHRISTOPHER

Pull me up!

Manuel doesn't understand.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Pull!

Manuel pieces it together and tugs at Christopher's ankles. Christopher lets out a grunt as he grasps the belt.

It's not moving.

With a SIGH, Christopher releases the belt from his hands.

Manuel shrugs slightly at the boy.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher waits at the edge of the road as Manuel ascends from the wreckage.

CHRISTOPHER

We've got to try again.

Dusting his hands off on his jeans, Manuel looks over at the little boy.

Christopher stares at Manuel as if waiting for a full report. Manuel knows this look, perhaps from his own children.

Manuel lets out a long SIGH and shakes his head from side to side.

Christopher grimaces, confused.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Is my mom okay?

Manuel takes a long look at Christopher, but offers no response for several moments.

Scanning the area all around them, Manuel suddenly appears to be putting together some sort of plan. Then again, maybe he's looking for a way out of this mess.

As Job must have done so many times in biblical times, Manuel looks to the heavens as if to ask, "why?"

Then, lowering his gaze just a little to the tops of the surrounding mountains, he cups his hands over his mouth:

MANUEL
(shouting)
¿HOLA!?

Manuel's voice echoes through the canyons.

No response for several moments.

A hawk overhead SQUAWKS, and both Christopher and Manuel turn--but realize the uselessness of the response immediately.

There is not too much time to waste now.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

Christopher finds a seat on the dusty ground.

Another moment later, a PILE OF STICKS lands on the ground directly in front of him.

Manuel, who had deposited the pile in front of Christopher, hustles off to find more wood.

Christopher, in shorts and a tee-shirt, begins rubbing his arms with his hands to stay warm.

Within in an instant, Manuel is hovering back over the boy, and offers the cold child his soccer jacket.

Christopher looks up, and without a word, accepts Manuel's offering.

Manuel hustles back off to find more sticks and branches.

EXT. DOWN FOREST ROAD 39 -- EVENING

As the last sliver of light from the Sun illuminates the horizon, a plume of smoke can be seen off in the distance.

MANUEL
(shouting again)
¿HOLA!?

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn lays in the van, still motionless and perhaps, now unconscious.

A multicolored blanket has been draped carefully over her torso.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel ascends again from over the side of the canyon, clenching the Tupperware container and box of cookies that he managed to scavenge from the car.

A CAMPFIRE is going, on the other side of which Christopher sits, JADE lies nearby--still healthy but probably would still be favoring her injured leg.

Christopher looks at Manuel for answers.

MANUEL

Es sleeping.

Christopher stares at Manuel, disbelieving, but willing to buy it.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

(shouting once more)

¿HOLA!?

Manuel rubs the sweat from his brow with his forearm and moves toward Christopher.

Christopher calls out into the night for his other companion:

CHRISTOPHER

Tanner! Come here boy!

No response.

Manuel drops the box of cookies and plops down beside Christopher, offering to him the Tupperware container.

MANUEL

(shouting)

Eat?

There are muffins inside the Tupperware container, Christopher discovers, as he opens it's lid.

Almost immediately, Christopher goes to town on the food, showing all the signs of a famished child.

Manuel takes a drink of the water from his jug, and then offers it to Christopher.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

¿Agua?

Christopher GUZZLES the water from the jug.

Manuel picks up a stray stick and pokes at the campfire to get it going. It is getting late, and cold.

They wait.

No one else comes.

The fire flickers, a speck of light against the dark night.

EXT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT, PORCH -- NIGHT

Anthony sits alone, feet propped up on the railing. The sky is clear. His FM Radio provides some MUSIC.

The song ends

DEEJAY

(from the Radio)

Happy Thanksgiving to you and all
your little cluckers out there. No,
really--hopefully you're taking this
time and spending it with your
families. If you've gotta work
tonight or tomorrow morning--like I
do--well, make sure you're off on
Christmas. Or Hannukah, or Kwanza--
FESTIVUS, for the rest of us. We'll
be right back...

ANTHONY

What the hell am I doing here,
anyway?

