

A BAD MAN

By

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SOMEWHERE IN THE JUNGLES OF MEXICO (DREAM/FLASHBACK)

EXT. RANCH STYLE HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is larger, more sprawling than you're average Ranch Style house. It's two levels, the top floor having a balcony that overlooks the courtyard and grounds.

TWO MEN WITH GUNS can be seen on the balcony.

FOUR MEN WITH GUNS patrol the grounds.

The GUARD HOUSE is located just off to the side. A GUARD sits right outside of the door.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

A SPEC OPS TEAM - made up of FIVE MEMBERS - are observing all of this from their position. They're dressed in black from head to toe and geared up for war.

ARMANDO

LIEUTENANT

I got seven altogether. Armando,
Miguel.

As soon as they hear their names, ARMANDO and MIGUEL move forward.

LIEUTENANT (cont'd)

(to the both of them)

You know what to do.

A nod from the both of them.

EXT. RANCH STYLE HOUSE - GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

Armando and Miguel get to the side of the house. With Miguel's help, Armando gets started up to the balcony.

EXT. RANCH STYLE HOUSE - BALCONY - NIGHT

The GUARD turns the corner and Armando grabs him.

In a matter of seconds, Armando has gutted the guard with more than a dozen strikes of his knife.

He lays his victim's body down and hears another set of footsteps coming towards him.

The GUARD AT THE OTHER END OF THE BALCONY is walking towards Armando's position...

...and then drops dead as Armando's knife flies straight into his throat.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Armando keeps low to the wall. He sees a light and hears the sound of a TV coming from the room up ahead.

But then he hears a noise from behind him.

He turns...

...sees another GUARD raising his weapon...

...and then Miguel comes up from behind and puts the guard down nice and quiet.

Miguel gives Armando a smirk and Armando nods back at him in return before heading back towards the room.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Armando approaches from behind, his target's head and neck exposed as he watches TV.

Suddenly, a GUARD enters the room from another door.

He sees Armando, yells out a warning and starts blasting at him.

Armando's target hits the ground for cover.

A SECOND GUARD runs in guns blazing at Armando.

Armando barely gets back into the hallway as he returns fire.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Armando and Miguel are firing back into the room when yet ANOTHER GUARD appears from behind them.

Miguel kills him, turns back to Armando and shoots him a look.

Armando pulls the pin and tosses a grenade into the room.

There's a blast...

CUT TO:

INT. ARMANDO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY (END FLASHBACK)

The alarm clock goes off and ARMANDO opens his eyes.

Armando is Mexican and in his early forties. Average in build and height, if you were to see him on the street you would pass him without batting an eye.

The apartment is sparse and clean: a bed, an armchair and a dining table with four chairs. Across from the armchair is a side table with a TV on it.

Seeing the time, Armando gets up and...

...gets a tea kettle going.

...makes up the bed.

...makes himself some instant coffee.

...drops an ice cube in the coffee as he heads for the bathroom.

INT. ARMANDO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Armando is in the shower. After he finishes brushing his teeth, Armando starts washing himself starting from the top.

INT. ARMANDO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Armando gives the sheets another quick pull making sure that they're nice and tight.

He sticks a finger into the coffee and then downs it in one shot.

As he heads for the door with the laundry cart, he hears voices and laughter coming from the hallway.

He stops and waits until the people have gone before exiting the apartment.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Armando sees a car coming coming down the street towards him. The car stops and waits for Armando to cross before moving on.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Armando holds a quarter over each slot and pushes them in simultaneously. The machines start at the same time and he heads for the exit.

As he passes her, the OLD WOMAN working behind the counter calls out to him.

OLD WOMAN
Running a little late today, huh?

ARMANDO
Not really.

She looks like she wants to say something else but he's already out the door.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

It's packed with MOTHERS and their KIDS, COLLEGE KIDS on laptops and BUSINESSMEN doing big business things.

Armando spots two empty armchairs with a side table separating them.

As he nears it, Armando sees a small cup of coffee sitting on the table. He takes a second and then chooses a seat.

As he pulls out a book from his bag, a WOMAN squeezes by him and takes the other seat.

WOMAN
(to Armando)
Hi.

ARMANDO
Hi.

WOMAN
(she reaches for the coffee)
Sorry.

The Armando smiles but barely looks at her.

Another table suddenly opens up near Armando. He reaches for his bag as he gets ready to move when a HIPPIY LOOKING GUY walks in and grabs it.

The Hippy smiles at Armando and the woman.

(CONTINUED)

HIPPY
How are you two doing today?

WOMAN
Fine thank you.

ARMANDO
Good thanks.

WOMAN
(to Hippy)
How are you today?

HIPPY
So far so good.
(to Armando)
Excuse me. If you don't mind my
asking but where are you from?

ARMANDO
Queens.

HIPPY
No, I mean originally.

ARMANDO
Mexico.

HIPPY
That's what I thought.

The hippy extends a hand to him and Armando gives him a firm handshake in return.

HIPPY (cont'd)
That's a helluva grip you got
there, amigo.

Armando gives another small smile but doesn't look at over.

WOMAN
(leaning over to Armando)
That's unusual to see, that kind of
friendliness. It's nice.

Another smile from him but still no eye contact.

HIPPY
My best friend's Mexican.

Armando stops pretending now and says nothing as he goes back to his book.

The woman and hippy shift uncomfortably in their chairs.

(CONTINUED)

The woman finishes her drink, gets up and on her way to the door, throws her cup away.

Only then does Armando look up.

The woman is in her late 20s, maybe early 30s. She's pretty but it's a natural kind of beauty; she's not hiding behind any makeup or accessories.

Armando watches as she walks out the door, past the large windows and disappears from view.

Armando leans back into his chair, waiting a few seconds before going back to his book.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Armando pulls over the separated stack of shirts and begins folding each one into a neat square.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Armando sees the BMW barreling towards him but he steps out into the crosswalk anyway.

The car comes to a screeching stop just a few feet away from him but Armando doesn't seem bothered.

As he continues crossing, the DRIVER of the car rolls down his window.

DRIVER

Hey, asshole! Stay on the sidewalk
where you belong!

Armando stops in his tracks.

He starts to turn towards the driver...

...but then stops.

He faces forward again and...

DRIVER

I'm fuckin' talking to you!

But Armando does nothing, says nothing.

The driver steps on the gas and Armando goes on his way.

INT. ARMANDO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Armando puts away the last of the clothes and takes a look at the clock.

He grabs his gym bag and looks over at the answering machine but there are no messages.

He walks out the door and pulls the door behind him.

INT. GYM - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Armando slams the door closed, checks the lock and grabs a towel on his way out.

INT. GYM - FLOOR - DAY

Armando is butt down on the mat and his legs out in front of him.

He looks up and catches himself in the mirror.

He puts his head back down and reaches for his toes.

CUT TO:

Armando is seated as he does his bicep curls with light dumbbells, his breath slow and steady.

INT. GYM - SWIMMING POOL - DAY

He's not going to be competing in the 100 meter any time soon but Armando's technique is smooth and practiced as he makes his way across the pool.

He touches the wall, hits the turn and heads back to the other side.

INT. GYM - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Back in his street clothes, Armando checks the lock on the door and then heads for the exit. He throws his towel into a container on his way out.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Armando takes a look over at the drunk on the other side of the car and then goes back to his book.

INT. ARMANDO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Armando gives the pasta and vegetables a good toss and then pours it into a waiting bowl.

He sits at the table as he eats.

Holding a glass under the open tap water, all he gets is loud gurgling noises coming from the pipes.

He gives what's left of the orange juice a shake and then puts the carton back in the fridge.

On his way to the bathroom, he sees the light blinking on the answering machine and he hits the PLAY button.

CHEF (OS)

Armando, I need you to come in tonight. Santos didn't show, he got burned or some bullshit.

Armando deletes the message and continues towards the bathroom.

INT. ARMANDO'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Armando finishes drinking from his glass of water, turns off the tap and walks out.

INT. RESTAURANT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Armando walks in to find MICHAEL almost finished changing.

Michael is in his 20s and Slovakian. He's tall, good looking and dresses the part.

MICHAEL

Armando! How are you, primo?

ARMANDO

Good. How are you?

MICHAEL

Doing better now that I'm getting out of here. Aren't you off today?

ARMANDO

Chef asked me to come in.

MICHAEL

He asked you, huh? Well, have fun tonight. You have one-fifty on the books.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

Great.

MICHAEL

At least you don't have to work
with that asshole Claudio. That's
always a good thing.

Michael takes a last look at his pretty face in the mirror
on the inside of his door before slamming it closed.

ARMANDO

So what are you doing tonight?

MICHAEL

Hopefully a very good looking
woman.

They both laugh at this as Michael heads for the door.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

And remember, Armando: 'trés
soigné'.

Another shared laugh and Armando goes back to changing his
clothes as Michael leaves the room.

INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The place is hectic with people and action; in other words
it's your typical kitchen.

The CHEF is at the pass. He's young - late 20s - white and
American.

He finishes wiping a plate rim, turns to hand it off to a
waiting server and nearly crashes into the DISHWASHER behind
him.

The chef grabs the dishwasher by the arm.

CHEF

Behind! When you walk behind
someone you say
behind. Entiendo? Understand?

The dishwasher looks around for help.

CHEF (cont'd)

Can someone tell this fucking guy
what I just said?

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
(in Spanish)
Behind. Say 'behind' when you walk
behind someone.
(in English)
Behind.

The dishwasher looks over at the chef.

DISHWASHER
Behind.

The chef lets him go, turns back to the pass and the night goes on.

LATER:

Service is over and the chef takes off his apron. As he leaves he calls out to the guys.

CHEF
Good job, everyone.
(to Armando)
Good job.

Armando gives him an acknowledging nod and goes back to cleaning his station.

INT. GYM - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Armando slams his locker closed and grabs a towel on his way out.

INT. GYM - FLOOR - NIGHT

Armando is doing squats.

INT. GYM - SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

Armando is steady and smooth as he makes his way across.

INT. GYM - SAUNA - NIGHT

Seeing that it's empty, Armando enters and takes a seat. He leans back and closes his eyes.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

Armando looks up from his book when he sees the woman from the coffee shop. She is sitting at the other end of the car, engrossed in her own book.

As the train rolls into the next stop, she gets up and gets out.

Armando gathers up his things and follows.

EXT. LIBRARY STEPS - NIGHT

Across the street, Armando can see the dancers as they practice through the large windows of the dance studio.

But he's only watching one dancer, the woman from the coffee shop.

She's lithe and graceful and even more beautiful.

Armando watches her for a few seconds more before he gets up from the steps and starts walking.

INT. ARMANDO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Armando is sitting at his table eating his dinner. He stops and looks at something that he can only see.

INT. RESTAURANT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

At a nearby locker, another COOK, CLAUDIO, early 20s, jabs a FELLOW COOK and points in Armando's direction.

CLAUDIO

So what did you do on your day off,
Armando?

ARMANDO

I was with my girlfriend.

CLAUDIO

(to everyone, genuinely
surprised)

He was with his girlfriend. How
old is your girlfriend?

ARMANDO

Twenty-eight.

CLAUDIO

And what does she do for a living?

ARMANDO

She's a ballet dancer.

CLAUDIO

She's Mexican?

ARMANDO

She's American.

(CONTINUED)

CLAUDIO
American. Armando's got an
American girlfriend. This is the
first I've heard. Why don't you
bring her around?

ARMANDO
I don't want you acting stupid
around her like you are now.

CLAUDIO
Fair enough. Can you do me a favor
though and ask her a question?

ARMANDO
Sure.

CLAUDIO
Can you ask her if she knows how to
do The Nutcracker?

Everyone bursts into laughter.

CLAUDIO slams his locker closed and walks past Armando.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)
Twenty-nine year old dancing white
girl. Everyone's right, Armando:
you are crazy.

