

REFUGE

Written by

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EXT. SORGHUM FIELD - NIGHT

A moonless night. Dark. Quiet. Tall sorghum sways softly in the evening air.

A beat-up SEDAN BENCH SEAT sits nestled against the perimeter of the field. On it, a young couple.

The boy is BRUJO (early-20s). His face fills the screen. He's earnest. Eerily so.

BRUJO

You're special, Mari. The first time I saw you, I knew. Could have any girl I want. But I want you.

Just a boy wooing a girl.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

Fuck, you're beautiful. You'll see. It's gonna be good with me. You're gonna have all the best shit.

He smiles, wide and dumb.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

Yo, this is crazy. I ain't never felt like this before.

MARI (O.C.)

You're sweet, Brujo. I'm so lucky.

Brujo nods. Smiles.

MARI (O.C.) (CONT'D)

But I should go home now. My parents are going to worry.

He shakes his head.

BRUJO

Nah, don't stress that. No one's gonna mess with you anymore. You're my girl now.

He moves closer. Gets serious.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

Plus, we're gonna make things official tonight.

Finally, we see the object of Brujo's courting: MARI (16). Awash with terror. She forces a small smile. A single tear slides down her face.

Her eyes fall to his hand. Tattooed with a large **XVIII**. And wrapped around a PISTOL. More tears come.

Brujo sees the change in her.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

Oh, baby girl. You don't have to be scared.

He pulls her face to his. Kisses her hard. She doesn't reciprocate. He examines her. His face grows dark.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

First time's always hard. But you'll get used to it.

He leans in again. She turns her face away. He kisses her cheek. Her neck. Forcing his affection on her.

Mari closes her eyes. Makes peace with her fate.

Turning away from them, we find TWO ARMED GUARDS waiting dutifully nearby: FLACO (20) and JUNIOR (16). Both covered in the tats of the dominant gang of the area -- BARRIO 18. Junior to a lesser extent.

The field sits far back from a cluster of small structures. The gang's *clique* (headquarters). Soft light and sound emanate from the compound. A tall fence encloses it all.

Flaco clicks his tongue at Junior. Nods at the scene beyond them. Smirks. Junior glances over to Brujo and Mari. His eyes find the ground. Not his idea of fun.

A LACKEY runs out from the clique. Finds Flaco. Hurriedly whispers. Flaco hustles over to Brujo.

Brujo's mid-assault. Mari, still clothed, lies back on the seat. Brujo gropes her hard. Clumsy. He stops as Flaco approaches, annoyed.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

The fuck...

FLACO

Smiley. Someone spotted him in Mal Paso. Gotta move quick though.

Rage and delight flash across Brujo's face. He rises.

BRUJO

(to Mari)

I'll be back soon.

(MORE)

BRUJO (CONT'D)
(to Flaco)
C'mon.

He quickly heads off. Consumed by the hunt. Flaco and Lackey follow. Junior hangs back.

Mari sits up. Wipes her tears. Mari and Junior listen as a rowdy group get in a car. Doors slam. Tires screech away.

The night grows quiet again. Mari and Junior stew in it. Mari's eyes downcast. Prey in waiting.

Junior looks to the compound. No one in sight. He moves to the fence along the perimeter. FLIPS the LATCH. Swings the gate open.

Mari watches him, confused. He shoots her a look. Then walks off toward the buildings. Mari eyes the open gate. Junior gets smaller and smaller. Not turning back.

Mari rises. Sprints out. Disappears into the inky night.

EXT. CORN FIELDS - DAY

A sun-dappled Mari sleeps serenely. Her eyes pop open.

She blinks into the light streaming in through the tall CORN STALKS around her. Time to get back to work.

She rises. Picks up the large CANVAS BAG she was resting against. Already heavy with the afternoon's haul.

Mari gropes an ear. Pulls down hard. Adds it to her bounty.

Something rustles against the stalks nearby. Mari stops. Alert. She scans. Listens.

Silence.

A moment passes. She calms. Reaches up for another ear.

A loud BANG sounds. Someone runs through the stalks.

Instinct takes over. Mari gets low. Scrambles away. Abandons her haul.

Another BANG. It's close. The unseen assailant right on her.

She rises. Runs as quickly as the corn will allow. Trips.

Mari cowers, terrified. The perpetrator emerges from the corn: a bespectacled boy with kind eyes. This is Mari's brother, MEMO (13). He explodes into laughter.

MARI
Jesus, Memo. What's wrong with you?

MEMO
What? It's funny.

He proudly holds out his hand. Displays three small paper tubes with large wicks. FIRECRACKERS.

MEMO (CONT'D)
I just got them.

Mari snatches them from him.

MEMO (CONT'D)
Hey!

MARI
You're gonna get yourself shot.
(then, defensively)
And it's not funny.

He holds something out to her. A PUPUSA wrapped in a paper towel.

MEMO
I brought your lunch.

She takes it, grateful.

MARI
Thank you. Now go home.

She pushes past him back toward her bag. Feels him lingering. Turns back.

MARI (CONT'D)
What is it?

MEMO
Maybe you should come home with me.

Mari considers. Memo makes his case...

MEMO (CONT'D)
You've been out here a month and...

He dies off.

MARI
And what?

She reads the trepidation on his face.

MEMO

Mom needs eggs. But Dad's still at work.

Mari's face falls.

MARI

Memo, I can't go into town.

He looks to the ground, ashamed.

MEMO

I don't want to go alone.

MARI

Memo...

He pleads.

MEMO

Please. It's better if we go together. Plus, Brujo has another girl. He already forgot about you.

Mari studies him. Sees his fear. Her love for her brother supersedes her self-preservation. She nods.

MARI

(re: the bag)

Help me get this back to the barn.

Memo smiles. Scampers off. As he disappears, her face grows dark.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - MAIN SQUARE - DAY

Mari and Memo navigate the pockmarked sidewalks of their rundown, vibrant town. Music and bright buildings surround them. Verdant hills line the horizon.

The pair are alert. On edge. They arrive at the main square. TIENDAS line the perimeter. VENDORS pepper the open areas.

Mari eyes the surroundings warily. She grabs her brother's hand. They beeline to one of the small stores.

INT. RURAL TOWN - TIENDA - MOMENTS LATER

Mari pays the woman behind the counter. Memo's focus locked outside the door. She grabs the EGGS. Nods to her brother.

MARI

Let's go.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - MAIN SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

As they exit, Memo spots a MAN. His body, a chaos of tattoos, including a distinct **XVIII** across his forehead.

Memo freezes. Mari notices.

MARI

(hushed whisper)

Keep moving.

He doesn't budge. Mari grabs his hand. He looks at her. She offers a reassuring nod. He subtly returns it.

They move toward a side street, maintaining an easy pace.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

They round the bend onto the smaller street. Mari glances behind them. Waits. Nothing.

They exhale.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - OUTSKIRTS STREET - LATER

Mari and Memo traverse the outskirts of town. The street, less populated. The two, a bit more at ease. They pass a wall adorned with a large spray-painted **18**. Mari speeds up a bit.

Memo swings the BAG OF EGGS as they walk.

MARI

Be careful.

He continues swinging.

MARI (CONT'D)

If you break them, I'll make you go back alone.

Memo shoots her a sidelong glance. Doesn't respond. But stops swinging the bag.

Faint RAP MUSIC wafts through the street. Mari keeps her eyes forward, trying to mask her unease.

The source of the music - an OLDER SEDAN - turns the corner. And slowly creeps toward them.

As it approaches, Mari looks to her brother. Part to hide her face, part to calm his fears.

MARI (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 Keep walking. They're going to
 drive right past us.

Memo continues. Frightened. Staring at the ground.

The car approaches. Slows... Then PASSES. Memo smiles.

MARI (CONT'D)
 I told you.

BRAKE LIGHTS. The sedan pulls onto the sidewalk - blocking Mari and Memo's path.

Memo freezes. Mari grips his hand, tight.

Flaco and Junior exit.

FLACO
 Hey, hold up!

He pulls a PISTOL from his waistband, emphasizing the point. Mari shifts uneasily as they approach. Memo looks back. Contemplates running. Mari clocks this. Shakes her head.

MARI
 They'll shoot.

Memo remains.

Flaco and Junior reach them. Flaco hits Junior's shoulder.

FLACO
 What'd I fucking tell you.

Junior exchanges a look with Mari. Sadness in his eyes.

JUNIOR
 Brujo's been lookin' for you.

Flaco gets close to Mari.

FLACO
 Shit, he don't want you anymore,
 maybe I'll have a go.

Memo's agitated by Flaco's insinuation. He steps closer. Wants to say something. But can't. Mari clocks this. Puts a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

Flaco grabs Mari by the waist. Starts leading her to the car.

FLACO (CONT'D)
C'mon. Let's go.

As she's lead away, Mari turns to her brother.

MARI
Go home. Tell mom.

Memo's on the verge of tears. He shakes his head. Mari nods.

MARI (CONT'D)
(unsure of this)
I'll be home soon.

She turns back to the car. Each step, sheer dread.

Flaco opens the door. The backseat's littered with implements of terror: KNIFE with dry blood, homemade PIPE GUN, ROPE.

Flaco notices this. He holds Mari back for a moment.

FLACO
(to Junior)
Get that shit in the back.

Junior obeys. As he collects the items, a CAR passes.

Flaco locks eyes with the passenger, SMILEY (20s). His stare turns cold. Smiley's eyes go wide.

FLACO (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Fucking Smiley...

Flaco pulls his GUN. Starts SHOOTING wildly. The other car SCREECHES away. Mari seizes the opportunity.

MARI
(to Memo)
Run!

Wasting no time, the two book it back down the street. Memo drops the bag as he flees. They turn down an alley.

Flaco and Junior watch them run.

FLACO
Fuck!
(to Junior)
Get in the car!

Junior gets behind the wheel. Flaco sits shotgun.

INT. SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Starting the car...

JUNIOR
Who should I follow?

FLACO
This fucker's not getting away
again. Brujo can handle her later.

They peel out. Tear down the road after Smiley.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - ALLEY - SAME

A PILE OF TRASH. Mari and Memo peer out from behind it, their
breath rapid and hot.

MARI
They're gone.

She grabs his hand. Pulls him up. They run for home.

EXT. RURAL TOWN - SIDE STREET - SAME

On the sidewalk, the GROCERY BAG sits open. EGGS BROKEN on
the hot, dirty sidewalk. The intense sun starts to COOK them.

EXT. CRUZ HOME - NIGHT

Darkness. A modest CONCRETE HOME sits quiet. No sign of life.

Well, almost no sign. Memo's bespectacled eyes peer out from
a gap at the bottom of the WINDOW COVERING...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Guillermite! Get away from there.

INT. CRUZ HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Mari and CARMEN (mid-30s), their mother, prepare
dinner by candlelight. Tension permeates the house.

Memo moves to a MACHETE near the door. He holds the handle
in his small hand. Ready to defend.

Carmen sees this. Takes it from him. Hands him a stack of TIN
PLATES. Nods to the table. He obeys. Laying them out.

MEMO

Is papa coming home soon?

Carmen tries to mask her concern in annoyance.

CARMEN

Of course.

The DOORKNOB jiggles. Everyone freezes. It jiggles again. Then stops.

Carmen motions for the kids to get behind her. She holds the MACHETE defensively.

The knob moves again. Then turns. TOMÁS (late-30s) enters. Quickly closes the door behind him.

TOMÁS

I couldn't see my key in the dark.

CARMEN

Tomás!

She rushes over. Hits him. Then hugs him.

TOMÁS

Everything's okay. I got it.

This lands on Carmen.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)

We leave tomorrow.

Mari and Memo go quiet. Carmen backs away, concerned.

CARMEN

How much did Don Ramirez give you?

Tomás looks lovingly at his wife.

TOMÁS

Enough.

CARMEN

How?

The adults exchange a charged look. Tomás nods. Carmen closes her eyes. Shakes her head. Tomás pulls her in.

TOMÁS

It's what's best. This place isn't our home anymore.

CARMEN
 (sad, to herself)
 Our land. Our home.

TOMÁS
 Tomorrow, we go north. Start a new
 life. Make a new home.

Mari's mind spins with possibilities. Apprehension and excitement on her face. Tomás sees this. Pulls her into a seat. Beckons Memo over.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)
 This will be hard. Probably the
 hardest thing you'll ever do. But
 we'll be together. That's what's
 important.

Memo steps next to Mari. He puts a protective arm over her shoulders. Tomás smiles at the gesture.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)
 We'll leave in the morning. No
 warning.

The family nods. Tomás senses their sadness. He gets an idea. Pulls the KEY off his keyring.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)
 You see this?
 (off their nod)
 It opened the door to our home for
 your entire lives. We'll take it
 with us. As a charm. It will be the
 thing that opens the door to our
 new life. A better life.

Mari smiles. Memo holds it in his hand, trying to feel its power.

Something CREAKS outside. The sticks and barbed wire that serve as a gate shifting. Tomás is alert. Creeps to the window. Peers out. It's still. Quiet.

A GUST of wind. The GATE sways. He watches for one minute longer. Nothing.

CARMEN
 Tomás?

TOMÁS
 Just the wind.

He turns back to his family.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)

Eat. Then pack. We'll leave before
sun-up.

They nod. Sit at the table. Tomás eyes the window, uneasy.

INT. CRUZ HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mari slips down the hall. CANDLE in hand. HUSHED VOICES from her parents' room. She blows the candle out. Slides over to the BLANKET covering the entrance of their room.

Peering through a CRACK, she sees the BED pulled to one side. A HOLE dug in the hard dirt floor. Tomás drops the MONEY in and covers it as he talks to his wife.