The night offers no response.

Anthony looks down at his watch, pressing a button that produces a blue light.

INT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- LATER

Anthony lies awake. The clock next to his head on the nightstand reads 9:15 PM.

He tosses and turns, before finally settling.

He closes his eyes.

They open again.

INT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN -- LATER

Anthony stands in pajama pants, removing a BUTTERBALL turkey from the fridge, which he then deposits in the nearby trash can.

He walks to the sink holding a glass, and fills it with water.

Taking a long sip, he stares up at the wall.

He reaches for his cell phone on the counter.

ANTHONY

Yeah, hey Jenny...it's me. Look, I know you're busy, I hope your family is doing good...wish them a happy Thanksgiving.

Anthony puts the cell phone down on the counter.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- NIGHT

Christopher has curled up underneath Manuel's soccer jacket, and lays up against the Mexican's leg.

It is cold tonight, below 40 degrees. Manuel shivers, rubbing his arms with his hands and watching his breath, visible because of the cold and the light of the fire.

Manuel's eyes are wide open, as he is deep in thought or perhaps just alert to his surroundings.

EXT. MAGDALENA, SONORA, MEXICO -- DAY

In the square that surrounds the mission church, Manuel's CHILDREN all play together. They are wearing new clothes and all are very happy.

Manny, Manuel's oldest son, stands apart from the group, and speaks into a cell phone.

MANNY

Gracias, papá. Te quiero...Adiós.

Manny ends the call, and starts off toward the other Children who continue to play.

EXT. WORK SITE -- DAY

A large construction site in the United States, filled with heavy equipment and many WORKERS.

Manuel is hard at work, hard-hat and overalls. He is not sweating, but he is laboring, laying bricks on a wall.

Others are working, too--but they are working as a unit and not troubled by their toil.

EXT. WORK SITE, LUNCH TABLE -- LATER

Manuel sits at a table with other CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, of all shapes and sizes. They all appear very content with their work, their lunches and most importantly--each other.

Thumbing through pictures of his children in his wallet, Manuel proudly introduces a CO-WORKER to his family. The Co-worker smiles agreeably at the pictures.

EXT. WORK SITE -- EVENING

Manuel stands in line with other Construction Workers, waiting to be paid by the AMERICAN FOREMAN.

Those that are paid before him show immense gratitude to the American Foreman, and they look at their paychecks as if each one was receiving a winning lottery ticket.

AMERICAN FOREMAN
(calling next in
line)
Soberanes!

Manuel finally steps up, toe-to-toe with the American Foreman, with a brimming smile on his face.

Suddenly, Christopher appears beside the American Foreman.

Manuel is puzzled, but is happy to see the boy even so.

Christopher offers an outstretched hand, which Manuel accepts, and the two shake hands.

Smiling at the exchange, The American Foreman nudges Manuel aside, and greets the NEXT CONSTRUCTION WORKER stepping up to receive his paycheck.

Somewhat confused, Manuel looks at the American Foreman.

Noticing Manuel, the American Foreman puts his hand on Manuel's shoulder, guiding him to turn around for what must be an even greater reward.

EXT. BORDER WALL IN NOGALES -- DAY

The large wall is made of giant sections of green painted steel.

Manuel scans it up and down, then spins around toward the American Foreman and Christopher--but they're gone: replaced by the poor people of Nogales, milling about on the street during their daily routines.

His face drops, the smile disappears.

Along the wall, a group of MOURNERS stands in front of a new WHITE CROSS that is being placed on the border wall.

Manuel removes his hard hat, and approaches the Mourners.

He moves into them and through them, as if he wasn't there at all.

P.O.V. MANUEL -- MOMENTS LATER

On the wall, a white cross bears the name "Manuel Jesus Cordova Soberanes"

EXT. BORDER WALL IN NOGALES -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel's face is filled with shock and disbelief. He looks around him, but there is nobody there.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- NIGHT

Manuel's eyes open wide while he manages to GASP for air--surfacing as if submerged underwater. It was all in his head.

All around Manuel, the night moves on.