Armando finishes changing in silence.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

It's Saturday night and the kitchen is in full swing.

Armando gives the plate rim a quick wipe and hands it to the
CHEF, an American who looks way to young to be the chef.

The Chef takes Armando's plate and quickly hands it over to
a waiting LATINO SERVER.

Armando readies another plate and hands it over to the Chef.
The Chef goes to wipe it but stops and hands it off to
another SERVER.

CHEF
Armando!

ARMANDO
Oui, Chef?

(CONTINUED)

CHEF
Sexy as shit, primo!

Armando gives the Chef a grin, turns around and back to work. Claudio is next to him at the stove.

CLAUDIO
(to Armando, sarcastically)
Oui, Chef!

CHEF
Claudio, where's my monkfish?

At the sound of Chef's voice, Claudio quickly goes back to his pans.

CLAUDIO
Two minutes, Chef!

CHEF
You said two minutes five fucking minutes ago!

CLAUDIO
Oui, Chef!

CHEF
Don't oui, chef! Just get your shit together!

CLAUDIO
Oui, Chef!

Claudio looks over at Armando and catches him smiling.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Armando is the last one to finish changing. The other COOKS are heading out.

MICHAEL
Armando, let's go out, get a drink. I want to hear all about this girlfriend of yours.

Claudio slaps Michael on the back while on his way out.

CLAUDIO
Don't worry about Arman-da. He probably has another big date with this girlfriend of his.

He exits.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
(to Michael)
Some other time maybe.

MICHAEL
Always some other time.

ARMANDO
Sorry.

MICHAEL
You don't have to apologize. You
tell me when. See you mañana.

Michael exits and Armando finishes dressing.

EXT. LIBRARY STEPS - NIGHT

The dancers are winding down.

Armando's girl is collecting her things when a MALE DANCER approaches her.

They talk as they head for the exit.

Armando picks up his groceries and starts walking towards the subway station.

INT. ARMANDO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Armando grabs a side rag, pulls the pan out of the oven and slides the sandwich on a plate.

JUMP CUTS:

At the dinner table, Armando is...

...eating...

...then starts coughing...

...and then the coughing gets worse.

Armando runs to the fridge...

...grabs the carton of OJ and puts it to his lips....

He turns the faucet on and he hears a loud rumbling noise...

Armando runs for the bathroom.

INT. ARMANDO'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

In between coughs, Armando tries to get as much water in his mouth as he can.

INT. ARMANDO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Armando's coughing has subsided as he walks out of the bathroom.

On his way back, he sees the blinking light on the answering machine and presses the PLAY.

As soon as he hears the woman's voice, he freezes in his steps.

LUZ (V.O.)
Armando? It's me, it's Luz. If
you're there, please pick up.

Beat. Armando is frozen to his spot.

LUZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your mother is dying, Armando.
Please come home.

And then she's gone.

Armando looks at the blinking light. He reaches for the DELETE button...

INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Armando pulls his hand back and steak and pan go flying all over the kitchen floor..

ARMANDO
Shit!

CHEF
Don't tell me that's my skirt
steak, man!

With a towel in one hand, Armando picks up the pan while scooping up the steak with other hand.

CHEF (cont'd)
Throw another steak on already!

But Michael, who works next to Armando, is ahead of the game and has thrown it on for him.

(CONTINUED)

CHEF (cont'd)
(to Michael)
Thank you!

Armando is still out of it. He grabs a plate but then looks over at the steak.

CHEF (cont'd)
(to Armando)
Hey!

Armando turns around and fast.

CHEF (cont'd)
What are you doing? Step on the
fucking thing!

Armando grabs a pan, places it on the steak and puts his body weight right on it.

ARMANDO
Chef, maybe we can bring out the
fish first and then...

CHEF
No, I am not going to bring the
fish out first. We're going to do
what we always do and send
everything out at the same
time! Work smart, not hard!

Armando doesn't respond; his attention is on the steak.

CHEF (cont'd)
Hey!

Armando turns around again.

CHEF (CONT'D)
I'm fucking talking to you! Yes,
sir! Yes, Chef! Oui, Chef!

ARMANDO
Oui, Chef!

Armando turns back to his steak and his trick worked. He pulls it off the grill and on to the counter.

He goes to slice it but it's too hot and he pulls his burned hand back.

CHEF (CONT'D)

Oh, don't be a fucking pussy!

Armando cuts the steak into several slices and fans it out on a plate. He quickly wipes the rim and puts the finished dish on the pass.

The chef, however, takes one look at the plate and shoves it back at him.

CHEF (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Salad salad salad...

Armando grabs a small bunch of watercress and mixes it in a bowl of vinaigrette.

He barely has the salad on the plate before the chef grabs it and passes it off to a SERVER.

CHEF

Claudio, where the fuck is my...

But before he can finish, Claudio has given him his finished plate.

CHEF (CONT'D)

Thank you!

The Chef hands it over to the same server who hustles it out of the kitchen.

Armando sees it but tries to ignore Claudio's shit eating grin.

INT. RESTAURANT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Armando stares at his burned hand and tries several times to close it.

Michael sees him.

MICHAEL

You alright?

ARMANDO

I'm fine.

CLAUDIO

Don't worry about it,
Armando. Just let it go. Breathe
in, breathe out. Breathe in...

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
I'll do that thanks.

CLAUDIO
Go home and go out with that
girlfriend of yours out. God knows
you and HE deserve it.

Everyone laughs at the punchline.

Armando puts on his jacket, slams his locker closed and
turns to face Claudio.

ARMANDO
He'll probably agree with you.

More laughter as Armando walks past Claudio and out the
door.

INT. GYM - FLOOR - NIGHT

Armando stands in front of the dumbbells and looks them
over. He finally settles on one, grabs it with his burned
hand and immediately drops it.

He flexes his bad hand and looks over at the EXIT SIGN.

INT. LIBRARY STEPS - NIGHT

The dance studio is dark and empty.

Armando gets up off the stairs and starts walking.

INT. FAST FOOD CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Armando is at a table by the window when the CHINESE LADY
comes out from behind the counter and brings him his food.

He pushes the food around with his fork and then looks out
the window.

He hears a pan hit the floor and Armando turns in the
direction of the kitchen...

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Armando looks bewildered as he stares at the pot and its
contents lying on the floor.

He's reaching for it when the Chef calls out:

(CONTINUED)

CHEF

(to Armando)

Get off the line. I don't know what's up with you but go back home and get yourself right and don't come back until you do because right now you're fucking useless to me, man.

The kitchen is as quiet as a kitchen ever gets as Armando takes off his apron and heads for the locker room.

INT. RESTAURANT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Claudio, Michael and the OTHER COOKS come in to find Armando dressed and sitting on one of the benches.

Everybody goes to their locker and start changing in silence.

CLAUDIO

Don't sweat it, Armando. Every goes through a rough patch. This week just happens to be yours.

But Armando says nothing.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

This fucking guy. Last bit of advice, Armando: Like chef says, work smart, not hard.

ARMANDO

Fuck you.

CLAUDIO

What'd you say to me?

ARMANDO

Fuck. You.

Claudio smiles and walks over to him.

CLAUDIO

Relax, dick. I was trying to be nice.

Nothing from Armando.

CLAUDIO (CONT'D)

Hey. I'm talking to you.

(CONTINUED)

Claudio grabs Armando by the shoulder and two seconds later Armando has him down on the ground.

Claudio tries to get up but Armando has him in some kind of wrist lock. He pushes down hard on him and Claudio lets out a scream in pain.

MICHAEL

Armando!

ARMANDO

(to Michael)

Stay out of this.

Armando lets go of the hold and Claudio pulls back his arm, wincing in pain.

Armando goes back to his locker, slams it closed and heads for the exit.

He stops and gives Claudio a smile.

ARMANDO (cont'd)

I really enjoy these little talks of ours. I'm looking forward to the next one.

As soon as Armando's gone, the room starts buzzing.

Michael looks over at Claudio who is just getting to his feet.

MICHAEL

(to Claudio)

Holy shit, man. Where'd he learn to do that?

CLAUDIO

The fuck you asking me for?! But I swear to God, the next time he tries that shit...

MICHAEL

The next time he'll fucking kill you.

Claudio shuts his mouth and turns his attention back to his hand.

INT. GYM - FLOOR - NIGHT

Armando is on the treadmill, drenched in sweat and pushing himself hard.

INT. GYM - SAUNA - NIGHT

Armando walks in and takes a tired seat. He closes his eyes and leans back.

TWO OTHER MEN walk in and take seats a few feet away from him.

Armando sits quietly for a few seconds more before he gets up and leaves.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

Frustrated, Armando looks up from his book to find that he isn't alone.

A YOUNG MOTHER, 20s, is seated at the end of the train. Her SON, 5, is asleep in her lap as she brushes his hair back with her fingers.

Armando watches them, his eyes heavy with sleep.

He leans back and closes them.

CUT TO:

COUNTRY SIDE SOMEWHERE IN MEXICO - FIFTEEN YEARS EARLIER

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Armando puts down the first guerilla soldier but misses the second who scrambles into the adjoining room.

Armando keeps close to the wall as he makes his way to the doorway of that room.

He peeks in and barely pulls his head back in as bullets rip into the walls around him.

He pulls the pin from one of his grenades, tosses it into the room and then turns away from the blast that follows.

He waits until it's silent...

...takes a breath...

...and then steps into the room with his weapon drawn.

CUT TO:

NEW YORK, NY, USA - PRESENT

INT. ARMANDO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

ARMANDO wakes up, the sheets soaked in sweat and bunched up in his hands.

ARMANDO

(whispers)

You're fine. You're fine. You're going to be alright. Everything's going to be alright.

He goes over to the answering machine, presses PLAY and listens to Luz as she speaks to him.

As soon as it's finished, he presses the DELETE button and then grabs the phone.

He flips through the phone book, finds the number he wants and dials.

ARMANDO (cont'd)

Yes, I'd like to book a flight for tomorrow, please...Yes, I'll hang on.

(beat, waiting)

Hello?...Yes, I'd like to book...For tomorrow...For where?...For Mexico.

The sound of an airplane landing can be heard O.S.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO - DAY

INT. CAB - NIGHT

As the cab moves along, the scenery begins to change.

Apartments and offices of modern Mexico City begin to give way to the grimier back alleys and slum homes few people see or want to see.

Armando watches it all drift by from the backseat of the cab.

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Armando knocks lightly on the door. When there is no answer, he walks in.

ARMANDO

Hello?

Armando looks around the room and then down the hallway.

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - (ARMANDO'S OLD) BEDROOM - NIGHT

A bed and a dresser are the only furniture in the room.

Armando walks over to the window and looks out at the backyard.

He looks down and stomps on the floorboard beneath him, testing it.

Armando goes over to the dusty photos sitting on top of the dresser and stops in front of one particular photograph.

In the picture a YOUNG WOMAN in her early 20s, holds a BOY in a cowboy hat, 5, in her arms. The boy holds a toy gun in one hand while clinging to the woman with the other.

LUZ (O.S.)

Can you believe that your mother
was ever that young?

Armando turns around to find his sister-in-law, LUZ, standing behind him.

She's no longer twenty but in spite of the worn lines around her eyes, Luz would be considered a beautiful woman at any age.

Armando turns back to the photograph.

ARMANDO

I loved that gun. It was made out of metal, not like today. You could feel the difference when you held it in your hand. Then one day I went to play with it and it was gone. I looked everywhere but I couldn't find it. For a long time after that, it would kill me just to even think about that gun. Not because it was gone but because I was the one who lost it. But here it is. After all these years. Is this Manuel's room now?

(CONTINUED)

LUZ

When he's here. I'm on my way to
the hospital.

Armando turns back around to Luz.

ARMANDO

Okay. I'll go with you.