TOMÁS

If something happens, you take the
kids and go.

CARMEN

I won't go without you.

TOMÁS

You might have to.
(off her trepidation)
It's only one more night. Then
we'll be free of this madness.

Carmen nods. Tomás pushes the foot of the bed back in place, hiding the disturbed dirt.

He reaches out for his wife's hand. Carmen takes it.

TOMÁS (CONT'D)

Let's get some rest.

Tomás blows out the CANDLE. Casts the room into darkness.

Mari slips down the hall to her own room.

INT. CRUZ HOME - MARI AND MEMO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mari sleeps deeply.

MACHINE GUN FIRE nearby. A HAND clasps over Mari's mouth. Her eyes pop open.

It's Carmen. Memo sits in his twin bed, frightened. Mari tries to speak. Carmen gestures for her to keep silent.

A BANG from the front door. Followed by LAUGHTER.

BRUJO (O.S.)
This fucker's sturdy.

Mari panics. Tomás appears in the doorway, MACHETE in hand.

TOMÁS
They're almost in. Get them out.

Carmen dashes to the WINDOW. Pulls it open. USHERS Memo out. Reaches for Mari. She resists.

MARI
No.

TOMÁS
Go. Now!

Mari reluctantly obeys. Tomás stands behind his wife. Ready to help her out. Carmen turns to her husband. The BANGING gets louder. More SHOTS fired.

CARMEN
No.

TOMÁS
You don't have a choice.

A final BANG. The door RELENTS. The VOICES now in the house. Carmen turns to her children.

CARMEN
We love you.
(then, urgent)
Run!

She closes the window. Pulls the CURTAIN.

EXT. CRUZ HOME - BACK FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo watch, helpless, as their parents disappear.

MARI
No!

She looks to Memo. Fear on his face. She grabs his hand.

Their house abuts rural hills and fields. They get low. Scurry to a HILL several yards away. Duck behind a BUSH.

From this vantage, they can see the house. The RURAL ROAD. A VAN by the gate.

MUZZLE FLASHES illuminate the windows from within the house.

Commotion. A chaos of voices. Lights click on. One voice above the others.

BRUJO (O.S.)
Where is she?!

TOMÁS (O.S.)
We sent her north.

A brief pause.

BRUJO (O.S.)
Bullshit! Come on...

Mari and Memo watch as their parents are pulled from the house. Into the road. Brujo holds a GUN on them. He nods to Flaco and Junior. They PUSH the couple to their knees.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - CRUZ'S FRONT YARD - SAME

Carmen fights tears. Tomás remains defiant. Holds her.

Brujo PACES. A manic, drug-induced air about him. MACHINE GUN casually draped across his arm. MACHETE in the other hand. He bends. His face level with theirs.

BRUJO
You gonna use this on me?

The Cruzes meet his gaze, unyielding. Brujo looks to his men.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
Can you believe that? This fucker was tryin' to off me.

He gets in Tomás' face.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
Tell me where she is and I promise to be gentle with her.

Tomás' eyes burn with rage.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
Nah. You're not gonna talk.

He looks to Carmen.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
But you might.

Brujo gets behind Tomás. Pulls his head back. Puts the MACHETE to his throat.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
What about it, mamá? Where's our
little Mari?

Tomás' stare begs his wife to remain silent.

Carmen is in agony. Tears spill from her eyes.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
No one has to die tonight...

Tomás shakes his head.

TOMÁS
He'll kill me either way.

Brujo examines Carmen. She's staying strong. He smiles.

Brujo SLIDES the machete across Tomás' THROAT. BLOOD GUSHES.

Carmen's screams fill the night. Tomás FALLS.

CARMEN
No!

She brings her face close to her husband's. Helpless as she watches the life leak out of him.

EXT. CRUZ HOME - BACK FIELD - SAME

Mari and Memo take in the murder of their father. Memo's young mind can barely process the horror. Mari RISES. Memo grabs her arm.

MEMO
No.

MARI
They want me.

Memo shakes his head, frantic. Refuses to release her.

MEMO
They'll kill you. Kill all of us.

His desperation is too much for her. She gets low again. Pulls him in. They turn their powerless attention to the chaos below.

Carmen SOBS. Prostrate. Brujo pulls her up.

BRUJO

You want this to end? Tell me where she is.

Carmen meets his gaze. Past the point of no return.

CARMEN

She's gone.

BRUJO

Lies. One of my guys saw her.

Carmen stares back, defiant.

CARMEN

You'll never touch her again.

He smirks at her bravado. Keeps his eyes locked with hers. Yells commands.

BRUJO

Find them. They're close.

The men FAN OUT. Flaco and Junior move to the backyard. Memo starts to squirm. Mari holds him tight.

Junior starts up the hill. Moving his GUN across the TALL GRASS, slowly wending his way toward their hiding spot. Flaco takes the other direction.

Junior is close. Mari can see the TIP of his gun as it moves through the grass.

Memo's breathing gets heavy. Mari holds him tighter.

Flaco impatiently searches. He stops. Looks to Junior.

FLACO

Hey! Back up.

He motions for Junior to fall back. Junior's confused but complies. Mari and Memo breathe a sigh of relief.

BURSTS of GUNSHOTS pepper the hill. Flaco smoking them out.

A bullet WHIZZES by them, just missing Memo. His whimpering almost audible.

Brujo runs to the back of the house.

BRUJO

What the fuck are you doing? I don't want to fuck a corpse.

FLACO
I just...

BRUJO
Fucking idiot!

He turns back toward the house.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
(re: Carmen)
Get that bitch inside.

One of the men pulls Carmen inside the house. Brujo, Junior and Flaco move around to the front. Brujo turns to Flaco.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
You stay here.

Flaco is pissed. Wants to partake in the fun. Brujo adds...

BRUJO (CONT'D)
And no more fucking shooting.

Flaco hangs back. The other men file into the abode.

Carmen refuses to give them the satisfaction of her terror. She stares at the hills. Willing her children to run.

The horde disappears into the house. Loud MUSIC BLARES.

Flaco scans the area. No one else around. He moves to a window. Tries to get a glimpse of the action.

Mari shakes Memo.

MARI
(hushed whisper)
Let's go.

Memo is in full shutdown. He shakes his head, frozen.

MARI (CONT'D)
If we don't leave, we'll die.

She's getting through. He calms a bit.

MARI (CONT'D)
Cut through the fields. We'll hide
in Señor Flores' barn. Stay low
until you get to the corn. Okay?
(off his nod)
We go on three.

She checks. Flaco's still looking through the window. Mari thinks of her mother within. Fights tears. Takes a breath.

MARI (CONT'D)

One. Two.

She gives one last look to Flaco. Finally...

MARI (CONT'D)

Three.

They SCURRY up the hill. Stay low. Run fast.

Mari turns as they crest the hill. Flaco steps away from the window. Peers into the dark. Did he hear something?

There's no turning back now. Mari runs harder.

A SCREAM from inside the house. LAUGHTER. The guys are having fun. Flaco's pulled back to the window. He smiles.

EXT. CORN FIELDS - NIGHT

Mari and Memo TEAR through the fields. Run for their lives.

INT. BARN - LATER

A BARN DOOR slides open. A small shaft of moonlight. Simple FARMING EQUIPMENT and FOOD STORES within. Mari and Memo TUMBLE in. Mari quickly CLOSES the door. LATCHES it. She listens. It's SILENT.

Memo curls into a ball in the corner - emotionally and physically spent. Mari finds a BURLAP SACK. Places it over him. He doesn't react.

Mari leaves the catatonic Memo. Climbs up to a cantilevered second floor. Looks into the night. Vigilant for danger.

INT. BARN - MORNING

Memo wakes with a start. Soft, pale light peeks through cracks in the barn. Mari already up. She opens the LATCH.

MEMO

Where are you going?

MARI

Back home. Latch the door.

Memo stands.

MEMO

What if you don't come back?

Mari considers the question.

MARI

Go north alone.

Mari starts to close the door. She stops. Adds...

MARI (CONT'D)

And don't go home.

Memo looks down. Nods.

MARI (CONT'D)

I mean it. Promise me.

MEMO

I promise.

She studies him. He's being genuine. She CLOSES the DOOR. Memo rises. Quickly LATCHES it.

He scrambles up to the second floor. Watches his sister's tiny figure stalk off into the unknown.

EXT. CRUZ HOME - BACK FIELD - MORNING

Mari stares down at her family home. It's quiet. CURTAINS drawn. VAN gone. TOMÁS' BODY still strewn in the street.

Mari runs to the back of the HOUSE. Scans. Nothing. She moves to the front. Curtains obscure the windows. But the place seems abandoned. The GATE and FRONT DOOR sit OPEN, but there's no sound from within the house. Or without.

Mari takes a BREATH. Then MOVES into action.

She creeps to the front door. Pushes it open. A chaotic scene greets her. House trashed. TABLE flipped. FOOD everywhere.

Mari moves to enter. The soft SQUEAK of a BIKE comes to rest behind her. She stops.

She turns. Is met by the suspicious eyes of a BOY (10). It's clear the two don't know one another.

Mari spins. Is he spying for the gang? Is he merely amazed to see her alive? He's giving her nothing.

Mari does the only thing she can think of: she gives a slight WAVE.

The boy doesn't reciprocate. He puts his feet on the PEDALS. SPEEDS off.

MARI

Fuck.

Mari RUNS into the house.

INT. CRUZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

She BURSTS in. Crosses the chaos. Hopefully calls out...

MARI

Mamá!

In the hall...

MARI (CONT'D)

Mamá!

She pushes into her parents' room. Is STOPPED short by what she sees.

MARI (CONT'D)

No...

Mari turns back into the hall. Her hand over her mouth. Trying to reconcile the PILE OF GORE with the woman that was her mother. She takes a breath. No time to process right now.

She forces herself down the hall to her room.

INT. CRUZ HOME - MARI AND MEMO'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mari grabs TWO BACKPACKS. Stuffs them with a few essentials: SWEATSHIRT, UNDERWEAR, PRAYER CARD, a few U.S. DOLLARS.

Her face drops. The money triggering a memory.

INT. CRUZ HOME - TOMÁS AND CARMEN'S ROOM - DAY

BLOOD POOLS on the floor around Tomás and Carmen's BED. Mari enters. Keeps her eyes locked on the ground. Avoiding the sight of CARMEN'S BODY. Makes her way to the bed.

She pulls it to one side. Exposes the DISTURBED DIRT. As the bed moves, her mother's FOOT shifts. It HANGS UNNATURALLY off the side.

Mari CLOSES her eyes. BREATHES. Fights tears. Fights reality.

Refocusing on the ground, she begins to DIG.

INT. SEDAN - SAME

Junior drives. Flaco's shotgun. Brujo sits in the back with the boy from the bike. He shows the boy Mari's photo.

The boy nods.

BRUJO

You sure?

He nods again, positive. Brujo smiles.

BRUJO (CONT'D)

I got you now, bitch.

(to Junior)

Faster, bro.

Junior reluctantly speeds up the car.

INT. CRUZ HOME - TOMÁS AND CARMEN'S ROOM - SAME

Mari pulls the MONEY from the HOLE. No time to count. The victory is cut short by tires SCREECHING to a halt out front.

Mari's face drops. CAR DOORS OPEN. Close.

BRUJO (O.S.)

Come on.

Mari panics. Looks for an escape.

INT. CRUZ HOME - KITCHEN - SAME

Brujo enters the house. Junior and Flaco flank. All armed. Boy hangs back, frightened by what his actions have wrought.

Brujo smiles at the chaos of the house. He makes his way to the hall.

INT. CRUZ HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Brujo walks slowly. Listens for signs of life.

BRUJO

Mari? *Mi amor?*

He peers in Mari's bedroom. All clear. Brujo turns back to the hall. Moves to the parents' room.

Brujo THROWS the CLOTH back. His face twists in confusion.

Everything is as they left it last night. Including the BED in its place.

JUNIOR
Maybe she left.

BRUJO
Maybe...

Brujo gives the place a once over.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
Nah. Nobody's been here.

INT. CRUZ HOME - TOMÁS AND CARMEN'S ROOM

Mari's UNDER the BED. CLUTCHING the MONEY. The THIN MATTRESS above her SOAKED through with her MOTHER'S BLOOD.

INT. CRUZ HOME - HALLWAY - SAME

A devilish GRIN spreads across Brujo's face. An idea taking root. He hands the gun to Junior.

BRUJO
Get the cans from the car.

Junior walks off obediently. Brujo turns to Flaco.

BRUJO (CONT'D)
This bitch isn't gonna have a home to come back to.

INT. CRUZ HOME - TOMÁS AND CARMEN'S ROOM - SAME

Mari's eyes widen, terrified.

The blood above her has started to POOL. A DROP forms over her face. Mari closes her eyes - willing it to go away.

INT. CRUZ HOME - KITCHEN - SAME

Junior returns with TWO LARGE GAS CANS. Flaco takes one. They start DOUSING the house.

WALLS. FLOORS. PHOTOS. A family's life, gasoline-soaked.

INT. CRUZ HOME - TOMÁS AND CARMEN'S ROOM - SAME

Flaco enters. Mari sees his feet. SPLASHES from the can. The harsh SCENT of gas assaults her.

The DROP of BLOOD hangs perilously above her. It finally releases. Her mother's BLOOD splatters across her face.

She closes her eyes tight. Prays.

EXT. CRUZ HOME - SAME

Flaco trails gasoline behind him as he exits. Brujo smiles. Ignites a LIGHTER. TOSSES it.

The gasoline catches quickly. FIRE consumes the house.

The men turn back to their car. As Brujo gets in...

BRUJO

C'mon. Let's get something to eat.