Christopher SNIFFLES.

Manuel looks down at the boy. A tear has welled up in Christopher's eye and his face glistens from the glow of the fire.

Searching for words to say, Manuel finally forces something out that he hopes the boy will understand.

MANUEL
(pointing at his own
chest)
Mi nombre es Manuel.

CHRISTOPHER
I'm Christopher. Christopher
Buchleitner.

Manuel understands, and nods his head:

MANUEL
Christopher.

Christopher looks up at his new companion, and slightly nods his head.

Manuel's eyes dart around the darkness, as if searching for more words to say.

MANUEL (CONT'D)
I am brick-layer?

Christopher stares at Manuel, confused by the statement. Manuel looks down at the boy, knowing that the words meant very little.

Again, the boy closes his eyes.

EXT. SOCCER STADIUM -- NIGHT

Black against the night sky, stadium lights illuminate a green soccer field, painted white lines delineating a goal box, and the goal itself. A surrounding ROAR of a crowd fills the scene.

Standing with his back toward center field, a tall SOCCER PLAYER wears a jersey that reads BUCHLEITNER across the back over the number 19.

The Soccer Player is lined up for a penalty kick, and stares down the GOALIE who guards the posts: nervously bobbing and shifting his weight from side to side.

The Soccer Player's foot stands by the ball, then the foot moves away as he backs up to take the kick.

The crowd CHANTS, anxiously and supportively of the Soccer Player.

Several feet from the ball, the player's feet are standing, still--cocked.

In slow motion, the feet graciously move back toward the ball, in slow motion and as if they were walking on air.

With a BURST of motion, the ball is kicked--slinging right toward the Goalie and the Goal.

The Goalie's arms reach.

The ball arches away toward the open net.

The Crowd ERUPTS.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- NIGHT

Christopher's face is angelic. The dying fire lights his face.

Out on the Eastern horizon: a sliver of light.

Dawn has arrived.

Christopher is alone again.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39 -- MORNING

The light of the morning sky casts deep shadows on the landscape, but the visibility has noticeably improved.

Manuel walks along the side of the road, his pack slung over his shoulder.

EXT. BORDER PATROL STATION -- MORNING

It's very early in the morning still, and Anthony makes his way across the parking lot to a waiting Border Patrol Vehicle.

There are other BORDER PATROLMEN nearby. When they see Anthony, their interest is piqued.

One of them, a COCK-SURE PATROLMAN can't resist:

COCK-SURE PATROLMAN
Heard you got expelled from Mexico?
What did you do? Who did you do?

Anthony shakes his head, trying to shake them off.

COCK-SURE PATROLMAN (CONT'D)
Come on Anthony, it's all in good
fun. That's what you rent down there
after, right?

Anthony opens the door to his vehicle.

A bunch of empty beer cans and liquor bottles fall out. The
stench is awful.

Anthony is appalled, and angry.

He leaves the door open and approaches the other Border
Patrolman--making a bee-line for the Cock-Sure one:

COCK-SURE PATROLMAN (CONT'D)
What, man? Can't remember your
patrol last night?

Anthony grabs the Patrolman by his collar. The other
Patrolmen jump to their buddy's defense.

ANTHONY
You have no idea what you're doing.

COCK-SURE PATROLMAN
What?! You going to take a swing at
me? You're the one that's been
sleeping with the enemy.

SERGEANT
PINELLA!

The others turn and look. A SERGEANT stands outside the
doors to the Station.

Anthony lets the other man go, but eyeballs him.

INT. BORDER PATROL STATION -- LATER

Anthony sits at the desk of the Sergeant, who isn't too
pleased.

SERGEANT
It's a damn disgrace to misbehave
yourself like that. We work hard to
keep our borders safe, we don't go
walking around with our dicks in our
hands.

ANTHONY
I didn't--

SARGEANT

You pulled your gun. You pulled your badge. And you almost pulled us all into one hell of a mess. I've got Congressmen on the phone, telling me to make this go away. I've got angry people in Mexico...