Luz tries a smile but it is a sad attempt. She turns and reaches for the door knob.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Luz pushes the door open as she and Armando walk into the room. Armando's mother, ROSALITA, 70s, lies in bed, her breathing ragged and shallow.

Luz sits in a chair nearest to the bed. She looks back at Armando who has not moved from his spot at the door.

LUZ

She can't hear anything. She's on a
lot of medication for the pain.

Armando nods but doesn't look like he really hears her.

He brings a chair over to the other side of the bed and sits down.

Luz takes Rosalita's hand and holds it. She looks over at Armando but he hasn't moved.

LUZ (CONT'D)

Take her hand.

Armando does as he is told and takes hold of his mother's hand.

Suddenly, one of the monitors begins to spike loudly.

Armando looks at it and then at his mother.

Rosalita's mouth opens as she takes a labored breath.

The monitor's beeping grows and grows...and then stops.

Armando lets go of his dead mother's hand and sinks back into his chair.

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Armando stares at himself, straightens up and then walks out.

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Armando walks out and bumps into his nephew, MANUEL, 20. He's a good-looking kid and slight of build. He stands straight as he tries to make himself appear bigger than he actually is.

There is an awkward moment of silence as they look each other.

ARMANDO

How are you?

MANUEL

Fine.

ARMANDO

I haven't had a chance to really talk to her but your mom said you were in school.

MANUEL

She was wrong.

ARMANDO

Oh. So...what are you doing?

MANUEL

What do you do?

ARMANDO

I'm a cook.

MANUEL

Really? Because that's what I do.

ARMANDO

Really?

MANUEL

Yeah. I serve tacos all day to drunk Americans.

ARMANDO

Manuel.

(CONTINUED)

MANUEL

I gotta go.

ARMANDO

Can we talk?

MANUEL

Yeah, sure. Wait right here. If I'm not back in an hour, just start without me.

And with that, Armando watches as Manuel turns away, walks down the hall and out the door.

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Armando walks in and the conversation in the room drops.

Armando keeps his head down, careful not to make too much eye contact as he makes his way to the table of food.

He picks up a plate...

...and then turns to catch a few of his relatives as they look away from him.

He turns back around and puts the plate down when he sees the bottle of tequila at another table.

Armando pours himself a a large shot. He looks at it, debating a second or two before shooting it back.

He looks like he's about to pour another but decides against it. He closes the top of the bottle, puts it down and turns around...

...to find his cousin, RODRIGO, 40s, standing in front of him.

RODRIGO

Good of you to make it.

ARMANDO

You know what they say: better late than never.

RODRIGO

You think your mother would think that was funny?

ARMANDO

She had a pretty good sense of humor.

(CONTINUED)

RODRIGO

I always thought you were a selfish, little prick but you were never an asshole.

ARMANDO

That's strange. I always thought you were.

RODRIGO

Everything is still a joke.

ARMANDO

Can you please get out of my way?

RODRIGO

No. Make me.

ARMANDO

Make me? What are we ten years old?

RODRIGO

She was heartbroken to the end.

ARMANDO

How would you know? I didn't see you there. Look, I'm just trying to get something to eat...

As soon as Armando moves, Rodrigo grabs him.

In a flash, Armando locks up his cousin's arms. He pushes and Rodrigo trips and falls to the floor.

Armando takes a long look around the room at the all too familiar faces and then walks towards the front door.

INT. ELENA'S PLACE/BAR - DAY

Armando is at the bar nursing a beer when a GROUP OF MEN walk in and take a back table.

They're working men, their faces and clothes covered in dirt and sweat. One of them, JUAN, 40s, whistles at the bartender.

JUAN

You have thirsty customers, Pedro!

PEDRO

Some customers!

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

Would just you set us up some
beers?

Armando turns away when he sees Juan heading towards the bar. As he collects the beers, Juan looks over at Armando and then stops.

ARMANDO

Juan Vitalicio.

JUAN

Armando?

Juan goes over to Armando and stares at him, still not believing his own eyes.

They take a seat at the bar.

JUAN (cont'd)

What are you doing here?

ARMANDO

My mother.

JUAN

Oh shit, man. I heard. Who...?

ARMANDO

Luz called.

JUAN

Luz...

ARMANDO

(uncomfortable)

Actually, I just left there. After
the funeral...back at the house...
things were getting out of hand.

JUAN

Everyone there, your whole
family. I can imagine.

ARMANDO

How about you? You've been...

JUAN

...here the whole time. Where the
hell am I going to go? You've been
around since you've been back?

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

A little bit.

JUAN

Nice, huh? Actually, it's not so bad.

ARMANDO

Yeah?

JUAN

No, it's worse. But what about you, man? How the hell have you been? Where the hell have you been?

ARMANDO

New York.

JUAN

New York! What are you doing tonight? You know what? Don't even answer that. We're hanging out whether you like it or not.

ARMANDO

It sounds like fun but...

JUAN

Armando.

ARMANDO

Yeah?

JUAN

Behind you.

ARMANDO

Behind me?

He turns around and finds ELENA staring at him.

Elena is all curves and full bodied from head to toe. She's about the guys' age but whether you're twenty-five or sixty-five, you'd have to be a blind man not to think that she was sexy.

But Armando doesn't have time to dwell on this as she punches him square in the face.

He stumbles back onto his seat.

(CONTINUED)

ELENA

Get out.

ARMANDO

Elena.

ELENA

This is my place and I want you out.

ARMANDO

Can we just sit and talk?

ELENA

Get out!

Juan takes a hold of Armando and yanks him quickly to his feet. As he drags him out, Armando turns around and tries one last time.

ARMANDO

Elena, please...

Elena grabs the beer bottle off of the counter and throws it at Armando. He ducks just in time as it crashes against the wall. Juan shoves him through the doors.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Outside of the cantina, Juan shakes his head at Armando.

JUAN

You've got some kind of death wish, man. I was wondering what you were doing at Elena's place.

ARMANDO

Why didn't you tell me that was her place?

JUAN

I thought you knew.

ARMANDO

How would I know?

JUAN

Everyone knows that's Elena's place.

He points at the cantina and Armando looks back.

Sure enough, there's a big sign above the door that reads:
ELENA'S PLACE.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN (cont'd)
 Let's go back to my house; it's
 safer. Actually it's not much
 safer.

ARMANDO
 Why's that?

JUAN
 Because you haven't met my wife.

As Juan walks away, Armando looks back at Elena's one last
 time before hurrying after his friend.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

As they near the house, Armando sees the bars over the doors
 and windows.

He looks around and sees that Juan's house is not the
 exception.

As soon as Armando and Juan walk up the front walkway,
 Juan's KIDS - ADOLFO, 11, ADOLFA, 8, and ADOLFINA, 3 - come
 out to meet him.

ADOLFINA
 Daddy!

She jumps towards Juan and into his arms.

ADOLFINA (CONT'D)
 Why are you late?

ADOLFINA (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 I'm sorry, nina. I ran into an old
 friend.

Adolfina takes a look over at Armando and then buries her
 face into Juan's neck.

JUAN
 Armando, this is Adolfina.

ARMANDO
 Good afternoon, Adolfina.

She takes a quick peek at him but then goes back to her
 hiding place in her father's neck.

Juan pulls his other daughter close to him.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

And the other light of my life,
Adolfa.

ADOLFA

Good afternoon, señor.

ARMANDO

Good afternoon, señorita.

Juan puts Adolfinina down and pulls the oldest, his son,
towards him in a mock headlock.

JUAN

And last but not least, my son, the
big man, Adolfo.

ADOLFO

(extends his hand out)
Hello and welcome, sir.

ARMANDO

Thank you for having me.

JUAN

Where's your mother?

ADOLFO

Busy cooking.

JUAN

Take your sister and make sure
everyone gets washed up.

ADOLFO

No problem.
(to Adolfinina)
Let's go inside and get cleaned up.

ADOLFINA

Do I have to?

ADOLFO

We all have to.

ADOLFINA

Fine.

As the kids disappear into the house, Juan's wife, ALEGRIA,
34, comes around from the back of the house with a basket of
laundry in her arms. Wearing a simple skirt and tee, she's
as beautiful as the sun setting behind her.

(CONTINUED)

As soon as she sees Juan, the smile on her face grows brighter.

JUAN
(aggravated)
So can you tell me why my dinner
isn't sitting on the table waiting
for me?

Alegria stops dead in her tracks and her smile disappears.

ALEGRIA
Excuse me?

JUAN
I think you heard me.

ALEGRIA
Oh, I heard you.

JUAN
Then you'd be wise to lose the
attitude I detect.

ALEGRIA
I'm going to lose something in a
few seconds.

Alegria puts down the laundry and starts walking towards Juan.

JUAN
Don't make me beat you in front of
the neighbors again!

Alegria rushes over and playfully slaps at Juan.

ALEGRIA
Don't say things like that!

Juan laughs, grabs and pulls Alegria to him.

JUAN
I'm joking.

ALEGRIA
But other people don't know that.

JUAN
Sorry, baby.

ARMANDO

So I take it you don't beat your wife?

JUAN

Only when she gets out of hand.

ALEGRIA

Yeah, I'd like to see that.

JUAN

Didn't I say it would be safer here? Armando, I would like you to meet the love of my life, Alegria. Alegria, this is Armando Calixto.

ALEGRIA

So you're the famous Armando Calixto.

ARMANDO

So he's spoken about me then?

ALEGRIA

Quite a bit actually.

Alegria waits for a response but Armando only gives her a polite smile.

ALEGRIA

Don't worry: it's been only good things.

JUAN

Is dinner almost ready?

ALEGRIA

I was just about to check on it.
(to Armando)
You're staying for dinner.

ARMANDO

I really should be getting back.

ALEGRIA

You've misunderstood. I wasn't asking.

ARMANDO

I would love to have dinner with you and your family. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

ALEGRIA

You're welcome.

(to Juan)

Coming in?

JUAN

Two seconds.

Alegria turns and heads back in the house.

As soon as she's gone...

ARMANDO

It seems like it was only yesterday that I was holding your head above a toilet bowl so you wouldn't drown in your own vomit. And now you're married and with three kids.

JUAN

And a fourth on the way.

ARMANDO

Four?

JUAN

What can I say? I got it where it counts. Let's get inside. I can smell the food and I'm starving.

They continue to talk as they head for the house.

ARMANDO

I have to ask you one thing though.

JUAN

What's that?

ARMANDO

Adolfo, Adolfa, Adolfina. What's with the names?

JUAN

They're my little wolf pack.

ARMANDO

So what are you going to name the new baby?

JUAN

I don't know. What's another way to say 'wolf' in Spanish?

Armando shakes his head as they enter the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Armando and Juan are sitting at the table, each of them enjoying a beer.

Alegria is just finishing up the dishes at the sink. She folds up her apron and walks over to her Juan.

ALEGRIA

I hope it was alright. I've never cooked for a chef before.

ARMANDO

I'm just a cook and the meal was delicious. Thank you.

ALEGRIA

It was my pleasure.

She puts her arms around Juan and kisses him on the cheek.

ALEGRIA (cont'd)

I'm going to the other room. Jose Saramago is calling me.

(to Armando)

Are you sure there's nothing I can get you?

ARMANDO

Thank you. I'm fine.

Juan turns around and watches her leave the room. When he turns back to Armando, he has a contented smile on his face.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

You look happy.

JUAN

I am happy. How about you? How are you holding up?

ARMANDO

Great. Can't you tell? You have a nice place.

JUAN

Worked hard to get it.

ARMANDO

When you say you worked hard, you mean legally?

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

Remember what we used to say? "You gotta get it..."

JUAN (CONT'D)

"...when you got it."

ARMANDO

"...when you got it."

They tap bottles and take a drink. As Juan puts down his beer...

JUAN (cont'd)

So why'd you leave the way you did?

ARMANDO

I don't want to do this right now.