They drive off. No interest in staying to watch the destruction they set into motion. Just another day.

INT. CRUZ HOME - TOMÁS AND CARMEN'S ROOM - SAME

The car DRIVES away.

Mari rolls out from under the bed. SMOKE and HEAT overwhelm her. Confronted with her mother's CORPSE again, she turns away.

Something catches her eye. Her father's KEY on a SIDE TABLE. Mari grabs it.

FLAMES overtake the room. Mari searches for a way out. She runs to the WINDOW. Pushes through it. Falls to freedom.

EXT. CRUZ HOME - SAME

Mari COUGHS, desperately trying to catch her breath.

She looks around, fearful of the attention the blaze might garner. Mari pops to her feet. RUNS for the fields.

INT. BARN - LATER

Memo sits. WOODEN AXE HANDLE across his lap. Face strained with anticipation.

FOOTSTEPS outside the barn. He picks up the handle.

The door slides open. It's Mari, SOOT and BLOOD-STAINED.

MEMO

Mari?...

She staggers in. Her legs give out. She CRUMBLES.

Memo rises. He looks down the path. No sign of his mother. His face falls. He closes the door.

MEMO (CONT'D)

Mamá?

Mari gives a subtle shake of her head.

MARI

It's all gone.

This lands on Memo.

MEMO

What do we do now?

Mari shrugs her shoulders. What other option do they have?

MARI

We go north.

Memo gives a small nod. Mari nods wearily back. It's decided.

EXT. OPEN-AIR BUS DEPOT - DAY

Mari and Memo navigate through a BUSTLING OPEN-AIR DEPOT. Not much more than a parking lot full of COLORFUL BUSES. Mari, hastily cleaned-up, leads Memo to the TICKET KIOSK. The KEY now hangs from her neck. Memo looks around, vigilant.

They reach the COUNTER. A gruff, middle-aged TICKETING AGENT greets them.

TICKETING AGENT

Destination?

Mari and Memo look to one another. No idea how to do this.

MARI

Mexico.

The agent turns. Takes in the pair. Mari's dirty clothes. Their lack of luggage. It's a story he's seen before.

TICKETING AGENT
Where in Mexico?

Mari hesitates.

MARI
Mexico City.

His eyes narrow in incredulity.

TICKETING AGENT
Mexico City?

Mari nods.

TICKETING AGENT (CONT'D)
Long trip. Couple connections.

MARI
That's okay.

The ticketing agent doesn't move to process the request.

TICKETING AGENT
Where are your parents?

Mari momentarily freezes. Memo chimes in.

MEMO
They're waiting for us. There.

TICKETING AGENT
In Mexico City?

MEMO
Our aunt is sick.

The agent rolls his eyes. He doesn't have time for this.

TICKETING AGENT
Tickets are \$98. Each.

Mari pulls a few BILLS from her pocket. The agent begrudgingly takes the money. Turns to the COMPUTER. Mari squeezes Memo's shoulder. They're on their way.

INT. GENERAL STORE - LATER

A GENERAL STORE teeming with TRAVELERS. Mari and Memo enter.

MARI
Go grab some food.

Memo enthusiastically heads for the snack aisle.

MARI (CONT'D)

Be quick.

INT. GENERAL STORE - SNACK AISLE - SAME

Memo arrives at the snack aisle. Eyes alight at the options. He grabs random BAGS OF CHIPS and SWEETS.

INT. GENERAL STORE - TOILETRIES AISLE - SAME

Mari fishes TRAVEL-SIZED TOILETRIES out of bins. TOOTHBRUSH, SOAP, etc.

A rack holding VARIOUS CLOTHING ITEMS catches her eye. Mari regards her shirt. Its melange of brown, black and red stains. She moves to the rack. Rifles through the options.

INT. GENERAL STORE - REGISTER - LATER

Mari lays a few items in front of the CASHIER: TOILETRIES, a BACKPACK, a JUG OF WATER. Memo approaches, holding an assortment of BRIGHTLY-COLORED SNACK FOOD PACKAGES.

Mari takes in his bounty.

MARI

We need real food.

He looks through the items. Holds up some BEEF JERKY.

MARI (CONT'D)

Fine. But take the rest back.

The cashier eyes them sadly. So young. Memo reluctantly turns back toward the food aisle. Mari continues checking out.

INT. GENERAL STORE - SNACK AISLE - SAME

Memo returns the items to their shelf. Something catches his eye. He freezes. The remaining BAGS FALL to the FLOOR.

Outside, THREE YOUNG MEN exit a car. Among them Flaco and Junior. The men head for the entrance of the store.

Memo's already running back to the front.

INT. GENERAL STORE - REGISTER - CONTINUOUS

The Barrio 18 trio enters. The patrons quiet. No sign of Mari and Memo. The cashier closes her register. Flaco holds out a COPY of Mari's FACEBOOK PROFILE PICTURE.

FLACO

Seen her?

The cashier freezes. Torn between endangering innocents and saving herself. Flaco senses her reticence. He pulls a GUN.

FLACO (CONT'D)

Where?

Terrified, the woman POINTS toward the back exit.

FLACO (CONT'D)

(to Junior)

Go. We'll take the front.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - BACK ALLEY - SAME

Mari and Memo run along the back of the building. Mari in the HOODIE and BACKPACK she bought.

She peeks around the corner. Sees the BANGERS exit. Two go out front. Junior heads toward them. She pulls back.

She scans for cover. Points to a DUMPSTER. They scramble in.

INT. DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

Mari peers out under the lid. Sees Junior ROUND the corner. He clocks the dumpster. The obvious hiding spot.

He eyes the dumpster for a beat. Thinks. He looks around. No sign of the others. He looks back at the dumpster. Almost as if he's looking right at them. He NODS subtly, decision made.

Junior turns and leaves.

Mari and Memo exhale in relief.

INT. GENERAL STORE - CASHIER - MOMENTS LATER

The pair RUN back through the store. They stop at the front door. Scan to make sure the coast is clear. It is.

Mari pulls up her HOODIE. Grabs Memo's hand.

MARI

We have to get to bus 21. Try to act normal, okay?

Memo looks at her. Nods. They head out...

EXT. GENERAL STORE / BUS DEPOT - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo walk through the crowd. Eyes locked ahead. They quickly move along the front of the BUSES.

A HAND GRABS Memo's collar. He looks up in horror. An OLDER MAN stares down at him.

OLDER MAN

Jose?...

Memo shakes his head. Mistaken identity. Mari pulls him away.

She turns. Sees Flaco QUESTIONING a DRIVER with the photo. Mari pulls her hood up. Moves faster.

The movement draws Flaco's attention. He catches a glimpse of color as they pass. His eyes NARROW in suspicion.

Mari and Memo speed past the other buses. Memo spots a CRUDE 21 painted on the front of one of the buses. He points.

MEMO

There!

They beeline for the BUS. Board.

INT. BUS 21 - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo are the first ones on. They run for the back. The DRIVER, hardened, middle-aged, GRABS Memo as he passes.

DRIVER

Hey!

Mari turns. Realizes their mistake.

MARI

Sorry.

She pulls out the TICKETS. He takes them with a grunt.

They finally get to the back of the bus. Duck down low between the last two seats.

Flaco BOARDS. Looks down the bus. Regards the driver. Holds out the PHOTO. The driver inspects it.

Mari fingers her father's KEY. Whispers a prayer.

The driver looks one minute more. Then shakes his head. Flaco turns, annoyed, and exits. Mari looks to Memo in disbelief.

Once Flaco's gone, the driver stands. STARTS for the back.

The driver appears above them. Mari smiles widely.

MARI (CONT'D)

Thank yo--

DRIVER

Hundred dollars.

Mari looks at his out-stretched HAND in confusion.

MARI

What?

The driver looks back over his shoulder to the front of the bus. He repeats his demand.

DRIVER

A hundred. Or I call him back.

A stunned Mari looks to her brother. Memo shrugs softly. What choice do they have? The driver moves his fingers, beckoning her to hurry up.

Mari angrily pulls SEVERAL TWENTIES. Puts them in his hand.

Other passengers start to board. The driver looks back to them. Offers a matter-of-fact truth.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Better than the alternative, no?

Mari responds with a glare. Her anger amuses the driver.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Stay down 'til we get out of town.

He heads back to the front. Mari and Memo remain in their cramped hiding spot.

EXT. BUS DEPOT - LATER

Bus 21 pulls out of the lot. Flaco stands at the exit. Scanning each bus as it leaves. He recognizes the driver from their earlier encounter. Gives a NOD. The driver nods back.

The bus EXITS and heads down the dirt road.

INT. BUS 21 - NIGHT

Mari's asleep against a window. Memo propped against her, also sleeping. It's pitch black. The bus LURCHES to a halt. Mari and Memo stir.

She looks out the window. A dimly lit BUS STATION.

The driver exits. A NEW DRIVER boards. Behind him, a FEDERAL POLICE OFFICER. He moves through the bus. Asks for IDs.

MEMO

Where are we?

MARI

A checkpoint. Must be Mexico.

Some passengers slip FOLDS OF MONEY behind their IDs. Mari clocks the officer wordlessly pocketing the bills.

He surveys the back half of the bus. Spots Mari and Memo. Bypasses the other passengers. Strides right to them.

He looms. His BADGE identifies him: OFFICER GODINEZ.

OFFICER GODINEZ

Come with me.

Mari quickly pulls a \$50-BILL. Holds it out. The officer regards it. SMIRKS. But doesn't reach for it.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)

Come.

She pulls out another FIFTY. Extends it.

MARI

Please. We have tickets.

The officer puts his hand on his GUN.

OFFICER GODINEZ

Now.

A nearby, MIDDLE-AGED PASSENGER hisses at them.

PASSENGER

Just go. You're going to make
trouble for all of us.

Mari shoots the woman daggers. A few others call for them to go too. Mari looks to Memo with resignation. She motions for him to pick up their BAG. They follow Godinez off the bus.

INT. BUS STATION - POLICE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo sit opposite the officer's desk. The room is dingy. Harsh fluorescents. Godinez pulls the BLINDS shut.

OFFICER GODINEZ

Know why I flagged you?

Mari protests...

MARI

We're going to see our parents.

Officer Godinez eyes Mari. Snickers. Perches on the edge of the desk facing them. Pulls out his PHONE. Brings up the PHOTO of Mari. Shows her.

Mari's face drops. He's working with Barrio 18.

MARI (CONT'D)

(pitiful)

Please...

OFFICER GODINEZ

Should probably just turn you over.
You're a shitty liar. Won't make it
far.

Mari thinks.

MARI

Let my brother get on the bus. They
don't care about him.

MEMO

No.

Mari quiets him. Puts her hand on his arm. Godinez sees this.

OFFICER GODINEZ

Touching.

He stands. Puts a HAND on Memo's SHOULDER.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)
Perhaps I should interrogate your
brother. See what he knows.

Mari and Memo exchange a look. Not liking where this is
going. Godinez locks eyes with Mari.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)
Or I could turn you over and you'll
both be dead by morning.

Mari says nothing.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)
(to Memo)
Come. The bus will wait for us.

Memo rises. Starts to follow Godinez into an adjacent room.
He looks back at Mari, terrified. She watches on, helpless.

Godinez pulls Memo into the ROOM. The DOOR closes.

Mari churns. Rises. Runs out of the office.

INT. BUS STATION - ADJACENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small, sparse room. Memo sits in the only chair. Godinez
stands over him. In front of the light. His face shadows.

OFFICER GODINEZ
No need to be scared. I'm only
going to ask you a few questions.

Godinez PETS Memo's head. Memo stares ahead, trembling.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)
You love your sister, right?
(off his nod)
You'd do anything for her?

Memo looks up at him. Terrified of the implications.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)
I can make sure you pass safely. I
can make it so no one else bothers
you.

Godinez crouches down. His face level with Memo's. He puts a
HAND on his knee.

OFFICER GODINEZ (CONT'D)
Would you like that?

Memo eyes the large hand subtly squeezing his thigh. He looks up to Godinez. Opens his mouth to answer. But COUGHS instead.

Godinez starts to cough too. He looks to the door. SMOKE streams in from underneath. He rises, angry. Throws open the door to reveal...

INT. BUS STATION - POLICE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

FLAMES consume the desk. Mari LIGHTS a piece of PAPER with a MATCH. Adds it onto the already burning pyre.

OFFICER GODINEZ

What the fuck?

He quickly grabs the EXTINGUISHER. Aims it at the fire.

Mari seizes on the opportunity.

MARI

Memo! Run!

He sprints to her. They run out.

EXT. BUS 21 - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo quickly board the IDLING BUS. New Driver wastes no time, speeding the bus out of the lot. Back onto the road.

Mari slips him a wad of BILLS. She's learning.

MARI

Thank you.

Memo looks back. The station and the danger within receding in the distance.

EXT. PUEBLA BUS STATION - DAY

A new day. A new DEPOT. Much like the one they left from.

INT. BUS 21 - SAME

Driver pulls to a stop. Opens the door. People stream out.

Mari looks through their SMALL STACK OF TICKETS.

MARI

I think we need a different bus.

They rise.

EXT. PUEBLA BUS DEPOT - TICKETING KIOSK - LATER

Mari is mid-conversation with the FEMALE TICKETING AGENT.

MARI
But we have the ticket.

FEMALE AGENT
Bus won't be fixed until tomorrow.

Mari turns in frustration. They step away from the counter.

MARI
We need to find somewhere to sleep.

Memo holds his stomach.

MEMO
I'm starving.

MARI
Me too. Let's find some food.

EXT. PUEBLA CITY STREETS - LATER

Mari and Memo exit the depot. The busy streets of Puebla greet them. Their faces stretch in awe. They've never seen anything like it.