ANTHONY

Sir, I had a little too much to drink and then I--

SARGEANT

Rambled out onto the street like a damn fool telling everyone to go cross the border since it was Thanksgiving? What makes you think that you're above the law when it comes to these things?

ANTHONY

It didn't happen that way.

The Sargeant holds out his hand.

SARGEANT

Give it to me.

Anthony pulls his gun from his holster and hands it over. He then reaches for his badge.

SARGEANT (CONT'D)

Keep the badge. You're going out to do field work.

ANTHONY

Without a gun?

SARGEANT

What's the matter? Isn't your dick big enough to defend yourself with? You're lucky I don't suspend you for this --I really ought to.

ANTHONY

Well, why don't you?

The Sargeant looks at Anthony, shocked.

SARGEANT

Because I'd rather see you sit
(MORE)

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
around all day, waiting for
something to happen that never does,
than to think for just one minute
you're sitting in some bar getting
drunk. I know Jenny left you, and I
know you're thinking about leaving.
So shit or get off the pot, son.

Anthony is surprised that the Sargeant knew all of this.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Go clean your car out, and wait for
the dispatcher to give you orders.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39 -- MORNING

Up ahead, a pick-up truck, headlights on, slowly moves up
the grade.

Manuel stops dead in his tracks.

He looks at the headlights and pauses to consider his
situation. Looking around him, he sees ample brush where he
can duck for cover.

It is a frozen moment in time. Manuel has a decision to
make.

Manuel rubs his arms to ward off the early morning cold.

INT. CLAYTON'S PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Inside this beat-up late-model Ford F-150, CLAYTON PRIOR and
NAT FIORE (both in their late 30s), scan around them. They
are dressed in hunting camouflage.

P.O.V. CLAYTON -- MOMENTS LATER

Looking out onto the road in front of him, a SILHOUETTE
appears.

INT. CLAYTON'S PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Clayton is surprised:

CLAYTON
You see that, Nat?

P.O.V. CLAYTON -- CONTINUOUS

The headlights of the pick-up illuminate Manuel, who is jogging toward them, raising his hands and trying to wave them down.

NAT

Yeah, poor son of a bitch must have
had a rough night!

The two LAUGH.

INT. CLAYTON'S PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

Clayton clicks his DOOR LOCKS.

CLAYTON

Well, probably can't call the border
patrol up here, so he's in luck.

NAT

Let's just keep going.

P.O.V. CLAYTON -- MOMENTS LATER

Manuel steps aside as the slow-moving vehicle does not stop. The windows are up, but Manuel shouts at the pair as they drive by:

MANUEL

Nino! Piqueno! Accidente!

INT. CLAYTON'S PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) -- MOMENTS LATER

Clayton eyes Manuel in his rear-view mirror. Nat is suddenly struck by a thought.

NAT

I don't know if last night's dinner
is just getting to me, but I think
he said...

Clayton slams on the BRAKES.

CLAYTON

(finishes Nat's
thought)
Kid and accident.

EXT. CLAYTON'S PICK-UP TRUCK (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Manuel sees the truck has stopped a little ways back up the road from him, and he hurries toward it.

Clayton and Nat both step out from the cab.

As he gets closer to truck:

MANUEL

(again)

Nino! Piqueno! Accidente!

Clayton cautiously takes a step toward Manuel, with a nod at Nat who is holding a hunting rifle.

CLAYTON

(to Manuel)

Hola.

MANUEL

Hola, señor. Hay sido un accidente de coche hasta la carretera. Un niño y su madre.

Clayton extends his arms, pointing his palms downward as he tries to understand.

CLAYTON

Slow down, amigo. Más lento.

Manuel waves his hands around in a rolling fashion, trying to demonstrate what he thinks had happened to Van as it went over the cliff.

NAT

I think he said...

CLAYTON

(to Nat)

I know.

(to Manuel)

Where? ¿Dónde?

Manuel points back up Forest Road 39. Nat pulls Clayton aside

NAT

Think he's telling the truth?

Clayton doesn't respond.