JUAN

It's a question, bro.

ARMANDO

And I don't have an answer. Maybe I should get going.

JUAN

I know why you left. You wanted to start over, am I right? I probably would of done the same thing if I was in your shoes. Shit. Probably would of went with you if you asked, just for the fuck of it.

ARMANDO

What do you want? You want me to apologize? Then I'll apologize.

JUAN

You've been and always be my best friend in the whole world, Armando. You never have to apologize to me. I would've appreciated a heads up, that's all.

ARMANDO

Sorry I didn't say good-bye.

Juan holds up his beer and motions for Armando to do the same. They tap bottles again and drink.

JUAN

So you're staying with Luz?

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

That's right.

JUAN

I've seen her around. Meant to say hi. So when are you planning on making your move?

ARMANDO

Oh, Jesus Christ.

JUAN

What? You're back home and your piece of shit brother's been dead and buried a long time. So what's the problem?

ARMANDO

Thank your lovely wife for dinner and let her know that her husband's an asshole.

As Armando gets up to leave.

JUAN

You should talk to Luz about your nephew.

Armando stops.

ARMANDO

What about Manuel?

JUAN

Talk to her. She knows.

Armando nods and heads for the door.

JUAN

So how's it feel to be back home?

ARMANDO

Getting better.

JUAN

Good.

Juan follows Armando to the door.

I/E. BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Armando is just about out the door when Juan grabs him by the arm and shoves a piece of paper in his hand.

Armando opens it to find a scribbled phone number.

JUAN (CONT'D)
 (silly voice)
 Call me!

Armando laughs and walks down the street.

Juan's smile fades as he closes the door.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luz is at the table smoking a cigarette, a half-full ash tray in front of her. Armando walks in and she stubs it out as he takes a seat.

ARMANDO
 I don't remember you smoking.

LUZ
 I don't, not really.

ARMANDO
 I want to apologize for before. Out there, with what's-his-name.

LUZ
 Remember that race against those kids? You were winning...

ARMANDO
 For the first time.

LUZ
 And right when you turned that corner...

ARMANDO
 (makes motion with his hand at neck level)
 What's his face pulls that rope up and boom! I thought my head popped off.

LUZ
 You were right: what's-his-name has always been an asshole.

Laughter and then awkward silence.

(CONTINUED)

LUZ
Are you hungry?

ARMANDO
I had dinner with Juan.

LUZ
There's a name I haven't heard in a while. How is he?

ARMANDO
He said he's seen you around.

LUZ
How come I never saw him?

ARMANDO
I kind of got the feeling he was scared to say hi.

LUZ
But why?

ARMANDO
I really don't know.

LUZ
That's strange.

Another awkward moment.

ARMANDO
Manuel looks good.

LUZ
Yeah.

ARMANDO
I was thinking about maybe getting together with him tomorrow, try and catch up on things. Do you know where I might be able to...

LUZ
He's always at the soda shop.

ARMANDO
The one I used to take him?

LUZ
Same one.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

I'll probably try and pass by there then.

LUZ

He might like that.

Armando waits a beat and then decides to go for it.

ARMANDO

Juan was telling me that he's seen Manuel hanging around town. That he thought that maybe Manuel...

LUZ

Manuel is young and still finding his way. It just takes some people a little longer. You don't have to worry about Manuel: that's my job.

ARMANDO

I know that.

LUZ

Good.

Luz gets up, turns her back to Armando and heads for the door. She stops.

LUZ (cont'd)

Tell Juan to say hello. It would be nice to talk to an old friend.

ARMANDO

I'll tell him that.

LUZ

It's been a long day. I'll see you in the morning.

Armando watches as she walks down the hallway and disappears into the darkness.

He waits until she's gone before looking over at the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - FIFTEEN YEARS EARLIER)

Armando, 25, walks out the front door, down the steps and down the street.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Armando walks with his head down and never makes eye contact with the few people he does encounter.

He stops suddenly in his tracks and looks across the street. He sees...

CUT TO:

EXT. SODA SHOP - DAY (END FLASHBACK - PRESENT)

Armando stands outside of the shop and looks over at the worn sign next to the weather beaten door.

With a tentative hand, he reaches for the door knob.

INT. SODA SHOP - DAY

The music is blaring as GANG MEMBERS are strewn throughout the place along with a number of GANG GIRLS.

Manuel, ROBERTO - THE GANG LEADER - and a few guys are at a back table playing dominoes.

Slap, slap, slap: it becomes a rhythm. Suddenly, Manuel slams the winning tile down.

ROBERTO
Son of a bitch!

MANUEL
I win! Again!

ROBERTO
You think you're smarter than me,
don't you?

Manuel looks over at him and sees on Roberto's face that he's made a mistake.

MANUEL
I didn't say that.

ROBERTO
But you wanted to, right? That was
on the tip of your tongue, wasn't
it?

(CONTINUED)

MANUEL

No, Roberto.

ROBERTO

(imitating a little girl's
voice)

"No, Roberto."

Roberto pulls out a gun from his waistband and slams it down on the table.

The place is totally silent at this point.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)

Say what you were going to say.

MANUEL

It was a joke. I was joking.

Roberto suddenly bursts into laughter. Manuel looks around and - realizing that he's been had - joins in.

ROBERTO

You have to toughen up, college boy. I already told Alejandro about you.

MANUEL

What did you tell him?

ROBERTO

I told him I didn't think you had what it took to do certain things.

MANUEL

You told him that?

ROBERTO

No.

The sound of the door opening can be heard OS and Roberto turns in its direction.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)

I told him that we might have to kill you. Now who's this?

ARMANDO (O.S.)

Manuel?

Now everyone is turned in the direction of Armando's voice who is trying his hardest to look as harmless as possible.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
Can I speak to you, Manuel?

ROBERTO
Who the hell are you?

ARMANDO
I'm Manuel's uncle.

MANUEL
What do you want?

ARMANDO
I just want to talk.

MANUEL
We got nothing to talk about.

ROBERTO
Yeah, Uncle Armando. About what?

ARMANDO
I just want to explain why I left
you, your mom.

Everyone laughs but Armando's focus doesn't waver.

MANUEL
Stop embarrassing yourself, old man
and go.

ARMANDO
Manuel, please. Just for a few
minutes.

ROBERTO
What'd you not hear him?

ARMANDO
I heard him.

Roberto nods his head at a GANG MEMBER sitting at table near
Armando.

MANUEL
Go home, Uncle Armando!

ARMANDO
(to Roberto)
I don't want any trouble.

ROBERTO
(to Armando)
Too late tough guy.

The gang member gets up into Armando's face and the boy goes over a table.

Armando turns to find...

...Roberto has his gun to his head...

Armando moves, the gun is gone and Roberto's on the ground.

The room comes alive as EVERY GANG MEMBER stands up.

Armando lets Roberto go. He takes a last look at his nephew and then heads for the front door.

EXT. SODA SHOP/SIDEWALK - DAY (FLASHBACK 15 YEARS EARLIER)

Armando, 25, and Manuel, 5, walk out of soda shop. Manuel is tending to his melting ice.

Armando looks over at him and sees the smile on his nephew's face.

ARMANDO
What's so funny?

MANUEL
The lady in the soda place. She thought you were my dad. And you didn't say anything, so she really thought you were my dad. That was funny.

ARMANDO
That was funny.

MANUEL
How about for the rest of the day, wherever we go, we'll pretend that you're my dad. But even though it's a joke between us, really the joke's on everyone else. Isn't that smart?

ARMANDO
That's pretty smart.

MANUEL
So do you want to do that? Pretend that you're my dad?

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
I think I'd like that.

MANUEL
It starts...
(he looks around)
...now.

They stop at the corner of the block and wait for the light to change. A WOMAN next to them looks over at Manuel and then Armando.

WOMAN
(to Manuel)
Your dad bought you that ice, huh?

MANUEL
Yeah.

WOMAN
It sure looks good.

MANUEL
It is.

Manuel looks over at Armando and tries not to laugh. Armando, however, can't hide his smile.

The light changes and they start to move. As they do, Manuel slips his small hand into Armando's as they cross the street.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Armando and Manuel enter to find MANUEL, SR., 28, Armando's brother in a drunken rampage.

Luz is trying to calm her husband down but to no avail. She reaches for Manuel, Sr. who swings at her to keep her away.

He connects and Manuel's wife goes down.

Armando grabs his brother and trips him. He gets on top of and rains punch after punch down on him.

Luz reaches out for Armando...

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - BEDROOM - PRESENT - DAY (END FASHBACK)

Armando wakes up to find that he has Luz by her hand. He lets go and looks around as he tries to get his bearings.

That's when he notices that he's on the floor.

He stands up and sees that the bed hasn't been slept in.

Luz watches him and waits but he says nothing.

She walks out of the room and down the hallway without saying a word.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Armando's eyes are closed as he lets the water beat down on him.

ARMANDO

You're fine. You're
fine. Everything's going to be
alright. You're going to be
alright.

He still doesn't move.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Armando walks in to find a plate of food waiting for him and note on the side.

He reads the note and looks over at the food.

He goes over to the phone and does nothing for a few seconds. He finally dials.

ARMANDOO

Hey. What are you doing today?

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Armando sits in a lawn chair, nursing a beer while Adolfina plays with her toys.

Armando looks back over at the house and can see Juan talking with CHARLIE, 40s, a large criminal looking type, tattooed and tough looking.

Armando turns around, his attention back on Adolfina.

Juan and Charlie exit the house and join Armando.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIE

(to Juan)

Pass by, man. There's gonna be some good looking pussy in the place tonight.

JUAN

Gotta run it past my old lady.

CHARLIE

I heard that, homes.

(to Armando)

And this motherfucker! New York! I knew it, homes. I always said that if anyone was going to make it out of here, it was going to be you.

(to Juan)

Didn't I always say that?

JUAN

He always said it.

CHARLIE

All the time.

JUAN

Any chance he had. Seriously.

CHARLIE

What do you do in New York?

ARMANDO

I'm a cook.

CHARLIE

Oh shit! You're a chef!

(to Juan)

You didn't say he was a chef!

JUAN

I didn't tell you?

ARMANDO

I'm not a chef. I just cook.

CHARLIE

Always a modest motherfucker. That's why you made it, homes. Humility. Good breeding.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
(low, to Juan)
Good breeding?

JUAN
(low)
Don't...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I heard about your moms, yo.
Respect.

Charlie grabs Armando by the hand, forces him to bump chests with him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Your mom's, yo. Disco cool. I
remember when we used to sleep over
at your house. She would feed me.

ARMANDO
She liked to cook.

JUAN
She was good at it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I liked hanging out at your place
and not just for the food. You
guys always made me feel
good. Like I was part of your
family or something. You didn't
make me feel like some retard or
nothing. Not like that fucked up
father of mine! You know what I'm
saying?

ARMANDO
I hear you.

JUAN
Definitely.

ARMANDO
How is your father?

CHARLIE
He's dead. Fuck'im.

ARMANDO
I hear you.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

Definitely.

CHARLIE

(to Armando)

Yo, I gotta get going but like I told Juan, come by the club.

(sees Adolfinina, waves at her)

Hey, sweetie!

(to Armando)

There's gonna be some good looking pussy in the place tonight.

ARMANDO

As opposed to other nights?

Charlie lets out a big laugh at this remark and gives Armando a friendly punch to the chest. Armando tries not to let on as he loses his breath for a second or two.

CHARLIE

If you can, you can. And if you can't...more pussy for me! You hear me, homes?

ARMANDO

I hear you!

JUAN

Definitely!

Charlie grabs Armando, bumps chests again. Grabs Juan, bumps chest.

Flashes the both of them the peace sign and he gives Adolfinina a wave as he walks away.

Both of them wait until Charlies is definitely gone and out of earshot before they start talking.