Wide streets. Big, bright BUILDINGS. Lots of CARS. Sidewalks packed with people.

Mari grabs Memo's arm.

MARI
Stay close.

They move into the fray. Their SOILED FACES and CLOTHES tell their story. Some ignore them completely. Others throw them looks of disdain. Unkind faces assault from all directions.

Mari pulls Memo down a smaller street.

EXT. PUEBLA SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

It's quieter here. Less people. Memo points to a STREET VENDOR cooking flat BALLS OF MASA on a LARGE PIECE OF METAL.

MEMO

There.

They scurry to the vendor. She throws them a brief, unfriendly look as they approach.

MARI

Two, please.

The vendor reluctantly prepares the order.

A BLUE TRUCK marked POLICIA ESTATAL turns onto the side street. The STATE POLICE OFFICER behind the wheel slows as he spots the pair. He CREEPS past.

Mari pays the vendor. Takes the FOOD. Clocks the truck.

She averts her eyes from the menacing gaze. Grabs Memo's arm. Quickens her pace. Memo sees what's scared her.

MEMO

(under his breath)

Not again...

MARI

It's okay. Just eat.

Memo nibbles at the food. The truck lingers a beat longer. Finally, it SPEEDS off.

They stop. Watch it drive away. Relief on their faces.

Memo points to a small alley in between two buildings.

MEMO

Let's eat over there.

Mari nods. Memo's learning.

EXT. PUEBLA ALLEY - LATER

They sit in the dirty alley. Memo greedily eats. Mari consumes slowly, casting furtive glances at the pedestrians crossing the mouth of the alley.

Across the street, THREE KIDS play 'La Migra'. Two of them stop the third. Pretend to arrest him. Mari watches, uneasy.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, spots Mari. Stops. Takes in the sad tableau of the pair. Offers a sympathetic LOOK. Mari responds with the defensive glare of a feral cat.

The woman moves her gaze to the street. Walks on. Mari rises.

MARI

We should move further back.

Memo nods. Follows her deeper into the alley. DEBRIS and broken pallets obscure them a bit more.

As they settle in, Mari looks through the backpack.

MARI (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get us more water.

She looks at Memo. He's frozen. Transfixed by something behind her.

A shadow consumes her. A large MILITARY BOOT steps into view. Mari cautiously turns to face this new threat. The State Police Officer from the truck. Black tactical gear. Assault rifle. Sunglasses. Name badge: CORTEZ.

OFFICER CORTEZ

ID's. Now.

Mari looks to Memo. He can't move.

MARI

Okay.

Mari rifles through the backpack. She subtly MOUTHS something to Memo. He furrows his brow in confusion. Cortez grows impatient.

OFFICER CORTEZ

Now.

Mari repeats her voiceless command. Mouthing the word: RUN. Followed by: NOW.

MARI

Here they are.

Mari turns and, in one swift motion, PUSHES the officer hard - sending him TUMBLING to the ground.

Memo books it for the entrance of the alley. Mari right behind him.

Cortez gets to his knees.

OFFICER CORTEZ

Pinche...

He pulls his GUN. Too many bystanders. He RISES. Gives CHASE.

EXT. PUEBLA SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo exit the alley -- NEARLY-PLOWING into the middle-aged woman from before. She clocks their SCARED FACES. Sees Cortez, GUN in hand.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Come!

She pulls them away down the street to a beat-up CAR. The woman gets in. Motions for them to follow. Mari hesitates. She turns to see Cortez rounding the bend.

MARI

(to Memo)

Get in!

They jump in the BACKSEAT. Get low. Cortez catches up, just as the woman pulls away.

He RAISES his gun. Takes the car in through the SIGHT. Lowers the gun. Watches them drive away.

INT. BEAT-UP CAR - SAME

Mari looks out the back window. The car TURNS a corner. Cortez disappears. She taps Memo. He rises.

They take in their savior. She turns another corner.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

I think we lost him.

Mari nods. The woman smiles back at her warmly.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm Irma.

Mari stares at her as she drives on.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A simple, single-family home. Mari and Memo at the DINING TABLE. The place is well-loved but a bit disheveled.

Irma slides TWO PLATES onto the table. Chilaquiles and eggs.

Memo digs in, ravenous. Mari hesitates. Irma clocks this. Her eyes squint in understanding. Irma shovels a BITE from Mari's plate into her mouth. She raises her eyebrows. Satisfied?

Mari is. She eats. Irma smiles. She likes this kid.

Irma disappears down the hall. Returns with a pair of mens SNEAKERS. Tosses them to Memo...

IRMA
These should fit.

MEMO
I have shoes.

IRMA
Only sell that brand in your country. Cops look for them.

Memo nods, grateful. Irma sits. Watches them eat. Mari looks up from her food.

MARI
Thank you. We'll leave after this.

IRMA
No rush, *mija*. Have kids of my own. Hope someone would help if they needed it.

Mari looks around. SEES SIGNS of teens in the house.

MARI
Where are they? Your kids?

Irma absorbs the question. Changes the subject.

IRMA
You have a plan?
(off their look)
For getting over? Someone to help?

Mari and Memo exchange a look. Mari SHAKES her head.

MEMO
Gonna find someone at the border.

Irma CHORTLES.

IRMA
With the way things are now? Police are worse than ever. Without someone helping you, you won't even make it to the border.

Mari interjects defensively.

MARI
We'll be okay.

Irma shakes her head.

IRMA

You need to be careful. A lot of people will take advantage of two first-timers like you.

MEMO

How can you tell it's our first time?

Irma raises her eyebrows at him. Does he really need to ask? She notices his PLATE is EMPTY.

IRMA

More?

Memo NODS enthusiastically. Irma rises to get him another serving. Mari follows Irma with her eyes.

She returns. Sets the plate in front of Memo. Lets out a heavy sigh.

IRMA (CONT'D)

How much do you have? To get over?

Mari is cautious.

MARI

Enough.

IRMA

I'm only trying to help.

Mari visually confers with Memo. He NODS his assent.

MARI

Little less than eight thousand.

Irma lets out a low whistle.

IRMA

That's barely enough. *If you're lucky.*

MEMO

We had more, but we ran into cops.

IRMA

Well, that's part of it.
(off their look)
Bribes.

Irma looks them over. They're completely out of their depth. She stands. Looks out the window. SIGHS heavily.

IRMA (CONT'D)
Okay. I'll take you.

She turns. Faces them. Mari and Memo look up.

IRMA (CONT'D)
I used to take people. Haven't for a while. Too dangerous. But I'll take you.

MEMO
Really?

Mari's eyes squint in skepticism.

MARI
Why would you take us?

IRMA
It's not charity. Let's say three to get to the border. Another three once we cross. Leaves you with a couple grand to get on your feet.

Mari considers.

IRMA (CONT'D)
No one will do it for less.

Memo implores his sister to accept.

MEMO
Mari...

Mari thinks for another minute. Then, nods.

MARI
Okay.

Irma smiles.

IRMA
Good. We'll leave in the morning.

INT. IRMA'S SON'S ROOM - NIGHT

A SMALL, COZY ROOM. Memo lies in the BED. Evidence of a teenage boy on the walls. TORN-OUT MAGAZINE PAGES display favorite teams, bands, models.

Memo lies in bed. Eyes alert. Energy restless. He gets up. Starts inspecting the room.

Pulling open a DRAWER, he finds a STACK of hastily-stashed PHOTOS on top of some disturbed clothes.

Memo reaches for the PHOTOS. The first is of a boy - about Memo's age - wearing a BEAT-UP LAKERS HAT. He stands with his father. They look nice, normal, mundane.

As he flips to the next photo, the door CREAKS. He quickly replaces the photos. Turns to see who's there.

It's Mari.

MEMO

I can't sleep.

Memo closes the drawer.

MARI

Me either. Get into bed. I'll talk to you until you fall asleep.

Memo nods. Moves to the bed. This is a familiar ritual. Mari sits on the floor. Their faces level. Their voices hushed.

MEMO

What's it like in the U.S.? Will it be like mom said it would? Clean. Good schools.
(then, pointedly)
Safe?

Mari thinks. Fiddles with her father's KEY. She nods.

MARI

Yes, everything's better there. And we'll be safe.

MEMO

Can I get an iPhone?

Mari smiles.

MARI

Sure.

Memo gets lost in a dark thought.

MARI (CONT'D)

What is it?

MEMO

It seems too good to be real.

Mari considers that. Rejects any doubt in herself.

MARI

It's going to be better there. I promise.

She rises. Pulls his BLANKETS up higher.

MARI (CONT'D)

Besides, it's the only choice we have.

MEMO

At least we have Irma now.

Mari breaks eye contact. Nods. Memo reads her expression.

MEMO (CONT'D)

You don't trust her.

MARI

I don't know.

Memo FROWNS. Nervous. Mari clocks this.

MARI (CONT'D)

Everything will be okay. Papa's watching over us.

She holds up the key. Memo SMILES sadly. Nods. Then adds...

MEMO

And I'll protect you.

MARI

That's right. We're safe as long as we're together.

Mari smiles. She KISSES Memo's forehead. Rises.

MARI (CONT'D)

Get some sleep.

INT. IRMA'S DAUGHTER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mari enters a YOUNG GIRL'S ROOM. Crawls into the SMALL BED. She stares at the wall across from the bed. A CHILD'S DRAWING of a family. Mother, father, son, daughter.

Mari's mesmerized by the picture. Considers her own family unit, now lost forever. She CLOSES her eyes. Waits for sleep.

EXT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

A back HATCH opens to reveal a DIRTY, CRAMPED TRUNK. Irma stands over it. Indicates inside it.

IRMA

Get in.

Mari and Memo stare at the cavity. Unmoving.

IRMA (CONT'D)

It's just until we get past the checkpoint.

They don't move. Irma LAUGHS to herself.

IRMA (CONT'D)

I can't kill you yet. You haven't paid me.

She pulls a WATER BOTTLE from her bag. Holds it out.

IRMA (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. Com'on. We've got a long drive ahead of us.

Finally, Mari takes the water. Climbs in. Memo follows.

INT. TRUNK - DAY

Mari and Memo bounce along in silence. They feel the car SLOW. Hear Irma's MUFFLED VOICE outside.

Her words are indistinct, but TWO GUARDS RESPOND. Mari puts her finger over her lips - urging Memo to stay quiet.

The conversation continues. It feels like forever. Mari touches the key. Irma lets out a LAUGH. The guards LAUGH too.

Two brief TAPS on the trunk. The car starts moving again. Mari and Memo breathe a sigh of relief.

INT. TRUNK - LATER

SWEAT covers Mari and Memo's faces. Their SHIRTS soaked through. Mari offers the last of the water to Memo. He slurps the few drops eagerly. Then...

MEMO

When are we stopping?

He's verbalizing something Mari's been wondering herself. She shakes her head softly.

MARI

I don't know.

As if on cue, the car turns. SLOWS to a STOP.

The DOOR OPENS and then SLAMS shut. Irma's FOOTSTEPS move away from the car.

MEMO

Where's she going?

Mari HUSHES him. She's trying to listen.

There are no other sounds. For a long time. Too long.

MEMO (CONT'D)

Mari...

Panic starts to set in. Mari stays calm for another moment. But there's no explanation for the silence.

MEMO (CONT'D)

Mari, what do we do?

It's hot. Getting hotter.

Mari turns to the lid of the trunk. Starts BANGING. Memo follows suit.

Both BANG hard. But no one comes. They start to YELL.

Suddenly, the TRUNK POPS open. Irma over them, annoyed.

IRMA

What in the hell are you doing? Are you trying to get caught?

Mari looks a little sheepish.

MARI

We didn't know where you went.

Irma helps them out.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

They get their bearings. A RAMSHACKLE GAS STATION PARKING LOT. Irma indicates a structure beyond the cracked asphalt. A SMALL CONVENIENCE STORE.

IRMA

I was making sure there were no
cops in there.

She holds out TWO SWEATING WATER BOTTLES.

IRMA (CONT'D)

And I got you these.

Mari and Memo take the water. DRINK thirstily.

MEMO

Thank you.

Mari nods her thanks. Irma looks to Mari.

IRMA

It's going to be okay, child. No
one's going to hurt you anymore.

Mari processes this. Irma smiles.

IRMA (CONT'D)

You want to sit in the front?

EXT. MONTEREY - DUSK

Irma pulls the car to a stop in front of a SMALL ABANDONED FACTORY in an industrial area. She turns, all business.

IRMA

I'll need the first three now.

Mari and Memo scan the surroundings. It's desolate.

MARI

We should wait until we're at the
border.

Irma shakes her head.

IRMA

I need to pay some people off
before we leave.

Mari stares back at her. Still uneasy.

IRMA (CONT'D)

The other option is the bus station, where you can take your chances with the cops.

Mari sighs. Gives Memo a short nod. She reaches under her shirt and into the side of her BRA. Memo takes off his right SHOE. They each pull out FIFTEEN \$100-BILLS.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Trust me. This is the way it always works.

Irma collects the money. Then leans over Mari and POINTS to a DOOR in a cinder block perimeter.

IRMA (CONT'D)

That's the place.

Mari's uneasy.

MARI

You're not coming.

IRMA

(indicating the money)

I have to take care of this. I'll be back soon.

MEMO

Who do we talk to?

IRMA

They know you're coming. Go on. It's getting dark.

Memo slowly SLIDES out of the car. Waits for Mari.

MARI

When will you be back?

IRMA

Soon. Don't worry.

Mari exits.

EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo walk to the door Irma indicated. They've hardly reached it when -- Irma SPEEDS OFF.