INT. CLAYTON'S PICK-UP TRUCK (MOVING) -- MOMENTS LATER

The truck turns onto Forest Road 39, and Manuel sits in the jump seat behind Clayton.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, STRAIGHT STRETCH -- LATER

Clayton's pick-up truck accelerates toward the scene of the accident.

P.O.V. CLAYTON -- MOMENTS LATER

Coming around a bend, we see Christopher and his dog, sitting next to the smoldering fire. They immediately notice the approaching pick-up, and Christopher runs up to the door--still wearing Manuel's soccer jacket.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- CONTINUOUS

Clayton's pick-up truck pulls to a stop, and both Clayton and Nat get out. Manuel also steps out of the truck.

Clayton looks at the cut on Christopher's leg.

CLAYTON

Are you okay?

Christopher blinks, the question cuts deeper than Clayton realizes. For a moment, Christopher is stunned and silent.

NAT

(to Christopher)

Are you hurt?

Christopher snaps out of his thoughts and looks at Nat, before turning and pointing to the cliff.

CHRISTOPHER

The van, it's over there.

Clayton and Nat walk over to the edge of the cliff to have a look.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

My mom is still inside.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Without hesitation, Nat jumps over the side and makes his way down to the wrecked van, while Clayton stands with Christopher.

CLAYTON

Can you tell me what happened?

CHRISTOPHER

The sun got in our eyes as we came around the bend back there.

Clayton hears Christopher's words, but pays more attention to Nat, who reaches the van and looks inside.

Christopher turns and looks back at the truck.

P.O.V. CHRISTOPHER -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel has turned and starts to walk away, looking at Christopher though, as he goes.

CLAYTON (O.S.)

Where were you heading?

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- CONTINUOUS

Christopher looks back up at Clayton, who is still looking down at the wreckage and oblivious to the fact that Manuel is leaving the scene.

CHRISTOPHER

We were going to Rio Rico for Thanksgiving dinner.

EXT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- MOMENTS LATER

Nat has been looking around inside the van. Finishing his assessment, he turns and looks back up at Clayton and Christopher. His glance is not a positive one.

Clayton ushers Christopher away from the edge of the canyon.

INT. DAWN'S VAN (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Dawn lies, motionless but peaceful.

Nat has one more look, concerned, then moves away from the window.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

Nat ascends from the side of the canyon and out onto the road. Clayton stands above the smoldering camp fire, holding his Verizon cell phone in the air.

Nat looks around.

NAT

Where did the Mexican go?

Clayton shrugs as he places the phone to his ear.

Christopher plops back down next to the camp fire, and his dog joins him there.

CLAYTON

(into the phone)

Hello, there's been an accident out
in the Coronado forest--we are on
Forest--

Clayton looks at his phone. The signal died.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)

Damnit.

He presses a button and tries again.

EXT. ABOVE THE CANYON -- MOMENTS LATER

Circling above them, we see as Nat sits down in an attempt to comfort Christopher.

NAT

What's your name?

CHRISTOPHER

Christopher. Christopher
Buchleitner.

Nat nods.

NAT

Christopher, I'm Nat and
(looking at Clayton)
That's Clayton. We're going to make
sure you're safe, okay?

Christopher nods his head in agreement.

Clayton continues on his phone.

CLAYTON
(into phone)
Yes, I'm trying to report an
accident on Forest Road 39. The
signal is very weak, so I might lose
you. My name is Clayton Prior.
There's a child and a mother--

The signal dies again. Clayton holds the phone away to hit
re-dial again.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
This could take a while.

He hits the phone again, and puts it back up to his ear.

EXT. ABOVE THE CANYON -- CONTINUOUS

Time lapses as EMERGENCY CREWS arrive on the scene. The sun
is coming up over the mountains.

RADIO CHATTER fills the air.

EXT. ABOVE THE CANYON -- CONTINUOUS

MORE EMERGENCY PERSONNEL, ambulances, fire trucks and police
arrive on the scene. BORDER PATROL TRUCKS appear as well.