ARMANDO

Holy shit. After all of these years Charlie is still bat-shit crazy. Why did we hang out with him in the first place?

JUAN

Because we were afraid that he would kill us if we didn't.

ARMANDO

And why are you still hanging out with him?

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

Because I'm afraid that he'll kill me if I don't. Hey: You want to play with the kid?

ARMANDO

Good segue.

CUT TO:

Armando chases after Adolfina, pretending to be a monster. He stops, out of breath. She looks over at Juan who is sitting in the lawn chair while sipping on some beer.

ADOLFINA

(to Juan)

Daddy? Come on!

ARMANDO

Yeah, daddy. Come on and play with your daughter.

JUAN

(to Adolfina)

I will! Let Daddy have a quick beer with Armando and then I'll play with you. Okay?

ADOLFINA

Fine.

Armando goes over to where Juan is sitting.

ARMANDO

Pass me one of those, would you?

Juan hands him a beer as he sits down.

JUAN

What're you tired?

ARMANDO

I'm an old man, man. You try that for a couple of minutes.

JUAN

I have.

ARMANDO

She's a great kid.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

I know it. I know it.

They tap bottles and take a pull off of their drinks. Armando looks around and once again notices the bars on the windows.

ARMANDO

(motioning to the windows)

What's all this?

Juan looks and turns back around.

JUAN

Like I said before: things have changed. You get into a fight now, no one shoots you a fair one. Now you gotta fight a pack and I'm talking about kids. And the older ones...used to be you only had to worry about some guy walking around with a pipe, maybe a knife. But now...

ARMANDO

What happened?

JUAN

What always happens: drugs. Jobs disappeared and the dealers showed up. Did a good job of recruiting around here, too.

ARMANDO

Is that what you meant about Manuel?

JUAN

You speak to Luz?

ARMANDO

She wasn't really up for talking.

JUAN

(resigned)

Manuel's hooked up with a one of the families running things around here.

ARMANDO

Is he dealing?

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

I don't know. The crew he runs with is small time, shakedown and shit like that. But if he's not, It's only a matter of time.

(uncomfortable beat)

There's also this other thing.

ARMANDO

What?

JUAN

Senor Fuentes - he's the head of the family - he's got a right hand man: Alejandro Vicente.

ARMANDO

Alejandro Vicente. That's his real name?

JUAN

That's the name he goes by. Any way, he's the guy that Manuel's crew answer to. The thing is...people are talking...they say...

Juan looks around.

Armando looks around to see what Juan is looking around for.

Juan, satisfied, leans in close to Armando.

JUAN (cont'd)

They say he worships the devil.

ARMANDO

What are you talking about?

JUAN

I'm talking about cutting people's hearts out and eating it just for pleasure. Several American tourists have gone missing in the past couple of months and they say he had something to do with it.

ARMANDO

That's what they say, huh?

JUAN

Think what you want but in matters like this, it's best to keep an

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUAN (cont'd)
open mind. Could come back to bite
you in the ass.

ARMANDO
So what can I do to help Manuel?

JUAN
You talk to him?

ARMANDO
Like his mother, he's not in a
talking kind of mood.

JUAN
Then nothing.

ARMANDO
There's nothing I can do? There's
no one who can help?

JUAN
Well...

ARMANDO
What?

JUAN
I do know someone who may be able
to help. But they'll want money.

ARMANDO
When can I meet him?

JUAN
We can go now.

ARMANDO
What about Adolfina?

JUAN
It's fine.

They get up and start for the house.

ADOLFINA
Daddy! Where are you going?

As they walk away, Juan looks back at Adolfina.

JUAN
Daddy really wanted to play some
more, sweetheart. But then daddy's
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUAN (cont'd)
friend said I had to go with him
right now. So I have to go.

ADOLFINA
Tell him no!

JUAN
He doesn't care. He's a mean man.

ADOLFINA
(to Armando)
Mean man!

ARMANDO
(to Juan)
Thank you very much.

JUAN
I'll be back, baby.
(to Armando)
Let's go.
(to Adolfo)
Adolfo!

Adolfo pops his head out a window.

ADOLFO
Yeah, dad?

JUAN
Watch you're sister for me. I'll
be back.

As they head back towards the house, Armando turns around
and sees Adolfina flashing him an if-looks-could-kill look.

Armando gives her a weak smile and hurries after Juan.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Juan comes out with a gun in his waist band.

ARMANDO
What the hell is this?

JUAN
What?

ARMANDO
(pointing at gun)
That.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

Oh, yeah.

Juan pushes gun a little further down his waistband and pulls the bottom of his shirt over it.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Is that better?

ARMANDO

Are you crazy?

JUAN

You want one, too?

ARMANDO

No, I don't want one. What do you need a gun for?

JUAN

I told you: things have changed around here.

ARMANDO

Well, I'm not walking around with you when you've got a gun.

JUAN

Well, I'm not walking around without one.

Armando debates the matter for a few seconds and then heads for the door.

ARMANDO

This person you're taking me to better know what they're talking about.

JUAN

Trust me. She's good.

ARMANDO

She?

And they're out the door.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Armando is sitting at a table, annoyed and aggravated.

He looks over at Juan to say something smart but he motions for Armando to remain quiet.

Armando turns his attention back to SENORA ESPERANZA, the town oracle or bruja.

ARMANDO

Listen, Senora Esperanza. My friend has made a mistake.

LA BRUJA

La Bruja.

ARMANDO

Excuse me?

LA BRUJA

Call me by my name: Juana Bruja. Or La Bruja if you please. Have you brought money?

Armando pulls out some pesos, places them on the table. La Bruja reaches out and pulls the money quickly towards her.

LA BRUJA (cont'd)

You have a question? About your future?

ARMANDO

No, not mine.

LA BRUJA

Someone else.

ARMANDO

Yeah, not mine. So, yeah, it's someone else.

(to Juan)

Seriously?

LA BRUJA

Enough! I will not be ridiculed or belittled! Not in my home. Do you understand?

ARMANDO

I'm sorry. Please, go on.

(CONTINUED)

LA BRUJA
A boy. A little boy.

ARMANDO
He's not a little boy.

LA BRUJA
He still is in your eyes. Is this
not true?

ARMANDO
Yes, that's true.

LA BRUJA
Your nephew.

ARMANDO
How do you...

LA BRUJA
Your nephew is on a dangerous road
and you wish to know where it ends.

ARMANDO
I want you to tell me how to help
him.

LA BRUJA
That I cannot do.

ARMANDO
Of course you can't.

LA BRUJA
I can only show you the path that
he takes. Whether it is possible
to save him that I cannot see.

ARMANDO
So what can you see?

LA BRUJA
I must look to the tea leaves.

La Bruja pulls the cup of tea leaves that are in front of
Armando towards her and peers into it.

LA BRUJA (cont'd)
Oh!

She looks up quickly, fear in her eyes.

ARMANDO

What is it?

LA BRUJA

Your nephew is caught in the
clutches of a powerful brujo.

ARMANDO

A brujo. So what else do you see?

LA BRUJA

I don't see, I hear.

ARMANDO

So what do you hear?

LA BRUJA

I hear your nephew screaming in the
dark. His heart pounding. And you
are there. Screaming as your
nephew dies.

An angry Armando pushes himself away from the table and gets
up.

ARMANDO

I'd ask for my money back but why
bother. Thank you, "La Bruja".

(to Juan)

And you.

Armando is the first out the door.

LA BRUJA

(as Juan gets up)

Bring him back afterwards. I will
do what I can for him.

Juan, nodding, makes the sign of the cross over and over as
he backs up through the door.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Armando and Juan are sitting at a table. Juan is busy
ogling the passing women while Armando broods.

ARMANDO

La Bruja.

JUAN

You said you wanted someone who
could help.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

That's right: Help. So what do I get? "Screaming in the dark! His heart pounding!"

(looking around)

Where the hell is our waiter?

JUAN

Here he comes now.

The WAITER puts a plate of chicken in mole sauce in front of each man and Armando starts right in.

He takes a couple of bites...chews...and swallows.

He motions for the waiter who immediately returns.

WAITER

Yes, sir?

ARMANDO

When you get a chance can I have a glass of water, please?

WAITER

Right away, sir.

JUAN

What's the matter?

ARMANDO

It's a little dry.

JUAN

Tastes alright to me.

Armando looks over at the TWO BUSINESSMEN seated at the table next to them as they dig into their bloody steaks.

ARMANDO

I should have gotten that.

He looks back at his own plate of food.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

"A powerful Brujo".

A MAN IN A WHITE SUIT enters, flanked on both sides by a BODYGUARD, and sits a few tables away from Armando and Juan.

Armando watches them as they make themselves comfortable.

Before he can even ask, Juan is ready with the answer.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

Senor Fuentes. He operates and controls everything south of here.

ARMANDO

Does Manuel...?

JUAN

No, Manuel doesn't run with them. He runs with...

And on cue, a MAN IN A GREY SUIT enters the restaurant who is also surrounded by two bodyguards.

JUAN (CONT'D)

(motions to man in grey suit)
...his crew. That's Senor Gonzalez. He operates and controls everything north of here. Oh my God.

Senor Gonzalez heads over to Senor Fuentes' table. They shake hands and Gonzalez takes a seat opposite his counterpart.

While the drug lords seem cool and collected, it is evident that the bodyguards of both parties are the ones who are more on edge.

ARMANDO

So what does this mean?

JUAN

It means something big is going down.

As everyone watches, anticipating what will happen next, FIVE MEN get up at a nearby table. They have a number of shopping bags with them and look to be tourists.

As they walk past Fuentes and Gonzalez' table, they suddenly reach into their shopping bags and pull out automatic weapons.

One of Gonzalez' men goes for his own weapon and is shot in the head for his effort.

The point has been made and everybody stays right where they are.

As his men take up positions around the room, The LEADER of the group stands behind Gonzalez and puts a knife to his throat.

(CONTINUED)

LEAD KILLER
Senor Gonzalez.

SENOR GONZALEZ
Then you do know who I am.

LEAD KILLER
Of course I know who you are.
You're my boss.

SENOR GONZALEZ
You work for me?

LEAD KILLER
Indirectly. I work directly for
Senor Alejandro Vicente.

SENOR GONZALEZ
Alejandro?

LEAD KILLER
Yes, sir.

One of Fuentes' men starts to slowly go for his weapon but Fuentes touches him lightly on his arm.

Simultaneously, Juan reaches for his gun and Armando touches him lightly on the arm.

ARMANDO
(to Juan, low)
Don't do it.

SENOR FUENTES
(to the bodyguard, low)
Let them take care of their
business.

LEADER
Senor Vicente would like to inform
you that from this moment on, he
will be the one the men turn to for
guidance and support.

SENOR GONZALEZ
So he wants me to just hand over
everything to him, is that it?

LEAD KILLER
That is Senor Vicente's deepest
wish, yes.

(CONTINUED)

SENOR GONZALEZ

You tell Alejandro that I will see him dead and buried in hell before that comes to pass.

LEAD KILLER

Regretfully, he has a similar message for you.

And with that, the lead killer slices open Senor Gonzalez' throat.

Gonzalez stands up, his hands at his own neck as he tries to breathe. He turns around and reaches for his assassin.

His killer pushes the knife so hard into him that the blade punches through his back and pins him to the table.

Everyone is stunned and horrified.

But not Armando.

He's been looking over at their waiter the entire time.

The waiter was on his way back to their table with a glass of water when all of this started.

He now has been trying his hardest to hang onto it the entire time.

But the glass is slipping through his sweaty palm.

ARMANDO

Shit.

The glass slides through the waiter's hands and shatters on the floor.

One of the gun men, startled, turns in the direction of the crash and lets loose a burst of gunfire mowing down the waiter and innocent bystanders.

Armando reaches over to the steak guys and grabs the knives...

A knife flies through the air and plunges into a gunman's throat.