Mari FREEZES. Irma's words about not killing them until she has the money ring through her head. Everything suddenly feels menacing.

Mari grabs Memo's arm.

MARI

Wait.

Memo stops. Looks back at her. More matter-of-fact than we've seen him up to now.

MEMO

What choice do we have? We'll get picked up on the street.

MARI

We don't know what's behind that door.

MEMO

It'll be okay. As long as we're together.

He grabs her hand. She calms a bit. The sibling dynamic momentarily reversed. They go to the door.

Memo KNOCKS. Nothing. He moves to knock again. A GRUFF VOICE sounds from the other side.

GRUFF MAN

Who is it?

MEMO

Memo. And Mari.

Silence.

MARI

Irma sent us.

Another beat. Finally, a latch clicks. The door swings open.

EXT. STASH HOUSE - FRONT COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo enter. MEN and WOMEN of varying ages pepper a small walled off courtyard. Some with desperation in their eyes. Others with danger. Beyond them, an ABANDONED FACTORY.

Gruff CLOSES the DOOR. Mari and Memo start to move past him.

GRUFF MAN

Wait.

He pulls them back. Opens their backpack.

GRUFF MAN (CONT'D)

No weapons.

MARI

We don't have--

Gruff pulls her closer. He PATS her down. It looks more like groping. He takes his time around her womanly parts.

Mari looks away. Embarrassed. A MAN with a gleaming GOLD TOOTH watches. Enjoying her shame. He smiles to himself and ELBOWS his friend - a man in a COWBOY HAT - beside him.

Cowboy Hat looks up. LOCKS his gaze on Mari. He's got a good-looking face, but there's something hard in his eyes.

Finally, Gruff takes his hands off Mari. He NODS his head approvingly as she steps away. Memo steps up for his pat down. Gruff waves him off.

GRUFF MAN

(pointing to the entrance)

Beds are in there.

Mari and Memo move toward the door. Many of the men follow them with their eyes. Mari can't tell if they want to fuck them or kill them. She grabs Memo's hand. Speeds up.

INT. STASH HOUSE - SLEEPING ROOM - LATER

A RE-PURPOSED MANUFACTURING FLOOR now serves as the sleeping quarters of this stash house. The siblings move through rows of FILTHY MATS on the floor. Desperate, hungry people seemingly fill all of them.

Mari spots an EMPTY MATTRESS. She points.

MARI

There.

Upon reaching it, she smells something. Mari lightly pushes her foot on the mattress. It emits a wet SQUISH.

They scan the debris around the room. Memo sees an old trash bag. He grabs it. Gives it to her. Mari lays it out gently, creating a plastic barrier.

MARI (CONT'D)

You take the bed. I'll sleep next to you on the floor.

Memo sits. Mari sets their bag in front of him.

MARI (CONT'D)
It's only for one night.

A WOMAN next to them lets out a cynical SNICKER. Mari regards her. The woman smiles at Mari's naïveté. Mari brushes it off.

MARI (CONT'D)
Stay close to me.

She surveys the others. Sees the despair in their eyes.

MARI (CONT'D)
And stay close to the bag.

Memo eyes the woman next to them. He leans in closer to Mari.

MEMO
(low)
She's coming back, right?

Mari stares at him. Blinks.

MARI
Of course.

Her response drips with doubt.

INT. STASH HOUSE - SLEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness has descended. The room is alive. SOUNDS and MOVEMENTS of uneasy souls in purgatory. Some sleep. Others lie awake. Still others WEEP softly.

Memo is among the sleeping. Mari among the awake. She hugs their backpack tight.

Pale MOONLIGHT illuminates the vast open room. Soft SCRATCHES of rodents sound along the walls. Figures shuffle between the makeshift beds. People in search of something in the night.

A MAN moves past the foot of the mattress. Mari studies him. The moon glow highlights his dead, SUNKEN EYES.

Mari turns. Trying to push the macabre surroundings away. She closes her eyes. The SOUNDS of the room persist.

She sighs heavily. Sits up. The people moving through the room have subsided for the moment.

Mari STANDS. She stares at her sleeping brother - equal parts envious of and happy for him. She tucks the backpack under his arm. Memo stirs briefly but quickly falls back to sleep.

She makes her way toward the back door.

EXT. STASH HOUSE - YARD - CONTINUOUS

Mari steps out into a YARD. A few dilapidated picnic tables. A modest area of dead grass. A long-forgotten break area.

She's alone. It's almost nice. She breathes in the fresh night air. The MOON SHINES down. She ponders it.

The same moon as home, yet so much has changed.

Something CREAKS. She snaps back. Alert. Surveys the surroundings. Waits a moment.

NOTHING.

Maybe it was in her head. Maybe not. She hurries to the task at hand. Walking briskly, she arrives at the far end of the yard. Moves behind a HANGING SHEET.

THREE FIVE-GALLON BUCKETS. She chooses the least full. Squats. Starts to PEE.

As she does, she hears the unmistakable sound of FOOTSTEPS on the dead grass. She STOPS. The footsteps STOP.

She hurriedly grabs a piece of nearby NEWSPAPER, wipes herself. Pulls up her pants.

Moving to the edge of the sheet, she peers out. Scans the yard.

No one's there.

Mari RUBS the key. Good luck. One more look around confirms she's alone. She STEPS out. Still nothing.

Mari moves quickly toward the back door of the stash house.

She's practically sprinting. FIFTY FEET AWAY. TWENTY.

She REACHES for the handle. Before she feels its metal, a dirty HAND comes down hard over her mouth.

Her EYES go wide in terror. She tries to call for help but the HAND muffles her CRIES.

An ARM locks itself around her waist.

The unseen assailant PULLS her to a more secluded part of the yard. The door gets further and further away.

Mari's SPUN around. Finds herself face-to-face with Cowboy Hat.

His eyes are emotionless. He brings his FACE close to hers.

COWBOY HAT

I want to take my time with you.

His detachment is chilling. TEARS roll down Mari's face.

He turns her around. Bends her over a half-wall. Pins her against it with his pelvis. His free hand pulls out a KNIFE.

He SLICES through her BELT. PULLS at her pants violently.

Mari STRUGGLES. Every ounce of her fighting him off. The full-grown man easily overpowers her.

He gets her pants down. The cool, night air hit her exposed skin. She BUCKS even harder. His buckle jangles.

Mari SCREAMS as loud as she can through his hand.

Suddenly, she feels something HOT and WET SPLASH across her back. The movement stops. The hand over her mouth goes limp.

Mari TURNS. Faces her assailant.

His face, a mask of surprise. His neck, IMPALED with a large PIECE OF SCRAP METAL.

He falls to one side, revealing IRMA.

Mari crumples into a ball. SOBS.

IRMA

We need to get out of here.

Irma pulls her to her feet. Shuffles the crying Mari away.

INT. STASH HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

A SMALL BEDROOM. Mari on the bed. Still covered in Cowboy Hat's BLOOD. Still reeling. Thumbing the key.

The door FLIES open. She looks up with a start. It's Irma. Memo in tow. Irma closes the door behind them. Props a chair under the knob.

Memo gets a look at his sister.

MEMO

Mari... Are you okay?

Before she can answer...

IRMA

She's fine.

Irma looks at Mari again. She looks terrible.

IRMA (CONT'D)

She'll be fine.

Irma rushes to a dresser. Grabs a RAG. Pours some WATER from a plastic jug on it. Starts cleaning Mari up.

IRMA (CONT'D)

You two sleep here tonight. We leave first thing in the morning.

Irma wipes the blood from Mari. She STARES off, unmoving.

MEMO

Where were you? Where did you go?

Irma indicates a couple JUGS OF WATER. A small cache of FOOD.

IRMA

Getting us supplies. And paying people off so we don't run into trouble.

Memo walks over to his sister.

MEMO

(softly)

Are you okay?

Irma, still all business, replies for her again.

IRMA

She's fine.

(to Mari)

Tell him. He's scared.

Mari comes out of her dark reverie. Looks to her brother. She musters a small NOD and half smile. A sign between siblings she's going to be okay. Memo sits next to her.

Irma rifles through their backpack. Pulls out a SHIRT. Gently hands it to Mari.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Here, put this on.

Mari takes it. Looks up at the sweet expression on Irma's face. Pure compassion.

MARI

What happened to your kids?

Irma blinks. Caught off-guard.

IRMA

Let's just get some sleep.

She moves to the dresser. Washes red out of the rag in a bucket.

MARI

Please tell me.

Irma stops. Turns to face Mari. Sighs heavily.

IRMA

I was in Arizona. Been there a few years. I was making good money. But I missed my family.

She sets the rag down. Sits next to them on the bed. She unconsciously strokes Memo's head as she speaks.

IRMA (CONT'D)

My husband and I decided it was time for him to come over with the kids. I told him who to pay. How to do it. But he went through someone his brother knew. He messaged me when they got to the border. Then nothing. For two months. I came back to find out what happened. But no one has heard from them.

She looks up to Mari and Memo.

IRMA (CONT'D)

God put you in my path. Getting you two across is my penance. My salvation.

A TEAR slips down Irma's face. Mari puts her HAND on Irma's. Two women bonded in trauma.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Now get some sleep. Morning will be here before you know it.

Memo lies in the bed. Mari changes her shirt. She looks around.

MARI

Where will you sleep?

IRMA

On the floor. I don't mind. And you need your sleep.

Mari nods her thanks. Curls up next to Memo on the bed.

A CRUCIFIX on the wall catches Irma's eye. She crosses herself. Blows out the candle. The room goes DARK.

INT. CUBE TRUCK - DAWN

SWEATY BODIES packed shoulder-to-shoulder in the cargo hold of a cube truck. Small holes permit a modicum of light. A breath or two of air.

The group jostles and sways as the vehicle navigates the rough terrain.

Mari, Memo and Irma stand by one of the truck's walls. Through a HOLE, Mari watches the DESERT LANDSCAPE slide by. It slows to a STOP.

Metallic LATCHES sound. A false panel pulled back. Blinding desert light consumes the group.

A man impatiently beckons the group to exit. Standing next to him is a young coyote, barely older than Mari. This is GALLO.

People spill out into...

EXT. OPEN DESERT - CONTINUOUS

The group is a hodge podge. A MOTHER holds her DAUGHTER's hand. The girl not much older than five. A YOUNG MAN helps his obviously PREGNANT WIFE down from the back of the truck.

Irma helps Mari and Memo down.

The group is assembled on the desert floor. Gallo gives the SIGNAL to move out.

GALLO

Com'on!

He walks in the direction of a nearby low mountain range. Irma pulls the two aside.

IRMA

Stay with me. If you fall behind,
he'll leave you. We need to stay
together.

Mari and Memo NOD. They turn. Follow the group.

The man gets back in the truck. Drives off.

The group wends through the vast, brutal desert.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Gallo emerges from a patch of greenery into a clearing. The rushing Rio Grande greets him. The group filters out of the trees in drips and drabs.

It's a relatively narrow strip of the river, but the WATER flows at a DEADLY CLIP. The group sits. A rest in order before this next perilous hurdle in the journey.

Mari slides to the edge of the group. Sits faced away from the river. Memo follows. Kneels beside her. Speaks in HUSHED TONES.

Irma clocks this. Approaches them. She catches a snippet of their conversation.

MEMO

It'll be okay...

IRMA

What's wrong?

MEMO

(protective)
She doesn't like water.

Irma regards Mari, concern in her eyes.

IRMA

There's only one way across, *mija*.

Mari puts on a brave face. Nods.

MARI

I can do it.

Irma nods.

IRMA

That's my girl.

Irma touches her head. Walks off. Memo watches Irma as she moves away from them. She talks to Gallo as he pulls TWO INNER TUBES from beneath nearby shrubs.

MEMO

Look, there are inner tubes. It'll be easy. You can just float across.

Mari looks up. Sees the inner tubes. Memo notices the conversation Irma's having with Gallo. Their faces close. Their demeanor covert. He NODS, understanding.

Gallo ties ROPES to the inner tubes. The other ends are secured to STAKES. Once done, he turns to the group.

GALLO

We'll go two at a time.

Everyone gathers at the river's edge. Gallo holds up a bunch of BLACK TRASH BAGS.

GALLO (CONT'D)

Take your clothes off. Put them in here.

He hands one inner tube to a man. The other goes to Irma.

Everyone strips to their underwear. Leaves their shoes on.

Irma starts to stuff her clothing and backpack into the plastic bag. Mari watches on - visibly concerned.

Irma reaches in her bag. Pulls something out. Beckons Mari over. Mari cautiously moves closer to the water. Irma holds the item out. It's a PILL.

IRMA

Take it.

Mari looks at her, unsure. Irma smiles.

IRMA (CONT'D)

You'll feel like you can do anything.

Mari eyes it for one moment more. Then POPS it into her mouth and SWALLOWS it back. Irma nods, satisfied. She turns back to the task at hand.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Go next. Best to get it over with.

Mari walks back to Memo. They both look on, as they do...

MEMO
What was that?

Mari shrugs.

MARI
Something to help.

Irma and the other man WADE out in the water. They're in control at first. Then the riverbed below them DROPS down precipitously. No longer on firm land, the rope PULLS taught. The CURRENT trying to push the two down river.

They STRUGGLE to stay afloat. To make any forward progress. Vigorously paddling. Frantically KICKING. They go on like this for a minute or two.

Finally, their feet catch land on the other side. They pull themselves ashore. Irma and the man pant hard. Irma SMILES across to Mari.

IRMA
(yelling)
See no problem.

Hand over hand, Gallo pulls the inner tubes back. As they return to the shore, Mari's heart begins to beat hard.