EXT. SOMEWHERE NORTH OF THE CANYON -- MORNING

Manuel (without his jacket), cautiously continues his
journey northward. He hustles up and down the craggy rocks,
determined to press onward.

A look of peacefulness is on his face.

The sun lights up the hills around him.

A SIREN blares.

Manuel stops dead in his tracks.

P.O.V. MANUEL -- CONTINUOUS

On a hill several hundred feet from him, Manuel sees a
BORDER PATROL VEHICLE, parked at an awkward angle. Anthony,
fully recovered from the debacle in Nogales, hangs out of
the vehicle's open door.

ANTHONY
No se mueva! Don't move.

EXT. SOMEWHERE NORTH OF THE CANYON -- CONTINUOUS

Manuel blinks.

His journey is over.

INT. BORDER PATROL VEHICLE (MOVING) -- MOMENTS LATER

Manuel sits in the back seat.

ANTHONY
(in English, into a
satellite phone)
...yeah, nothing yet. I'll let you
know

Anthony hangs the phone up, Manuel looks out the window.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
(Spanish to Manuel)
You doing okay back there?

Snapped from his drifting thoughts, Manuel looks up to the front seat and nods his head.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
I hear you saved some kid's life. Is
that right?

Miguel shakes his head from side to side, no.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Well, you fit the description I've
got. Thing is, I haven't reported to
my command center that I've got you.
I'm going to take you to Tucson, and
let you go. Is that okay?

Manuel doesn't respond immediately.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
This will be our little secret. I
owe you guys one.

MANUEL
No thank you, sir. You should take
me back to the accident if you're
going to take me anywhere.

ANTHONY
I don't get it.

MANUEL
Please.

Anthony stops the vehicle. He turns and looks back at Manuel.

ANTHONY
What's with you people? Are you really turning down the opportunity for freedom? Are you stupid? You saved the life of someone else's kid--and you're going to be sent back to that shit-box you call your country. For God's sake man, take the offer.

Manuel stares at Anthony for a few moments.

MANUEL
No.

Anthony jumps out of the car.

EXT. BORDER PATROL VEHICLE (STOPPED) -- CONTINUOUS

Anthony looks up at the sky.

ANTHONY
Fucking stupid--

The CB RADIO inside of Anthony's car crackles to life.

RADIO
Anthony, everything all right down there?

Anthony hears the Radio, and looks back in the car. Just then, on a hill above his Vehicle, he spots another Border Patrol Vehicle, parked on the ridge.

RADIO (CONT'D)
You need some help?

Anthony grabs the CB--

ANTHONY
(calmed down)
No, I'm fine. Bees.

RADIO

Bees?

ANTHONY

Yeah, had one that wouldn't go away.

Anthony waves up at the other vehicle and nods his head as if to show that he's okay.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I've got our guy.

EXT. FOREST ROAD 39, ABOVE THE CANYON -- LATER

A RESCUE HELICOPTER circles overhead, while below at the edge of the canyon, the scene is covered with Emergency Personnel and Border Patrol AGENTS.

Nat speaks with a FEMALE PARAMEDIC

NAT

...she was gone by the time I got down there.

The Border Patrol Vehicle that stood on the hill above Manuel just a short while ago drives slowly up, stopping several feet from the camp fire.

Anthony lets Manuel, who is cuffed, out of the back seat.

CLAYTON

(talking to an
OFFICER)

...hunting trip, quail.

(looking at Manuel)

Yeah, that's him.

Clayton had been talking to a UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER, who walks over to Manuel and has a word with Anthony.

Manuel scans the melee for Christopher, finally spotting his hair--Christopher lies covered by a blanket on a gurney, being attended to by TWO PARAMEDICS.

MANUEL

Christopher.

Clayton steps over to Manuel and looks him over, then motions to the Uniformed Police Officer and Anthony to have a word aside with them.

After a moment, Anthony returns to Manuel, and removes the handcuffs.

Manuel rubs his wrists and stares at Anthony. The exchange of their glances is powerful--unforgettable.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Gracias.

Another AGENT approaches Manuel, handing to him his soccer jacket.