A second knife finds its mark in another gunman's eye.

Gonzalez' and Fuentes men start blasting, first at the gunmen and then each other.

The room erupts into chaos: bullets flying and people dying.

(CONTINUED)

Gonzalez's killer isn't sticking around and goes for the door.

And Armando is up and after him.

EXT. RESTAURANT/SIDEWALK - DAY

Armando runs out just in time to see the killer jump into a waiting car.

It takes off and Armando follows.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Armando runs and watches the car take the next turn.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Armando turns down the street and sees the car stop briefly as another car partially blocks him. Armando pushes harder.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Armando runs out of the alley and is miraculously ahead of the car.

He sees an old TV sitting on top of a garbage can...

He scoops it up...

And throws into the oncoming car's windshield, shattering it.

The car swerves and crashes into a parked car.

The killer gets out of the passenger side and runs on wobbly legs.

And then a second person gets out: Roberto!

The men go in separate directions.

A split second and Armando chooses to chase the killer.

EXT. DEAD-END ALLEY - DAY

The killer skids to a stop. He turns around and sees Armando walking towards him.

The killer pulls out a knife and waves Armando in who is more than happy to comply.

Thirty seconds later and Armando's opponent is beaten and bloody and barely able to stand.

(CONTINUED)

He bends down and picks up his knife. Armando prepares to wade back in but then the killer does the unexpected:

He plunges the knife into his own heart.

And Armando can only stand by as the man dies.

The sound of police sirens can be heard OS...

Cars screeching to a stop...

The police step out of their cars, their weapons drawn and aimed at Armando.

Armando laces his fingers behind his head and goes down to his knees as the cops approach him.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Armando sits at a table opposite Garcia.

After he finishes with it, he closes the manila folder in front of him and pushes it towards Armando.

CAPTAIN GARCIA

You're a very impressive man, Mr. Calixto. A cook in New York City.

He laughs and the other THREE COPS in the room join him.

CAPTAIN GARCIA (cont'd)

I'm sure your mother is very proud...oh. It says here...I'm sorry to hear about your loss, sir. But fifteen years is a very long time to be away from home don't you think. Why kind of son does that make you? Not the good kind I think. Or am I wrong? Are you a good son? Are you a good man?

ARMANDO

Why am I here?

CAPTAIN GARCIA

Not to cause any trouble I hope.

Armando says nothing.

CAPTAIN GARCIA (CONT'D)

Because if you were to make trouble, things could get very

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAPTAIN GARCIA (CONT'D) (cont'd)
difficult for you. For you, your
family and friends. Do you still
have friends here, sir?

(opens folder, goes to
particular section)
Yes, you do. You have a
friend. Who does happen to have a
family. And a rather large one I
might add. Good for him. Family
is important. The bigger the
better is what I say. So, sir. I
ask one more time: Can I trust that
you will be of no concern to my
friends and I?

ARMANDO
I don't want any trouble. I just
want to protect what's mine.

CAPTAIN GARCIA
Nothing wrong with that,
sir. Nothing at all.

Garcia stands and extends his hand in friendship. Armando
gives a forced smile and shakes Garcia's hand in return.

Garcia motions to one of his men who opens the door and
ushers Armando out.

Garcia looks over at the two-way mirror.

INT. ADJOINING INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

On the other side of the mirror, Senor Fuentes smokes. He
and Garcia exchanging unseen but knowing glances.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Manuel sits in the back along with FIVE other GANG MEMBERS.
He looks over at the others but no one says a word.

MANUEL
Where are we going? Are we hitting
another liquor store?

The van comes to an abrupt stop.

The doors open and Roberto pushes THREE COLLEGE KIDS, TWO
BOYS and ONE GIRL - bound, gagged and blindfolded - inside
and they fall into an awkward pile at Manuel's feet.

(CONTINUED)

MANUEL (CONT'D)
They're Americans. What are doing
with Americans?

But no one says a word.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

The Americans are pushed forward, stumbling against one
another.

Manuel steps out of the vehicle and can see, off in the
distance, a LARGE, SPRAWLING COMPLEX.

MANUEL
(to Roberto)
Who lives there?

ROBERTO
Just shut up and get inside.

Manuel follows the others into the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Manuel walks in to find the rest of the gang in some state
of undress.

He turns around and Roberto shoves a blood red robe into his
hands.

ROBERTO
Put it on.

MANUEL
I don't understand. What is this?

ROBERTO
Put it on!

Manuel starts taking off his clothes.

He just finishes when a secret door opens at the back of the
barn.

MANUEL
(to Roberto)
I don't get it.

ROBERTO
Don't be scared.

(CONTINUED)

MANUEL
I'm not scared.

ROBERTO
Then move.

Manuel looks over at the door and then follows the other men with Roberto close behind.

INT. TUNNELS - NIGHT

Manuel squints into the darkness as he walks, the makeshift lights lining the dirt walls being the only source of illumination.

Every time Manuel slows down, Roberto gives him a little push as a reminder to keep moving.

Eventually Manuel sees a light shining brightly ahead from an open doorway.

Manuel looks back at Roberto who is now smiling.

INT. SACRIFICE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Directly in front of Manuel is a large altar with some objects on top:

CANDLES...

A SMALL GLASS CONTAINER OF OIL...

A CHALICE...

...and a BOTTLE OF GUINNESS BEER.

The gang members drag the Americans over to a SET OF HOOKS HANGING FROM THE CEILING and hang the kids from them by their bindings.

The kids are then pulled up until they are suspended in the air, helpless to do anything.

The room is silent as Roberto goes to the altar and lights the candles.

He pulls out a bottle opener and - with a little trouble at first - pops open the Guinness with it.

After pouring some beer into it, he lifts up the chalice and looks to the heavens:

(CONTINUED)

ROBERTO

My Lord and Master, come forth from Hell And greet me as your servant and friend. Join me as I conduct this service in Your honor out of love and thankfulness for you. We have this drink which will become for us an elixir of life and a power beyond all powers by Thy Name.

Roberto takes a big pull off of the chalice and raises it high.

ROBERTO

Hail Satan, Prince of Darkness!

GANG MEMBERS

Hail Satan, Prince of Darkness!

A gang member goes over to the first American, one of the boys, and rips open his shirt.

Manuel is in shock as Roberto brings out a machete from beneath the altar and makes his way over to the boy.

The kid pisses his pants as Alejandro raises the machete high above his head.

ROBERTO (cont'd)

May the gifts of Satan manifest themselves as they burn by the light of the altar flame as we salute thy Name.

ROBERTO

Hail Satan, Prince of Life!

GANG MEMBERS

Hail Satan, Prince of Life!

Roberto brings the machete down...

MANUEL

No!

...and buries the blade into the kid's chest.

The other American kids go wild as they try to scream and struggle.

Manuel backs up and turns around to find a hooded ALEJANDRO VICENTE smiling at him.

CUT TO:

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Armando enters with his weapon raised and ready.

A quick look and he sees:

...his target and one bodyguard dead.

Armando hears a noise come from the other guard lying a few feet away. He walks over to him, pulls out his SIG Sauer handgun and puts a bullet in his head.

Armando hears footsteps running down the hallway. He stands alongside the doorway and shoots the GUARD who enters.

He tries to shoot the SECOND GUARD who enters but fails in getting the jump on him. Struggling for the gun, they crash to the floor.

The guard lands on top, pulls out a knife...

...Armando tries for his own knife...

...and the guard's brains explode against the wall.

With a smoking gun in one hand, Miguel helps Armando up with the other.

They hear the gunfire coming from outside.

As they run for the door, Armando hears a sound come from the target who is still lying face down on the floor.

Armando goes back over to him, flips his body over...

...to finds a BOY, 9, lying underneath the target. His little body is torn up with shrapnel and covered in blood.

But he's still alive.

Armando picks the boy up without thinking, as if the kid had just fallen down and he wants him to stand.

ARMANDO

(in shock)

You're alright you're alright
everything's fine you're going to
be fine.

MIGUEL

Armando!

Armando looks over at his teammate and then back at the kid who's still trying to catch a breath.

(CONTINUED)

Armando lays him down, clearing away any debris.

He gets up, turns and runs.

INT. ARMANDO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (END OF DREAM SEQUENCE)

Armando wakes up, tumbles off his bed and crashes onto the floor.

Suddenly, a woman screams OS.

It's Luz and Armando is up and out the door.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Armando runs in and finds Luz huddled in the corner. He goes over and pulls her close to him.

ARMANDO

What happened?

LUZ

I woke up and Manuel was standing in the doorway. I asked him, "What's wrong, mijo?" He stopped smiling and walked away and I followed. He was standing right outside of the bathroom and then walked inside. I walked in and he was gone. Something's happened to him, Armando. I can feel it.

She breaks down and Armando holds her tighter.

ARMANDO

I'm going to look for Manuel. I'm going to find him and I'm going to bring him home.

LUZ

Why did you do it?

ARMANDO

Luz...

LUZ

Why did you leave?

ARMANDO

Because I was afraid.

(CONTINUED)

LUZ
Afraid of what?

ARMANDO
I was afraid that you would look
inside and you would see. I wasn't
a hero. I wasn't a soldier. I was
a liar and worse.

Luz pulls him to her and they kiss. It's quiet and sweet
and filled with emotion.

Armando gently pulls himself away from Luz.

LUZ
What is it?
(beat)
You have someone.

Armando says nothing.

LUZ (cont'd)
She's probably young and beautiful,
am I right?

ARMANDO
No one could be more beautiful than
you.

Armando tilts her head to his and kisses her one last time
before he gets up and goes to the door.

ARMANDO (cont'd)
I'm going to make a phone
call. Then I'm going to find
Manuel.

LUZ
Please be careful. His friends...

ARMANDO
I know his friends. And I'm going
to talk to them right now.

Armando exits the bathroom.

Luz leans back against the wall and hugs herself hard.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The car comes to a stop. Armando looks over at the soda shop, a fire in his eyes.

JUAN

Armando.

ARMANDO

What?

JUAN

You're not thinking clearly, man.

ARMANDO

If you want to stay, I understand and that's fine. This isn't your problem.

Juan pulls out two guns. He hands one to him but Armando pushes it back at him.

ARMANDO (cont'd)

I told you: I'm not carrying a gun.

JUAN

Well, I'm not going in there without one.

They exit the car, cross the street and head for the soda shop.

INT. SODA SHOP - NIGHT

Blackened room.

Suddenly, the door bursts open. Armando and Juan stand in the doorway, silhouettes against the night lights.

JUAN

Where is everyone?

ARMANDO

That is the question. Now what?

JUAN

I think we should sit down and think about this. You want to get a beer?

Armando turns to Juan, an incredulous look on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. ELENA'S BAR - NIGHT

Roberto picks up the shot glass and downs it. A second later, he spits it back out all over the counter.

ROBERTO

That tastes like shit. Where are you hiding the good stuff?

PEDRO

If you didn't have that gun, you punk...

Roberto puts the gun on the bar and jumps behind the counter.

ROBERTO

What would you do, old man?

Roberto gives him a push and Pedro falls to the floor.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)

Get up and show me what you got.

ELENA (O.S.)

He's got me and I've got a gun, you piece of shit.

He turns around to find Elena behind the trigger of a shotgun and she looks none too happy.

ELENA

And you got two choices: Get the fuck out or get the fuck out. And you've got 'til the count of three to decide. One. Two.

Roberto puts his forehead against the barrel and pushes it hard.

Elena steps back, confusion in her eyes.

Roberto bats the gun from her hands and cracks Elena in the mouth which sends her to the floor.

She scrambles but Roberto gets a hold of her.

He drags her out from behind the bar and throws her on a table. He punches her once, twice and some of the fight goes out of her.

He turns her around and throws her back on the table. As he runs his hands across her body:

(CONTINUED)

ROBERTO

For an old chick, you're not too bad.