Memo helps her put her clothes and their backpack in the trash bag. He puts his own clothes in his bag.

He looks up at Mari. She looks SWEATY, panicked.

MEMO
Are you okay?

She looks at him with wide, FRANTIC EYES and nods. She's TWEAKING hard on whatever Irma gave her.

Memo hands her the bag.

MEMO (CONT'D)
Be careful.

Mari takes the bag. Gives an unnatural nod. Gallo hands her the tube. Takes in her nearly-naked body.

Mari barely notices. She grabs the tube. A middle-aged woman takes the other one. They wade into the water.

Mari sets the tube in the water. Steps into it. Holding the bag tight. She WALKS further out into the water.

The river gets DEEP. Mari YELPS as the tube rises. She tries to keep her head over the tube. But the current keeps PULLING her from below - nearly sucking her out of the tube.

Struggling against the water, her FRANTIC HEARTBEAT and the sound of the RUSHING WATER fills her ears. She kicks wildly, seemingly making no forward movement at all.

She momentarily rises above the tube. Gets a GLIMPSE of her path. Sees Irma on the other shore. The woman who waded out with her is almost there.

The CURRENT pulls Mari back down and into...

Complete DISORIENTATION. She panics. Breaths come short and labored. Her feet FLAIL. To make progress. To find land.

From the unknown space around her, she hears MEMO'S VOICE.

MEMO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Move away from my voice. Just keep
kicking away from my voice, Mari.

Mari calms a bit. Tries to gather herself. Still unable to see, she KICKS hard - away from her brother's voice.

MEMO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Good. Keep going.

Reinforced by the movement, she keeps kicking. And kicking. With the next kick, her FOOT hits LAND. She digs her toe in hard. Pulls with all her might.

Mercifully, she RISES from the water. Scrambles quickly up the bank. Her belongings hang from her side. Knuckles white from her death grip on the bag.

Irma greets her.

IRMA
That's my girl.

Mari collapses. The tubes return to the other side. She gasps hard, trying to calm down, despite the uppers.

IRMA (CONT'D)
Welcome to the United States.

Mari shoots her an exhausted smile.

Across the river, Memo ties his GLASSES to his head. He and the Young Man with the pregnant woman step into their tubes.

They wade into the water, side-by-side.

Instead of stepping into the tube, both men loop one arm onto it and hang off the side. They start to PADDLE.

Memo's making his way across easily. Back on the shore, Gallo watches him progress, slowly letting out slack on the rope.

Mari looks on, anxious.

Memo's at the ZENITH of the current. Suddenly, the rope goes completely SLACK. Did it slip from Gallo's hand? Did he release it intentionally?

Gallo REACHES for the rope, but it's too late. Memo's tube shoots sharply down the river - COLLIDING with the other tube just as Gallo gets a hold of the rope.

Both Memo and Young Man are KNOCKED FREE from their tubes.

Memo manages to GRAB onto the man's tube. The man reaches out. Tries to do the same. But the current is too strong. It's DRAGGING him away.

At the last minute, his HAND finds Memo's trash bag.

The pregnant woman CRIES out. Memo struggles to hold onto the tube. The current pulling hard. Threatening to pull both Memo and the man from the tube.

The man STARES into Memo's eyes.

YOUNG MAN
Please. Please. Pull me in.

Memo fights the current. He holds onto the tube with one hand and the bag with the other.

MEMO
I can't!
(yelling to Gallo)
Pull us back!

Gallo pulls hard, inching them slowly back to shore.

Memo sees TENSION TEARS form in the bag. It's going to give. The man sees it too.

YOUNG MAN
Please. I don't want to die!

The FEAR in the man's eyes burns into Memo.

MEMO
(yelling to shore)
Hurry!

Another man joins Gallo. They start pulling them in faster.

They're nearly back to shore when... THE BAG GIVES, splitting into pieces. Everything Memo owns - his clothes, his money - spill into the Rio Grande.

The man is SUCKED AWAY in an instant.

Memo watches, powerless. The man STRUGGLES. Yells. He can't keep his head above the water.

He goes under. And doesn't come back up.

The yelling stops. Replaced by the rushing of the river. Memo scans for any sign of the man. All that remains are ERRANT BILLS.

Memo steps back on shore.

A piercing SCREAM startles him. The pregnant woman WAILS.

GALLO

Shut up.

The woman carries on. Grief blotting out reason.

Gallo runs over to her. Slaps her hard.

GALLO (CONT'D)

I said shut up.

Her cries die down to a WHIMPER. Gallo takes in the dirty looks from the others in the group.

GALLO (CONT'D)

What?! You want *la migra* to come?

He walks back to Memo and angrily throws him the tube.

GALLO (CONT'D)

Go again.

Memo glares at him. Not moving. Gallo turns.

GALLO (CONT'D)

I said go again.

MEMO

You did that on purpose.

Gallo stares at him, menacingly.

GALLO

It slipped.

He holds out the tube.

GALLO (CONT'D)

Now go.

Memo grabs the tube and hurries into the water. Unencumbered by belongings. Driven by adrenaline and anger. He makes it to the other side quickly.

As he emerges from the water, Mari grabs him in a HUG. He whispers low to her.

MEMO

Our money...

MARI

It's okay. I still have mine.

Irma appears behind Mari. Grabs Memo's face in her hands.

IRMA

Are you okay?

MEMO

He did that on purpose.

Irma looks across the river at Gallo. He glares in return.

IRMA

Stay close. It's easier for them with less people. Life is cheap out here.

(looking back to them)

But we're safe if we're together.

Mari and Memo NOD.

EXT. RIVER - LATER

The group, now-dressed, start to move out. Irma, Mari and Memo take up the rear. Memo now in SPARE CLOTHES.

Mari stops. Looks to the other shore.

Pregnant Woman LIES PROSTRATE on the beach. Her eyes lifeless, watching the water rush by. The water that took away her lover. Her future.

Mari's transfixed. Irma notices.

IRMA

Best to put it out of your mind. If
you dwell on the dead out here,
they'll take you with them.

She puts a hand on Mari's shoulder. They turn. Walk away.
Leaving the broken woman on the beach to her fate.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The BLARING SUN hangs high. Its unobscured heat assaults the
small band as they make their way through the desert. They're
nearing an ominous wall of mountains.

Mari, Memo and Irma still bring up the rear.

REMNANTS of past groups line the path: a BACKPACK, an EMPTY
WATER BOTTLE, a DIRTY STUFFED ANIMAL. Items discarded out of
weariness, confusion or something more dire: hopelessness.

Mari stares up at the sun. Her eyes STRUGGLE to focus. Heart
THUDDING loudly in her ears. She's still feeling the effects
of the pill Irma gave her.

Memo squeezes her hand. Her bewildered eyes find him. He
holds out a gallon JUG - half full of water.

Mari brings the jug to her lips, greedily drinking.

Irma pulls them back. Watches the group continue on. The
trail leads them to a valley between two mountains. Irma
shakes her head.

IRMA

That way is no good.

MEMO

Why?

IRMA

Border patrol waits in the
lowlands. They ambush groups that
move between the mountains.

She looks to a small TRAIL leading up the mountain.

IRMA (CONT'D)

This way. It'll take a little
longer but we won't get caught.

MEMO

We should stay with the group. What
if we get lost?

Mari's processing enough of the conversation to understand what's happening.

MARI

Yeah--

Irma becomes stern.

IRMA

Do you want to get caught?

Memo shakes his head.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Then you need to listen to me. I know these roads. You won't get lost as long as you stay with me.

She watches the group walk away.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Besides. I think you're right. We can't trust Gallo.

Irma turns toward the path.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Come on.

Irma starts up the hill. Mari and Memo watch the group get further and further away. Mari TURNS. Follows after Irma.

MARI

She's gotten us this far.

Memo stares at the group for a moment more. The little girl and her mother at the rear.

The girl turns. Memo locks eyes with her. He sighs, resigned. And follows his sister up the trail.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - AFTERNOON

Three pairs of TENNIS SHOES trudge up the rough mountain TERRAIN.

Irma leads. Her PHONE vibrates. She pulls it out. Reads the MESSAGE. Shoots a quick response back. She looks back at Memo. Sees him eyeing her. She offers a warm SMILE.

Memo takes another step. He looks back. A PALE IMPRINT of his shoe remains. He pulls his foot up. The bottom of his sole, wet and slick. His shoes literally MELTING.

MEMO

Mari.

Mari looks back at him lazily. Her DAZED eyes catch Memo off-guard. She's out of it. Her shirt soaked through with SWEAT. The high has given way to dehydration. Memo's concerned.

MEMO (CONT'D)

Irma.

She turns back.

MEMO (CONT'D)

We need to stop.

Irma plods over to them, impatiently.

IRMA

What is it?

We take in the over-blown, unfocused world from Mari's POV. Irma turns to her.

IRMA (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you, *mija*?

Irma's face moves in and out of focus. As it comes into focus one last time, it takes on the form of a DEMON. Mari WINCES. Turns away frightened. Doesn't answer Irma.

Irma sees she's in a bad state. She looks at their surroundings. Shakes her head.

IRMA (CONT'D)

We can't stop here. Too exposed. There's a small group of trees at the base of this trail. We'll stop there.

Memo PROTESTS.

MEMO

Look at her! She needs to rest.

He points to the shrubs and small trees that line the trail.

MEMO (CONT'D)

This is plenty of shade.

Memo grabs Mari's hand. Leads her to a nearby BUSH.

Irma watches on annoyed. Concerned. She looks up and down the path, uneasy. Pulls out her phone. Sends off another TEXT.

Memo sits Mari in the shade. Catches Irma texting again. As he pulls the water bottle from their backpack...

MEMO (CONT'D)

Who are you texting?

Irma shoots a look at him.

IRMA

Our contact. He's going to pick us up at the highway.

(raising her eyebrows)

Unless you want to walk to Dallas.

He turns back to his sister. Helps her take a SIP. He assesses the WATER LEVEL.

MEMO

Only a small one. We still have a long way to go.

Mari leans her head back. Absorbs the relief from the heat. She seems a bit more like herself again.

MEMO (CONT'D)

Feeling a little better?

She nods. Looks at her brother, gratitude in her eyes.

MARI

I think I need to pee.

Memo laughs.

MEMO

Okay. I'll go too.

He helps her to her feet. Irma sees them. Becomes impatient.

IRMA

Where are you going?

Mari walks into the dense shrubbery. Memo starts off another direction.

MEMO

To pee.

Irma's concern turns to near-panic.

IRMA

It's not safe. We need to move.

Memo's already DISAPPEARED into the greenery.

MEMO
We'll be quick.

Irma VIBRATES with agitation.

EXT. DESERT - ROCK OUTCROPPING - SAME

Mari makes her way toward an ROCK OUTCROPPING. She nestles under its pocket of SHADE.

EXT. DESERT - CLEARING - SAME

Memo finds a small clearing. He unzips his pants. Readies to pee into a bush.

Something in it catches his eye. A HAT. Slightly sun-bleached. TATTERED from exposure. He picks it up, curious.

He flips it over. There's a HOLE through the LAKERS EMBLEM on the front. Ringed dark. Memo FINGERS the hole. His heart sinks.

He turns. Trepidatious. SCANS the area for the owner of the hat. His eyes go WIDE.

Memo RUNS back toward the path.

EXT. DESERT - ROCK OUTCROPPING - SAME

Mari is still enjoying her momentary respite in the shade. Memo's voice chimes up from behind the bushes.

MEMO (O.C.)
(harsh whisper)
Mari!

Mari looks to the direction of the voice.

MARI
Memo?

He POKES his head out. Urgent...

MEMO
Come. Quick.

EXT. DESERT - CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Mari and Memo are back at the clearing. They confront the SIGHT that frightened Memo.

Mari processes the scene.

MEMO

It's Irma's family...

Finally, we see the tableau: THREE BODIES laid out on the desert floor. A MAN, a TEENAGE BOY, a GIRL. Their hands BOUND behind their backs. Their skin LEATHERY. Dark and taut.

A few DRY BUSHES cover them. Weighed down with ROCKS. A vain attempt to conceal the bodies.

MARI

You don't know that.

Memo holds up the hat.

MEMO

I saw a picture of her son. He was wearing this hat.

Mari takes in that new information.

MARI

That doesn't mean anything.

She scours for clues. A BACKPACK's pinned under one of the bodies. She pulls at it. The body CRACKS unnaturally as the bag is loosed.

Mari rifles through it. Finds a WALLET. Flips it open. Stops at a PICTURE. Her face falls. She reels.

Memo approaches.

MEMO

What is it?

Mari scans the area, near-frantic. She stops. A bit further back, a WOMAN'S SHOE juts out from behind a rock.

Mari moves to it. Memo follows. As they get closer, the wearer comes into view.

It's a WOMAN. Her body bent over and rigid. Her pants, around her knees. A BULLET HOLE in the sun-dried skin of her head.

Memo's confused.

MEMO (CONT'D)

Who?...

Mari hands Memo the wallet.

MARI

This isn't Irma's family.

Memo looks at the photo in the wallet. It's the same father and son he saw in the picture at the house.

But now the family is complete. A young daughter. And a SMILING MOTHER. A mother now dead in the desert.

A mother who is NOT Irma.

Memo spins.

MEMO

But we were in her house. This is the boy. The father.

The weight of their current predicament crashes down on Mari. She shakes her head.

MARI

That was this family's house. Irma took us there because she knew it would be empty.

She gets close to Memo's face.

MARI (CONT'D)

She knew because she's the one who brought them out here.

Mari and Memo stare at the dead woman - process the implications. Memo asks the obvious...

MEMO

What do we do now?