AGENT

(in Spanish)

This is yours.

There is a few SHOUTS over the noise from the HELICOPTER which has landed nearby. The Two Paramedics push the gurney and Christopher toward the open door of the Chopper.

PARAMEDIC

Clear out!

Others nearby watch as the BLADES kick up dirt and dust.

While DETECTIVES and FIREFIGHTERS move about around the edge of the canyon, the helicopter starts to lift off.

Surrounded by Clayton, Nat and several OTHERS, Manuel looks up at the departing Rescue Helicopter. Slowly he raises his arm and waves.

A SHERIFF'S OFFICER approaches Manuel, holding a pen and a clipboard.

SHERIFF'S OFFICER

(in Spanish)

I need to have a few words with you.

Manuel glances over the side of the cliff at the Firefighters and Paramedics who are leaning over the side of the canyon, trying to attend to Dawn and the Van.

Manuel nods his head to answer the request of the Sheriff's Officer, and the two move away from the others.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. IMMIGRATION HOLDING CENTER -- DAY

A number of ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS sit on the floor of the pastel colored room. A handful of PROCESSING AGENTS mill around them, holding clipboards and speaking in LOW VOICES.

A CASE WORKER enters the room and looks around at the Illegal Immigrants.

CASE WORKER
Soberanes-Cordova!?

Manuel stands up and approaches the Case Worker.

MANUEL
Si?

CASE WORKER
Come with me.

INT. IMMIGRATION HOLDING CENTER -- LATER

Manuel and the Case Worker walk down the hallway and enter an office, where an OFFICIAL is sitting behind a table.

The Official offers both Manuel and the Case Worker a seat, while thumbing through a stack of papers on the table in front of him.

OFFICIAL
Please, sit.

Manuel obliges, the Case Worker leans against the doorway.

Silence between the three for three seconds.

MANUEL
Hola.

OFFICIAL
(in Spanish)
Hola, Manuel. I am Special Agent Inez. You did a very good thing up in the mountains.

Manuel nods, graciously but also anxiously.

MANUEL
I have six children of my own.

OFFICIAL
Six? Wow. That's a lot.

MANUEL
Yes, many mouths to feed.

OFFICIAL
Christopher...

MANUEL

Yes?

OFFICIAL

...is an orphan now. He has been through a lot. His father committed suicide in August. His mother was all he had left.

Concern creeps across Manuel's face.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I doubt you were aware of that. He has been through a lot in his short life, including a bout with leukemia.

MANUEL

Leukemia?

OFFICIAL

Yes, when he was 2.

Manuel SIGHS. He had no idea.

MANUEL

Is he okay now?

OFFICIAL

Yes. He was treated for his scrapes and burns and will be released from the hospital within a few days.

MANUEL

Where will he go?

OFFICIAL

That hasn't been decided yet, but probably to Pittsburgh to live with his grandparents.

MANUEL

Pittsburgh--Pennsylvania?

The Official smiles and nods, but seriousness returns to his face.

OFFICIAL

You are a hero, Manuel.

MANUEL

No...

OFFICIAL

Unfortunately though, you came into this country illegally. And with the best interest of my country in mind, I'm afraid it is going to be very tough to let you stay here.

Manuel inches up to the edge of his seat. The Official looks down at his clipboard and SIGHS.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Your options are as follows. You can voluntarily return to Mexico--which transportation by our agency will provide for. Secondly, you may chose to be held for a hearing in which you can state your case before a judge as to why you should be allowed to stay in this country. Unless you can post bond--how much did you pay a coyote?

Manuel has a little trouble understanding.

MANUEL

I can stay?

The Official nods, but not very positively.

OFFICIAL

I would recommend against it. Looking at your file it seems as though you wouldn't have much of a case. You don't have any contacts here in the United States, and waiting for a hearing could take weeks or months, during which time you will be held in the custody of our government. It's not a pretty picture.

Manuel nods, trusting for a moment.

MANUEL

And if I decide to go?

OFFICIAL

Like I said, we will get you to the border.