ELENA

When I get out of this, I'm going to kill you.

He grabs her by the hair and smashes her face into the table. She wilts and he kicks her legs open.

ROBERTO

Somehow I don't think that's going to happen.

ARMANDO (O.S.)

Somehow I think you're right.

Roberto turns around to find Armando standing in front of him. Juan has disarmed his boy with the gun.

Roberto opens his mouth and gets his teeth knocked out as Armando punches him right in the face.

And the room explodes.

This is a Jackie Chan Rumble-In-The-Bronx beating but Armando's not really looking to let anyone go home.

When the smoke clears, Armando, Juan and Elena are the only left standing in the room.

Armando yanks Roberto to his feet.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

Where is he?

ROBERTO

Manuel is sitting at the right hand of the beast.

Armando punches Roberto in the mouth three times in succession.

Roberto smiles bloody and wide.

ARMANDO

Where is my nephew?

ROBERTO

Burning in hell.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

Where is Manuel, you motherfucker?!

ROBERTO

Haven't you heard? Manuel is dead.

And then Roberto spits out blood and teeth into Armando's face.

Armando's face twists and turns. He brings his right hand back, a ball of iron and anger...

...and then several POLICE OFFICERS tackle him from behind.

EXT. ELENA'S BAR - NIGHT

The thugs file by him, handcuffed and defeated looking.

Roberto, however, walks past Armando with his head held high and a smug smile on his face.

Armando sees Captain Garcia talking to Roberto before he is put in the waiting paddy wagon.

Juan stands next to Armando as they watch the police drive away.

ARMANDO

Do me a favor...

JUAN

I'm already gone.

Juan gets into his car and drives away.

ELENA (O.S.)

Come inside.

Armando turns around and Elena takes his hand. She takes a look at it and then lets it go.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Let's take care of that hand.

But before Armando can say anything, Elena has turned around and walked back inside.

INT. ELENA'S BAR - NIGHT

As she gets up and puts things away, Armando takes a look at Elena's handiwork on his hand.

ARMANDO

You have a knack for this. You ever think about being a nurse?

He turns to look at her...and is greeted with a hard slap to the face.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

Please stop doing that.

As soon as she goes for him, Armando gets a table between the two of them and does it fast.

ELENA

Do you know how long I waited? I was so stupid. I actually thought: What if something happened? What if he's hurt? What if what if. People said you ran away but I knew why you needed to leave, I understood. But you could have said something to me. Anything. Instead you decide to leave me standing there. In front of my house. Waiting for you to take me to that stupid dance. Why would you do that? Why did you do that to me?

Elena sits down, spent. Armando pulls up a chair, joins her.

ELENA (cont'd)

You want something to drink? I want something to drink.

She gets up and goes behind the counter and comes back with a fifth of the finest whiskey Armando has seen in a long time.

ELENA (cont'd)

That punk was right. We do keep the good stuff hidden for those special occasions.

She pours out two shots, pushes one over to Armando.

Armando picks his glass up and holds it out to Elena.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

To old times.

Elena downs her shot, slams it down hard and goes over to Armando.

She straddles him, grabs him by his face and kisses him. She pushes herself on him and Armando can't help himself.

He grabs her and pulls her to him.

But then Armando tears himself away.

ELENA

What is it?

ARMANDO

I'm sorry but I can't.

She looks at him, confused that she's not getting her way. And then the light bulb goes off.

She gets up, disgusted and hurt.

ELENA (CONT'D)

What's her name?!

ARMANDO

Kathy.

ELENA

Kathy what?

ARMANDO

(beat)

I don't know.

ELENA

You don't know you're girlfriend's last name?

ARMANDO

I just met her!

ELENA

You just...? What does this Kathy do for a living?

ARMANDO

She's a ballet dancer.

(CONTINUED)

ELENA

And how old is she?

ARMANDO

She's twenty-eight.

ELENA

Let me say this out loud, just to get it straight in my head. You're going out with a twenty-eight year old ballet dancer. Is that what you're saying?

ARMANDO

Yes. That's right.

ELENA

Hey, man. Good for you! You want another drink? Let's celebrate.

ARMANDO

Sure.

Juan comes back into the bar.

JUAN

You're not going to believe this but by the time I got to the station, bail had already been posted. I was walking in while they were walking out.

ARMANDO

I believe it.

ELENA

(to Juan)

Tell me if you believe this.

ARMANDO

Which way did they go?

ELENA

This one has a girlfriend. She's a twenty-eight year ballet dancer.

JUAN

(to Elena)

Yeah?

ELENA

Ask him yourself.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN
(to Armando)
Yeah?

ARMANDO
Yes! Now can we please get back to
Manuel?

Elena and Juan go quiet at the sound of Manuel's name.

ARMANDO (cont'd)
Thank you. Now what's west of
here?

JUAN
Nothing I can think of.

ELENA
There's the Bernstein farm. Ten
years ago, an American couple
bought the land, built a place out
there. Home away from home they
called it.

JUAN
Quiet couple. Older. They'd have
supplies delivered to them.

ELENA
Surprisingly nice enough people.

JUAN
Then one day the delivery boy shows
up at their place and...

ELENA
...and they were just gone.

JUAN
Everyone figured they had just
decided to go back to the States.

ARMANDO
And it's been sitting there ever
since?

JUAN
Pretty much.

ARMANDO
Nobody tried to buy it?

(CONTINUED)

JUAN
Nobody tried to sell it.

ARMANDO
Why not?

JUAN
Because people were spooked.

ARMANDO
About what?

ELENA
Some people think that maybe they
didn't go back home.

ARMANDO
Where did they go then?

ELENA
No one knows. But there've been
stories.
(in late night horror TV
personality voice)
Some say that they were killed and
sacrificed to the devil!

ARMANDO
Where did these stories come from?

ELENA
Who knows? Where do any of them
come from?

JUAN
Well, they gotta come from
somewhere. Even the police stay
clear and ordered it off limits.

ARMANDO
They have, huh?

ELENA
(to Juan)
Still so superstitious after all of
these years! Have a drink. Maybe
that'll cool those crazy thoughts
of yours.

ARMANDO
I want to go out there.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN
Just say when.

ARMANDO
Now.

JUAN
Tonight?

ARMANDO
Why not?

JUAN
Because! Look outside, man! It's
night!

ELENA
Oh, Christ! If he's too scared,
I'll go with you.

JUAN
You're not going. I'll go, I'll
go, I'll go. You know what? I
will have that drink.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Juan drives, Armando sits in the front passenger
seat. Other than Johnny Cash singing "The Man Comes Around"
on the radio, the ride is a silent one.

Juan pulls out a flask, takes a slug and passes it over to
Armando. Armando pushes it back to him.

Armando turns off the radio.

JUAN
We'll find him.

ARMANDO
I know.

JUAN
And bring him home.

ARMANDO
I know.

Juan passes the flask back to Armando.

This time Armando goes for it. He takes a big pull, shakes
it off and passes it back to Juan.

Juan turns Johnny Cash back on.

EXT. BERNSTEIN FARM - HILL - NIGHT

Juan and Armando are on top of this hill overlooking the farm.

To the left of a large barn, is a large corn field. To the right of it - about a hundred yards away - is a large ranch style house.

Except for the moonlight, there are no other lights to be seen anywhere on the property.

ARMANDO
(motions to the house)
That's the Bernstein's?

JUAN
Yeah.

ARMANDO
And no one's lived there since they've been gone?

JUAN
No. Why?

ARMANDO
Looks like there's been some renovations.

JUAN
(looking over at it)
Yeah. Yeah it does.
(looking back at farm)
So how do you want to do this?

ARMANDO
I am going to go down there. You are going to stay up here.

JUAN
I am not letting you...

ARMANDO
I work better alone. If I'm not back in an hour then something's happened and I want you to get the hell out of here. I don't want your wife thinking that I got her husband killed because I asked him to do something stupid.

Juan pulls out a gun and tries to force it on him but Armando's having none of it.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to attract any attention. Guns tend to do that. Especially when they go off.

JUAN

Take it goddammit.

Armando puts it in his waistband and starts down the hill.

As Armando makes his way to the farm, Juan pulls out his cell phone and starts dialing.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Armando sees lights and hears a lot of activity coming from inside. He keeps low as he enters.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

All around Armando GANG MEMBERS are busy with various tasks:

...taking apart cars...

...checking in shipments of drugs...

...hiding the drugs in the cars...

...putting the cars back together again...

Armando sees the door at the back of barn. He makes his way past the men and sneaks inside.

INT. TUNNELS - NIGHT

He flattens himself against a wall and waits for the HOODED GUARD to pass.

As soon as he does, Armando comes up behind him and knocks him out with a blow to the back of his head.

Armando puts on the hood and tries a nearby door. It opens and - after he sees that it's empty - he drags the guard into the room.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Armando dumps the guard and closes the door. He sniffs the air and swats at the numerous flies around him.

And then he turns to find:

...bodies piled upon bodies. Some have been freshly killed and some have not.

Armando opens the door, takes a peek and exits the room.

INT. TUNNELS - NIGHT

Armando turns the corner and runs right into another HOODED GUARD coming out of a door.

HOODED GUARD
It's about time! You're late.

ARMANDO
Sorry.

HOODED GUARD
Don't be sorry, be on time. Here.

He shoves a key ring into Armando's hands.

HOODED GUARD (CONT'D)
And do me a favor: hit them with
some water. They're really getting
ripe.

And then the guard disappears down the tunnel.

There's only two keys on the ring. Armando opens the door with one and enters the room.

INT. PRISONER ROOM/CAGES - NIGHT

Armando walks through the room and stares in horror at the number of people chained together.

He sees Manuel passed out in the corner and rushes over to him.

ARMANDO
Manuel. Wake up.

Manuel gives a quiet groan but doesn't wake.

Armando sees a trough and bucket.

He comes back with a bucket of water and throws it into Manuel's face.

This does it as Manuel wakes up coughing and trying to catch his breath.

MANUEL
Uncle Armando?

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

Are you hurt?

MANUEL

I'm dizzy.

ARMANDO

You've been drugged. You think you can stand?

MANUEL

I think so.

Armando helps him up and they head for the door.

MANUEL (cont'd)

(looking around at the others)

What about them?

ARMANDO

We can't do anything right now.

MANUEL

But Uncle Armando...

ARMANDO

We have to leave and we have to leave right now.

Armando takes a look out the door and they leave.

INT. TUNNELS - NIGHT

The sound of approaching footsteps can be heard OS.

Armando and Manuel can't go back: there's nowhere to hide.

They can't go forward: they'll walk right into whoever is approaching them.

The approaching men are about to turn the corner...

CUT TO:

THREE HOODED GUARDS turn the corner to find Armando - hood over his face - bent over Manuel who is slumped against a wall.

The guards immediately aim their guns at Armando.

ARMANDO

Relax! I just found him here myself. Looks like he got out of the cage.

(CONTINUED)

Armando reaches for Manuel and tries to pull him up. But Manuel falls back down like a sack of potatoes.

Armando looks over at the guards.

ARMANDO (cont'd)
What're you just gonna stand
there? How about a little help
here?

His tone gets them moving and the guards come over.

As soon as they get near, Armando reacts and takes them down one at a time.

Armando helps Manuel to his feet, they continue down the tunnel, turn the corner...

...and run into a GUARD the size of a truck.

BIG GUARD
Who the fuck are you?

ARMANDO
We need help! I just found this
guy back there and...

BIG GUARD
Bullshit. I know him but I don't
know you.

Armando pushes Manuel to the side and goes for the guy.

But a few seconds later and Armando finds himself on the ground.

Then against one wall.

Then another.

And then back on the ground again.

Armando's gun falls out from his waistband and skitters across the floor.

He struggles but Armando is pinned to a wall and being slowly strangled.