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - SAME

Irma waits impatiently. Her phone RINGS. She picks it up.

IRMA

What?

INT. POLICE TRUCK - SAME

On the other end, OFFICER CORTEZ in his police truck.

OFFICER CORTEZ

I want my cut for the two I corralled your way yesterday.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - INTERCUT

Irma eyes the bushes.

IRMA

You'll get your cut when it's done.

OFFICER CORTEZ (O.S.)

Don't fuck me here.

Irma grows annoyed.

IRMA

You know I'm good for it. I have to go.

She hangs up ABRUPTLY.

Irma quickly replaces the phone as she hears the pair return.

Mari and Memo emerge. Doing their best to look normal. Irma senses the change in them.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Everything okay?

Memo is frozen. Mari sees this. Tries to cover.

MARI

Memo had to poop.

Memo offers a soft NOD to confirm that fact. Irma's eyes squint in skepticism. She turns back toward the trail.

IRMA

Let's go.

The three re-embark on their journey. Irma takes the lead. Mari and Memo trail behind. A cautious distance.

Irma pulls her phone. Shoots off a quick text.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE TRAIL - LATER

The sun has slipped a bit. But is no less oppressive. Irma moves at a good clip.

Mari and Memo watch her. Who is this woman they're with? How do they get out of this desert alive? Irma feels their stares. TURNS back to them.

IRMA

You need to stay close. These trails are tricky.

Mari and Memo NOD.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Why don't you take a quick rest?
I'm going to make a call.

The pair sit on a nearby rock. Irma continues up the path another couple hundred feet to...

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE TRAIL - LEDGE - CONTINUOUS

A PRECIPITOUS LEDGE. She pulls out her phone. DIALS.

Memo speaks low to his sister.

MEMO

Let's push her.

Mari eyes Irma. The ledge. The drop. She SHAKES her head.

MARI

She could pull us over. Plus, we need the phone.
(off his confused look)
The map.

The person on the other end of the line answers. Mari and Memo watch. Too far to hear anything.

Irma eyes the two. Then moves around the bend for even more privacy.

Mari motions for Memo to be quiet. She RISES. Noiselessly creeps to the bend. Tries to stay out of sight.

This close, she can make out SNIPPETS of Irma's conversation.

IRMA

...they're suspicious.
...get the girl. Kill...
...okay, see you soon.

She hangs up. Mari spins around. Darts back to Memo.

Irma TURNS sharply. Did she hear Mari?

She waits for a moment, listening. It's quiet. She sighs. Equal parts annoyed and tired.

She turns the bend. STOPS short. Mari and Memo are GONE.

Irma's guard goes up.

IRMA (CONT'D)
Mari? ... Memo?

She stops. Listens. Nothing.

Irma doesn't like this. She shakes her head. Turns. Starts RUNNING down the mountain. Pulls out her phone.

IRMA (CONT'D)
Get up here. Quick.

EXT. MOUTH OF MOUNTAIN TRAIL - SAME

On the other end of the call, we find PANCHO, a mustached-man in his forties. He dons a crisp western-style shirt and cowboy boots. He angrily HANGS UP the call.

PANCHO
Fuck.

JAVI, a cartel soldier in equally dapper attire idles next to a truck. He notices Pancho's agitation.

JAVI
What is it?

Pancho looks up into the hills.

PANCHO
Something's wrong.

He pulls his PISTOL from its holster. Starts up the trail.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
Come on.

Javi grabs his ASSAULT RIFLE. Follows.

EXT. BEND IN MOUNTAIN TRAIL - SAME

Maria and Memo sneak around a bend of the trail. Mari stops short. Pulls Memo down behind a rock.

MARI
It's them.

Further down the mountain, Irma convenes with Pancho and Javi.

She pulls at his arm. Memo doesn't budge.

MARI (CONT'D)

They have guns. Let's go back.

MEMO

They'll follow us. We don't know where we're going. If they don't kill us, the desert will.

Mari sighs. He has a point. Something catches her eye.

MARI

Look.

She points to an OFFSHOOT TRAIL just beyond Irma and Pancho.

MARI (CONT'D)

If we get there, we can go around. Get to the bottom that way.

MEMO

How do we get over there?

Mari and Memo watch as the group below splits up. Irma and Pancho head up the hill. Javi lingers behind.

Mari has an idea. Grabbing her brother's hand...

MARI

Come on.

EXT. WILD DESERT - CONTINUOUS

She pulls him across the trail and into the WILD BUSHES.

MARI

Stay low.

They get on all fours and CRAWL along the desert floor, obscured by the shrubbery.

On the trail, Irma and Pancho make their way up the hill. They don't notice as Mari and Memo slowly crawl past them.

EXT. BEND IN MOUNTAIN TRAIL - SAME

Irma and Pancho arrive at bend where she last saw Mari and Memo. Irma slows.

IRMA

This is the place.

Pancho hands her a SMALL PISTOL from his boot.

IRMA (CONT'D)

The girl has the money. Kill the boy. Try not to hurt her. We'll get less for her if she's beat up.

Pancho nods. Gets in front. Leads with his gun. They start their search.

EXT. WILD DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Mari and Memo stop. Mari gets low. Looks between the foliage.

She can make out the ENTRANCE of the smaller trail. Only about a hundred feet away. But they need to go across the main trail, which will leave them briefly exposed.

Mari whispers, low.

MARI

Do you see the other one?

They strain to see through the shrubs. Memo shakes his head.

MARI (CONT'D)

Okay, let's run for it. Stay low.

Memo nods. They RISE to their feet - still bent over.

MARI (CONT'D)

Ready?

Memo looks nervous. But nods.

MARI (CONT'D)

Go!

They stay low. Make a BREAK for it. It's an awkward sprint.

The trail entrance sits invitingly ahead of them. Shrubs still hiding them.

Their target is close. FIFTY FEET. Then TWENTY FIVE. The only distance left is crossing the exposed main trail.

Rather than slowing, Mari pushes harder. RUNS even faster. Memo takes her cue. Follows suit.

They gun it for the entrance and...

EXT. MAIN TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

BURST onto the main trail - COLLIDING DIRECTLY INTO JAVI.

All three tumble to the ground. Javi's GUN lands nearby.

Javi looks up at Mari and Memo. Realizes what he's seeing. His EYES move to his gun. Mari and Memo see it too.

Javi and Memo LUNGE for the gun.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE TRAIL - SAME

Irma and Pancho continue their search. From the expanse, comes the soft CRACK of two bullets.

Pancho looks up, concerned. He pulls a WALKIE off his belt.

PANCHO

Javi, what's going on down there?

EXT. MAIN TRAIL - SAME

Mari, Memo and Javi stare at one another, stunned. Javi holds his chest. BLOOD haloes his hand.

Memo stares at the gun in his hand. A mix of awe and horror.

Javi falls. FADES quickly. His walkie crackles to life.

PANCHO (O.C.)

(via the walkie)

Did you get them?

Mari grabs Memo's hand. Snaps him out of it.

MARI

Come on. We've got to move.

She pulls him toward the smaller trail. Memo resists. He points to the placement of the body. Then the trail.

MEMO

When they see him here, they'll know where we went.

Mari stops.

MEMO (CONT'D)

We need to split up.

MARI

No! We stay together.

MEMO

We have to!

(re: the small trail)

You get down that way.

(pointing back at the shrubs)

I'll go this way. Try to pull them away. I can lose them in the bushes.

He looks out into the desert. Points to a TREE.

MEMO (CONT'D)

We'll meet there.

Mari shakes her head. The walkie on Javi's belt CRACKLES.

PANCHO (O.C.)

(via the walkie)

We're coming down.

MARI

What if they get one of us?

MEMO

Then the other one keeps going.

(adding, sadly)

Better one than none.

Mari doesn't like this plan. But she can't think of a better one.

MARI

At least take the gun.

Memo nods. Loops the RIFLE on one shoulder. The BACKPACK on the other. They HUG. Then go their separate ways.

Mari momentary stops and watches her brother DISAPPEAR into the shrubs. Is this the last time she's going to see him?

Perhaps.

She fingers her key. Turns. Moves out.

EXT. OFFSHOOT TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Mari makes her way down the treacherous terrain. The path waxes and wanes. Seems to disappear at points. Fear keeps her pace steady.

EXT. MAIN TRAIL - SAME

Pancho and Irma jog down the trail. Spot something up ahead: Javi's lifeless body.

They reach him. See the wounds.

IRMA

Dios...

Irma PORES over the murder scene, analyzing. Pancho spots the entrance to the smaller trail.

PANCHO

Look.

He starts for the path. Irma stops him with a wave of her hand. She examines the footprints on the ground.

IRMA

Clever little shits.

(re: the footprints)

They split up. I'll go this way.

You head that way.

Irma takes the smaller path. Pancho heads into the shrubs.

EXT. WILD DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Pancho PLODS through the brush. GUN drawn.

Memo hides deeper in the thicket of desert plants. He hears Pancho. He's close. Memo's mind races with options.

Pancho continues scouring. A BRANCH BREAKS to his right.

He stops. Moves over the area. Nothing. He looks around, confused.

Pancho's quiet. He waits. Behind him, another BUSH is disturbed.

He runs over. His eyes search wildly. He stops. Bends down. Rises. A LARGE ROCK in his hand.

Pancho looks around. He doesn't appreciate being fucked with.

EXT. OFFSHOOT TRAIL - LEDGE - SAME

Mari continues at a good clip. Suddenly, the trail DEAD-ENDS. A fifteen foot DROP.

She scans the area. Searching for any sign of a way down.

Behind her, rocks tumble. Irma on the hunt. She can't see Mari yet. But it's only a matter of seconds.

There's nowhere to hide. Mari takes a deep breath.

EXT. OFFSHOOT TRAIL - SAME

Irma makes her way around the bend. Arrives at the dead-end. The steep drop. She looks for a way down

A PEBBLE falls from the shelf of rock above her. She looks up. Mari holds a SOFTBALL-SIZED ROCK.

IRMA
You little cunt.

Mari LOBS the rock at her head. Irma DUCKS.

The rock misses its target, GRAZING Irma's shoulder instead.

Irma takes a SHOT at Mari. She LUNGES to avoid it. Loses her footing. SLIDES on the gravel. SLIPS down the hill. STOPS at Irma's feet.

Irma smirks. Points the gun. Mari grabs a handful of GRAVEL. FLINGS it at Irma's face. Irma DEFLECTS. Turns.

Mari jumps up. Throws herself on Irma. The two go down. The gun FLIES out of Irma's hand. Lands far from them.

Mari sees the SOFTBALL-SIZED ROCK. REACHES to grab it.

Her fingers latch onto it. She brings it down HARD on the side of Irma's HEAD.

Irma CRIES out in pain.

In her struggle to grab the rock, Mari lost her leverage on Irma's body. Irma PUSHES her off. RISES.

She touches her head. BLOOD. She looks to Mari. Angry. Annoyed.

IRMA (CONT'D)
I'm going to kill you for that.

She CHARGES at Mari. BATS the rock away. Takes her down. Starts beating her mercilessly.

Mari's no match for the large, angry woman.

The beating SUBDUES Mari. Irma rises. DRAGS Mari toward the edge by her leg.

Mari FLAILS. They're almost to the ledge. Mari KICKS the back of Irma's legs with her free foot. Irma's knees GIVE out.

Mari's hand find a ROCK. POUNCES on Irma.

The rock is high over her head. She brings it down on HARD onto Irma's face. She does it AGAIN. And AGAIN.

Mari stops. Irma's face, a PULPY MESS. An odd, creepy smile forms. Irma's out of it, but manages to say...

IRMA (CONT'D)
You're already dead.

She GURGLES. Chokes on her own BLOOD.

Mari BASHES the rock against Irma's head again. She continues until the only sound is the WET impact of the rock.

Finally, she stops. Takes in the gory mess of flesh and bone that used to be Irma's face.

She rises. RETCHES.

Mari gathers herself. Pulls Irma's phone from her pocket.

Irma GASPS eerily. Could just be air escaping.

Mari's not taking any chances. She rolls Irma's body to the ledge. PUSHES it over.

Irma's dead weight THUDS against the desert floor.

EXT. WILD DESERT - SAME

Memo gets to the EDGE of the overgrowth. Beyond him, PANCHO'S TRUCK. And flat desert.

No sign of Pancho.

Memo sees their meeting point in the distant. He rises. Scans the area. Nothing.

He RUNS for it.

He's fast. The distant tree gets closer with each step. In seconds, he's past the truck.

A SHOT rings out. The bullet slices through his backpack and into his arm. Pink mist EXPLODES from Memo's shoulder.

He cries out in pain. Falls. Grabs at the wound. His RIFLE lands nearby.

Pancho steps out from behind the truck.

Memo reaches for the rifle. Pancho fires a SHOT into the ground next to him.

PANCHO
Don't move.

Memo FREEZES.

Pancho saunters over. KICKS the rifle away. LOOMS. Trains the gun on Memo.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
The other one?

Memo stares back at him, defiant. Pancho nods, understanding.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
That's the way you want it...

Memo closes his eyes. Readies himself for death.

A pair of SHOTS ring out. Memo doesn't feel anything. He opens his eyes, confused.

Pancho drops the gun. A red-rimmed EXIT WOUND mars his chest.

Memo looks beyond Pancho. Mari's there. IRMA'S GUN in hand.

MARI
Come on!

Pancho falls. Blood leaks from his mouth.

Memo rises. Runs to Mari. She clocks his bloody arm.

MARI (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

He nods. They run into the expanse. Not looking back.

EXT. DESERT - TREE - AFTERNOON

Mari and Memo COLLAPSE into the shade.

Memo pulls the backpack off. As he does, he notices with alarm that it's WET. He frantically opens it.