Manuel looks right at the Official, thoughts are swimming through his head.

INT. HOSPITAL -- MORNING

Christopher stands in his room, in a hospital gown, surrounded by balloons, flowers and gifts and extended FAMILY MEMBERS.

An ORDERLY peers around the corner.

ORDERLY

You know, I'm not supposed to do this--but I've got a surprise for you, Chris.

Tanner and Jade enter the room, rushing right up to Christopher, who hugs both of them.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

No, dogs are not allowed in the hospital. Just this once.

Family Members who sit around Christopher's bed smile at the sight, a wonderful reunion.

Christopher is very happy to see the dogs.

EXT. IMMIGRATION HOLDING CENTER -- AFTERNOON

Manuel walks in a straight line, following a GROUP OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS as they make their way to one of the Wackenhut buses waiting on the street outside the Holding Center.

As he walks out into the sunlight, a HORDE OF REPORTERS rush to surround him. A few AGENTS try and protect the line.

REPORTER

Mister Soberanes!

ANOTHER REPORTER

Senor Miguel!

REPORTER #3

(correcting)

It's --Manuel!--

REPORTER #4

Cordova! Over here!

Manuel is surprised by the attention, and smiles a little.

REPORTER #5
 (in Spanish)
 Manuel...you are being called a hero
 for what you did on Thanksgiving.
 Can you make a statement?

Manuel looks at the Reporter.

MIGUEL
 I could have never left the boy.

The Agents push the crowd of reporters away, and the Line continues on to the bus.

Manuel spots a few OFFICIALS who are to the side of the line, talking to each other and pointing at Manuel.

For a moment, Manuel appears hopeful, shuffling along to the bus. Maybe they are going to let him go.

As he gets to be the next to board, the Officials look up at him, smile and nod, and then continue their conversation.

Manuel SIGHS, and boards the bus.

EXT. TUCSON AIRPORT -- DAY

It is a clear day, planes move on the tarmac.

INT. PLANE BOUND FOR PITTSBURGH -- CONTINUOUS

It is a full flight. Christopher sits against the window, nodding off.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT walks down the aisle, checking to make sure everyone is secure

CAPTAIN (O.S.)
 (over the intercom)
 Looks like we should have pretty
 good weather today for our trip to
 Pittsburgh...

The sounds of the CHEERING CROWD from Christopher's dream swell, drowning out the Captain's voice.

INT. BAR -- AFTERNOON

Anthony sits alone at the bar. He looks at a full beer and an untouched shot.

He's thinking.

His silence tells the story.

His cell phone BUZZES on the bar next to him.

ANTHONY
 (into the cell
 phone)
 Yeah? Hey...I'm coming to Jersey.

EXT. BAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Anthony walks out and hops on his motorcycle. He takes a look at his border patrol badge, then tosses it into dirt.

The bike is loaded up.

In an instant, Anthony is on his way.

EXT. ON THE NORTH OF THE BORDER FENCE, SOMEWHERE -- DAY

A Border Patrol vehicle sits, watching.

Waiting for crossers.

EXT. US/MEXICO BORDER CROSSING AT NOGALES -- DAY

Here on the United States side, the large white Wackenhut bus has pulled to a stop just a few feet in front of the large steel gate that blocks the road. Above that gate is a walkway, and beyond it: Nogales.

A sidewalk runs along the side of the road, and a BORDER PATROL AGENT in a green uniform stands ready to open a gate door that provides pedestrian access into Mexico.

The group of Illegal Immigrants, all Mexican, stand in a single-file line beside the Charter Bus, each with a clear plastic garbage bag containing whatever belongings they could carry with them, which they cradle or carry or have slung over their shoulder.

Next to them, another BORDER PATROL AGENT, bored, sizes up the line for a moment before nodding at the Agent standing by at the gate--giving the signal to open it.

BORDER PATROL #2
 (to the Mexicans)
 Muévelo, move it.

As the line of Deportees shuffle toward the open gate, we follow one in particular:

MANUEL.

FADE OUT

THE END.