MEMO

No, no.

He pulls out the water jug. It's been SHOT. There's barely any water left.

Mari's face melts in horror. She CRAWLS over. Takes the jug from Memo. Examines it.

So little left. A jug full of the specter of death now.

Memo jumps to his feet. Kicks the backpack. Lets out a guttural YELL. The rage and frustration of the last few days spill out.

Mari holds her head in her hands. Contemplating a thirsty death in the desert.

Rage expelled, Memo's now on his knees. He stares off into space. Despondent. Finally, puts it into words...

MEMO (CONT'D)

We're gonna die out here.

Mari knows they won't survive if they lose hope. She tries to pull herself together.

MARI

We drink this now. And rest. Then we'll move. As fast as we can. We can't be that far. We're already over the border.

Memo looks at her, incredulous.

MARI (CONT'D)

Memo, we don't have a choice. Do you want to die out here?

Memo silently stares back at her.

MARI (CONT'D)

Because I don't. We'll be fine. We just need to make it to a road.

Memo looks to his hands, still despondent.

Mari holds out the water.

MARI (CONT'D)

Here. You drink first.

Memo SHAKES his head.

MEMO

You first.

She takes the jug, opens it. TIPS it to her mouth, avoiding the bullet holes. Takes a small swig, about half.

Memo does the same. He takes in the empty, useless bottle. Gives a sad sigh. Then TOSSES it into the desert.

A hot wind takes it. Pushing the jug off into oblivion.

EXT. DESERT LOWLANDS - LATE-AFTERNOON

Mountains have given way to soft flat land. It's barren. Desolate. The low sun casts a SURREAL ORANGE HUE over the landscape. It's nightmarish.

Mari and Memo look terrible. CHAPPED lips. PINK skin. Covered in sweat, dirt, dry blood. The lack of water is taking its toll. They're woozy. Out of it.

Memo's in the lead. He pulls out the phone to check their location. The screen is BLACK. An ERROR MESSAGE informs the phone is too hot to use.

Memo looks at it. Confused. He TRIPS on something. FALLS.

Mari hurries - as much as she can in her state - to his side. When she gets to him, he's looking back to the spot where he tripped. He STARES, mesmerized.

Mari's worried.

MARI

Are you okay?

Memo doesn't respond. He just keeps staring.

Mari turns. Sees what he's looking at. She GASPS.

Behind a rock is the CORPSE of a YOUNG WOMAN. Skin dry, tight. Dark. One hand wrapped around her BELLY. Even in her current state, it's clear she was PREGNANT.

The area around her mouth is MUTILATED. The SAGUARO next to her tells the rest of the tale.

Bloody BITE MARKS mar the trunk of the cactus. Signs of the desperate woman's attempts to get to the water she believed to be inside.

Mari TURNS her head away. Memo notices her reaction.

MEMO
You see it too?

MARI
Of course.

Memo looks back to the sight.

MEMO
I wasn't sure if it was real.

Mari stands. Reaches out her hand to her brother.

MARI
Come on.

Memo is still entranced.

MEMO
Do you think it's worth it?

MARI
(confused)
What?

MEMO
Anything. Do you think anything is
worth this?

Mari considers the question.

MARI
Why would so many people go if it
weren't?

Memo continues to stare at the woman, unconvinced. She reaches her hand out again.

MARI (CONT'D)
Come on. Let's find a place to rest
until the sun goes down.

Memo NODS. He takes her hand and gets up.

They begin their zombie-like trek again.

EXT. DESERT HILL - NIGHT

The sun is gone. But the desert still RADIATES heat. The land has morphed yet again. The terrain HILLY, tree-filled.

The pair continue their slog. Propelled by pure survival.

They slowly push up a sandy hill. As they crest it, Mari sees something in the distance. She stops moving. Memo does too.

MEMO

What's wrong?

Mari starts to smile.

MARI

Look.

He does.

Off in the distance, SMALL MOVING LIGHTS dot the horizon.

MARI (CONT'D)

A highway.

Memo smiles. He plops down in the sand. Mari does the same.

Memo stares at the highway happily. He chuckles.

MEMO

We did it.

Mari smiles. Nods.

MARI

We did it.

They hug.

The two lie back on the soft sand. Resting before this last jubilant leg of their journey. Memo pulls his GLASSES off. Stares into the inky night.

Mari sits up. Hears something. MUSIC. Classic rock wafting through the desert air. Getting louder.

Memo sits up too.

MEMO

What is that?

About a 100 yards away, a TRUCK turns out into view. Bright lights. Big grill. Loud music.

Mari and Memo SCRAMBLE to the cover of the bushes. Memo forgetting his glasses in the hurry.

The truck speeds over the terrain. Heads right for them.

Memo realizes. Touches his face.

MEMO (CONT'D)

My glasses...

The truck is close. Too risky to go back for them.

MARI

(whispering)

Maybe they'll pass.

Memo shoots her a world-weary look.

MEMO

They never pass, Mari.

Memo's right. The truck slows. Two people inside. BILL and BOB (both late-30s). Bob is plump. Drives. Bill's wiry frame sits shotgun. Both men wear TACTICAL GEAR over civilian clothes.

Bill consults a DEVICE. He yells to Bob over the music.

BILL

Stop, stop! It's right here.

Bob complies. Brings the truck to a HALT right in front of Memo and Mari.

Bill hops out excited. Starts searching the area.

BILL (CONT'D)

Sensor hit right around here.

Bob stands on the ledge of the drivers side. Watches Bill over the cab.

BOB

I'm tellin' you, it's gonna be another jackrabbit.

BILL

You don't know that. Hit me with that light so I can see.

Bob reaches over to the large LIGHT attached to the roof of the cab. He flips it on. Spins it to face the search area.

The bright lamp startles Mari and Memo. Light blasts the bushes. Dappling their faces. They crouch even lower.

Bill inspects. Steps on something. CRUNCH. Memo's glasses.

Memo and Mari's hearts sink.

BILL (CONT'D)

That's no fucking jackrabbit. Bring me my gun.

Bob reluctantly obeys. As he grabs the GUN from the cab...

BOB

Probably already ran off.

Bill takes the gun from Bob.

BILL

May be. But, if they're here, we're gonna find 'em.

Mari and Memo can't understand anything the pair say. But seeing Bill examine their footprints and then asking for a gun tells them everything they need to know.

Mari MOTIONS to Memo. She points back the way they came. Advocating they make a run for it. Memo SHAKES his head.

MEMO

(barely a whisper)
They'll shoot.

Bill addresses the surrounding bushes and trees.

BILL

All right, amigos. If you're out there, make yourselves known.

Memo looks to Mari. Get any of that? Mari shrugs.

BILL (CONT'D)

Don't make me do this the hard way.
(off the silence)
Okay, have it your way.

Bill props the gun up on his hip. He SPRAYS a fan of BULLETS into the trees and bushes.

Mari and Memo lay flat on the ground. BULLETS whizz by their heads as the shooting path comes over them.

He STOPS. Bob's annoyed.

BOB

You're gonna kill someone.

BILL

No better motivation to do the right thing than a bullet.

Mari has seen enough. She SITS up. Grabs the backpack.

MARI
(barely audible)
Come on.

She starts to get to her feet. Memo pulls her sleeve. He SHAKES his head. His face more serious than she's ever seen.

MARI (CONT'D)
We have to.

MEMO
Stay.

He starts to get up. Mari PANICS.

MARI
What are you doing?

Memo looks back to his sister.

MEMO
I can't see. We can't outrun them.
(resigned)
Better one than none.

Mari shakes her head furiously.

MARI
No. No.

She holds his arm tight.

Beyond the trees, Bill issues a threat.

BILL (O.C.)
Get ready for another round.
(heavily accented Spanish)
Otra. Vez.

Memo puts a hand over his sister's. NODS lovingly.

MEMO
I wanted to protect you. Now I can.
Make a good life. Then find me.

Mari is CRYING. Shaking her head vigorously.

MEMO (CONT'D)
I love you.

And with that, he steps out.

Bill gets ready to fire again. Memo EMERGES. Hand shielding his eyes.

Bob's eyebrows go up in surprise.

BOB
Well, shit...

BILL
What'd I tell you!

He moves in to detain Memo.

Mari covers her mouth. SOBS. WHITE KNUCKLES her key.

BILL (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Come on, help me load him in the truck.

Mari peers through the bushes. They ZIP-TIE Memo's hands. Lead him to the truck. Haul him into the back, facing out.

Bill and Bob get in.

Mari watches Memo. Shaking her head. Crying. Memo is stoic. A far-cry from the little boy that left home.

He STARES at the bush hiding Mari. Memo can't see her, but he knows she's there looking back at him.

The truck pulls away. Mari watches helpless as her brother is taken from her.

Memo maintains his stare as the INKY NIGHT consumes him.

Finally alone, Mari SOBS OPENLY.

EXT. ESCONDIDO MOTEL - NIGHT

A SHITTY SINGLE-LEVEL MOTEL on the outskirts of civilization.

Beyond the glow of the hotel's fluorescents, PITCH BLACK.

Gradually, a figure comes into view from the darkness. It's Mari. She walks wearily to the building. Her eyes drift to a point of interest.

A bright VENDING MACHINE. She slips a dollar in. Examines the options. COKE.

She opens the can. Guzzles it down.

Mari limps to the side of the building. RESTS her head against the warm brick wall.

She's exhausted in every way a human can be. Her eyes close. She slips off to SLEEP.

EXT. ESCONDIDO MOTEL - MORNING

Mari sleeps, face still pressed against the building. The SUN HIGH. Sounds of the motel's normal operations fill the air.

Someone SHAKES her awake.

Mari BLINKS her eyes open. Orienting to the space. Waking up again to the nightmare that is her reality. She looks up to the person rousing her.

LUPE (30s) a rotund, kind-faced Mexican. Sporting a pink MAID'S UNIFORM.

LUPE
You okay, *mija*?

Mari hurriedly grabs her backpack.

MARI
I'm sorry. I fell asleep.

She pushes to her feet. Casts a frightened look over her shoulder as she walks away. Lupe takes in the sad sight. This dirty, battered girl all alone.

LUPE
Wait.

INT. ESCONDIDO MOTEL - ROOM - LATER

Lupe sits on one of the TWIN BEDS in the DINGY MOTEL ROOM. Mari emerges from the bathroom, freshly-showered.

MARI
Thank you.
(indicating her clothes)
And for this.

LUPE
(with a shrug)
Lost and found.

She sits on the bed opposite Lupe.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Do you have people here?

Mari SHAKES her head.

LUPE (CONT'D)
A place to stay?

Mari shakes her head again.

LUPE (CONT'D)
You're gonna need a job.

She gets up. Mari looks up at her with inquiring eyes.

LUPE (CONT'D)
I might know someone who can help.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

A stark, fluorescent-filled hallway. Through a glass picture window, we see a cleaned up Mari talking to a WHITE MANAGER. Her clothes are different. It's unclear how much time has passed.

We can't hear their conversation. But it ends with him NODDING his head.

The manager pulls out a white, folded UNIFORM. Mari takes it.

They head for the door. Their conversation becomes audible as they approach the hall.

MANAGER
...don't have papers, so the pay is
\$7 and hour. Okay?

He watches for signs of protest.

She NODS her head, grateful.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Good. Get dressed.

INT. SLAUGHTHOUSE - BATHROOM - LATER

Mari closes the stall door. Locks it.

She pulls out a CHEAP BURNER. Opens Facebook messenger to a conversation with Memo. She scrolls through multiple messages she's sent to him.

All still UNREAD.

She sighs. Puts the phone back in her pocket. Starts to pull the white uniform over her clothes.

Int. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - killing floor - later

The manager leads Mari, now in a white bunny suit, to the killing floor.

It's large. High ceilings. Concrete floors. Everything else metal. METAL and covered in BLOOD.

Large, stunned cows swing in upside down on a conveyer. A worker stabs a large knife into the chest of the cow.

Blood spurts out.

Another worker moves in with a vat on wheels. Collects the blood. It's messy, ugly work.

The manager calls to the worker who stuck the cow.

MANAGER

Rodrigo!

He beckons him over. RODRIGO (50s) complies. He's a grizzled, hardened veteran.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Need you to show... Maria?

He looks to Mari. Questioning.

MARI

Mari.

MANAGER

Right. Show her around. I want her on blood collection.

Rodrigo's not enthusiastic about the task but responds...

RODRIGO

No problem, boss.

MANAGER

Great. Thanks.

Manager leaves. Doesn't regard Mari further.

Rodrigo leads Mari to the main killing area. Another COW comes around.

RODRIGO
(re: the vats)
Go grab one. Have it ready.

Mari does as she's told.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
When I stick it, wheel that in.
Quicker the better. Blood is money.
Then lid it and get another.

Rodrigo readies the KNIFE.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
Ready?

Mari NODS.

He STICKS the cow. Mari moves in behind him. Blood SPURTS out in rooster tails. Covers Mari. Her white uniform.

Rodrigo LAUGHS.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
Beats the processing line.

He holds up his hands. THREE FINGERS MISSING.

Mari notices her KEY is poking out. She tries to shove it back inside her uniform. It's hard with bloody fingers.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)
What's that a key to?

Mari watches the blood collect. She sees her own red reflection shimmering back at her. Thinks of all she lost.

MARI
(sad, weary)
Nothing.

He recognizes the pain in her eyes. Nods. But there's a job to do...

RODRIGO (O.C.)
All right, that one's done. Grab
the next.

Mari considers BLOODY REFLECTION for one beat longer. Then slams a lid on the vat. Casting her reflection -- and us -- into DARKNESS.

THE END