Suddenly, a shot rings out and the guard falls dead to the floor.

Armando looks over at Manuel and the smoking gun in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

He helps his nephew to his feet and smiles at him.

ARMANDO
Thank you.

MANUEL
You're welcome.

ARMANDO
Now we really have to move.

They stop walking and start running.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Armando and Manuel stay low as they make their way to the exit.

There's only one guard standing between them and the exit.

ARMANDO
(low, to Manuel)
Stay right here.

Armando approaches the lone guard from behind and chokes him until he passes out.

Armando motions for Manuel to move.

They get to the exit and run out...

...and straight into a hooded Alejandro with a large group of his men.

Alejandro flicks a hand and his boys attack.

Armando fights and brings a couple of them down but their numbers are too much and start wearing on him.

Alejandro joins the melee.

In his weakened state, Armando doesn't last too long. One well placed punch puts him down and he is unconscious the minute he hits the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The SPEC OPS team is hauling ass while returning fire as their PURSUERS close in.

As soon as they see the waiting helicopter in the clearing up ahead, the team makes a run for it.

The Lieutenant, Armando and Miguel bring up the rear.

Bullets rip into the trees around them and Miguel lets out a scream of pain.

Armando turns around to find Miguel down and gripping his legs in pain.

Armando and the Lieutenant start to go back for Miguel but then are pinned down by more gunfire.

The Lieutenant takes a bullet to the shoulder and falls.

Armando can see Miguel, several yards away, as he fires into the jungle at the oncoming wave of men. He looks back at Armando.

They lock eyes...

Armando grabs the Lieutenant, gets him to his feet and they go for the helicopter.

As soon as they reach it, Armando and the Lieutenant are helped aboard the helicopter.

As it takes off, Armando gets to the pilot.

ARMANDO

We have one more man!

He points at Miguel who is still fighting the good fight.

The pilot nods and switches direction back towards Miguel.

Armando picks up an M-14 sniper rifle, goes over to the open door and starts firing.

His aim is good and he fires fast but the number are too much.

The helicopter is struck by a number of bullets coming from the approaching men.

(CONTINUED)

PILOT
It's too hot!

And he pulls away.

ARMANDO
No!

Armando starts shooting again.

He catches Miguel in his scope looking up at him. Armando slowly squeezes the trigger.

Armando pulls the rifle back and looks away as Miguel is swarmed by the enemy.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT - 20 YEARS EARLIER (FLASHBACK)

The SPEC OPS team is hauling ass while returning fire as their PURSUERS close in.

The Lieutenant, Armando and Miguel bring up the rear.

As soon as they see the helicopter in the clearing up ahead, they make a run for it.

Bullets rip into the trees around them and Miguel goes down.

Armando and the Lieutenant start to go back for Miguel but then are pinned down by more gunfire.

The Lieutenant takes a bullet to the shoulder and falls.

Miguel looks back at Armando.

They lock eyes...

Armando grabs the Lieutenant, gets him to his feet and they go for the helicopter.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Armando and the Lieutenant are barely aboard before the helicopter takes off.

Armando gets to the PILOT:

ARMANDO
(to Pilot)
We have one more man!

(CONTINUED)

Armando points at Miguel who is still firing into the jungle.

The pilot nods and turns back towards Miguel.

Armando gets over to the door and lets loose with his M320, cutting down the men advancing on Miguel's position.

But then Armando's weapon stops...

...he's out of ammo.

Armando grabs an M-14 sniper rifle that's lying nearby, goes back to the open door and starts firing.

He's good and fast but the numbers are too much.

He sees:

...a soldier with an RPG...

...and Armando falls back the pilot swings the helicopter out of the way of the incoming missile.

PILOT
(to Armando)
It's too hot!

ARMANDO
No, wait...!

Armando goes back to the door...

...raises the M-14...

...catches Miguel in his scope looking up at him.

...Miguel gives him a nod...

...Armando slowly squeezes the trigger...

...and he pulls the rifle up; Armando can't do it.

Then helicopter changes direction.

Armando takes a last look at Miguel who is overwhelmed by the enemy before he looks away.

CUT TO:

INT. SACRIFICE ROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT (END FLASHBACK)

Armando wakes up immediately from the shock of the slap to his face.

Roberto, who is standing in front of Armando steps to the side and Alejandro steps up front.

ALEJANDRO

Armando Calixto. Where have you been?

ARMANDO

Miguel...

Alejandro punches him in the face and Armando spits out blood.

ALEJANDRO

Miguel's not here. He disappeared, dragged into the jungle and forgotten. Do you know how long he was there? Three years. For three years he was a plaything, a chew toy for the men when they were bored. You can't even imagine the games that they would play. So how did he survive? He prayed. But God didn't hear him, no matter how hard he cried and so he began praying to someone else. To him. The Dark Lord, The Prince. And one day his prayers were answered. He took this window of opportunity and he ran. He ran until he thought that his heart was going to burst. Until his legs gave out and he fell down to his knees and gave thanks to His Master and pledged to him what little left of his life that he had to him. And from that point on, there was no more Miguel. There was only Alejandro.

ARMANDO

Miguel. I went back. I tried to find you.

ALEJANDRO

Alejandro, Armando. Don't make me repeat myself a third time. I tried to find you also. When I got

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEJANDRO (cont'd)
back, you were the first person I
looked up. But imagine my surprise
when I found out that you had
disappeared as well.

ARMANDO
Alejandro. I left because...

ALEJANDRO
I know why you left. A conscience
can be a terrible thing
sometimes. Trust me, I know.

ARMANDO
Alejandro. Let Manuel go. He has
nothing to do with this. This is
between you and me. He's just a
kid.

Alejandro seems to be actually contemplating this as he
turns around.

But when he turns back to face Armando, he has the machete
in his hand.

Alejandro motions and Roberto rips open Armando's shirt,
exposing his chest.

ALEJANDRO
You and I were just kids when we
were out there. You and I were
just kids when we were killing other
kids. Sometimes kids need to see
certain things up close in order to
learn.

Alejandro - standing in front of Armando - raises the
machete high above his head...

...brings it down...

...and stops.

He smiles at Armando.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)
And sometimes they need to
experience it for themselves.

ARMANDO
No!

Roberto rips open Manuel's shirt...

(CONTINUED)

...Alejandro goes over to Manuel...

...and raises the machete above his head...

ALEJANDRO

May the gifts of Satan manifest
themselves as they burn by the
light of the altar flame as we
salute thy Name. Hail Satan,
Prince of Life!

ARMANDO

Miguel. Don't do this. Please
don't do this. Kill me. But not
him. Please. Not him. Miguel!

Alejandro pulls the gag out of Manuel's mouth...

MANUEL

No no no no no please...

ALEJANDRO

You were always so handy with that
knife of yours, Armando. Now I
want you to see what I can do with
mine.

...and he brings the blade back up...

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Uncle Armando!

ARMANDO

Manuel!
(to Alejandro)
NO!

MANUEL

Uncle Armando, help me...!

...and Armando's body jerks involuntarily as soon as he sees
the blade bury itself into Manuel's chest.

Alejandro pulls the blade free, rears back and slams it back
into Manuel again.

He cracks Manuel's chest open with a twist of the machete.

...reaches into the cavity...

...and pulls out Manuel's still beating heart.

Alejandro takes a bite out of the pulsating muscle, his eyes
rolling into the back of his head as he savors this moment.

(CONTINUED)

He throws the remainder of the heart to the floor and approaches Armando who appears catatonic at this point.

As soon as he is within reach, Armando snaps.

...and kicks at Alejandro...

...thrashes and pulls at his bindings...

...and screams like a wild animal caught in a trap.

Alejandro brings machete ip...

...and cracks Armando in the face with the butt of it, knocking him out.

ALEJANDRO

(to Roberto)

Take him to the desert and bury him
along with his bastard nephew.

Alejandro hands the machete over to Roberto and exits the room.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Roberto leads the way as HIS BOYS drag Armando and Manuel out and throws him into a waiting van.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The van comes to a stop and Roberto and crew come out dragging Armando and Manuel behind them.

Roberto sees Armando coming around.

ROBERTO

(to two of his men)

Get him on his knees.

Roberto is slipping on a pair of brass knuckles as he walks over to Armando.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)

(to Armando)

Hey, tough guy.

Armando, still groggy, looks up...

Roberto hits Armando in the face over and over.

Armando is battered and beat. The only reason why he hasn't fallen over yet is because of the two men holding him up.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
(dazed)
Manuel...

ROBERTO
Don't worry, Uncle Armando. You'll
be seeing Manuel again soon enough.

Suddenly, one of Roberto's men is gunned down. More bullets fly and everyone scatters as they try to find cover.

Juan and Charlie come out, their automatic weapons lighting up the darkness.

One by one the gang members die as their bodies are ripped apart by gunfire.

As soon as he's hit, Roberto goes for the van.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Roberto gets into the driver's seat and fumbles for the keys.

He drops it on the floor.

He bends down to grab them...

...and sits up to find a shotgun pointed at his face...

...and Elena behind the shotgun.

ELENA
I told you I was going to kill you,
motherfucker.

The driver's side window blows out from the shotgun blast.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

As he rushes over to Armando, Juan looks over and sees Manuel's mutilated body.

JUAN
Oh, God.

He gets over to Armando and checks his wounds.

JUAN (CONT'D)
Armando, look at me.

Armando does for a split second and then passes out.

(CONTINUED)

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. LA BRUJA'S HOUSE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Armando awakens to find La Bruja standing above him as she waves some burning herbs.

Armando's eyes close again.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

Armando comes to and finds La Bruja waving a flailing chicken above him.

He reaches for her but the effort is too much for him and he slips back into asleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

Armando wakes up gagging on the burning liquid La Bruja is trying to force down his throat.

He pushes her away but once again sleep takes over and he sinks back down into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

Armando opens his eyes to find Elena sitting on the bed beside him.

She holds a glass of water to his lips and helps him sit up.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Small sips. Don't rush it.

Armando does as he is told and drinks the water in tiny amounts.

Juan comes through the door with groceries in his arms.

As soon as he sees that Armando is conscious, he puts them down and goes over to him.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN
(to Elena)
Careful with him!

ELENA
I know what I'm doing.

JUAN
I'm just saying...

ARMANDO
Where's Manuel?

ELENA
You're not strong enough yet. You
need to rest.

Armando leans back and closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. LA BRUJA'S HOUSE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Luz walks in with a plate of food. But when she looks in
Armando is nowhere to be found.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Juan comes in to find Armando staring down at Manuel in his
coffin (we never see Manuel's face).

Armando turns around and hobbles past Juan and through the
door.

INT. LA BRUJA'S HOUSE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Armando finishes drinking his water and Elena reaches over
to take it from him. But Armando stops her. He takes her
hand into his.

ARMANDO
Thank you.
(to Juan)
And you...

JUAN
If I had gotten there sooner...

ARMANDO
You came for me and I will always
be grateful. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

(looks around)
Did I see La Bruja?

JUAN
I didn't know where else to take
you.

ARMANDO
Remind me to thank her the next
time we meet.

ELENA
Do you want me to call Luz?

ARMANDO
No, not now.

JUAN
She doesn't blame you for what
happened.

ARMANDO
I'll see her after I'm done.

ELENA
Done with what?

ARMANDO
The only thing that I've been
thinking of doing the minute I saw
Manuel die: I'm going to kill them
all.

And this is the part of the movie where the
I'M-GOING-TO-KILL-THEM-ALL music comes up and comes up loud.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Armando picks up a weapon from the table of guns and
examines it carefully.

CHARLIE
I said it before and I'll say it
again: you got good taste, my
man. What you got there is...

ARMANDO
...a modified M320: it's got an
advanced day/night sight, double
action firing mechanism, an
unobstructed side-loading breech...

Armando takes a look at the barrel.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO (CONT'D)
...and a grenade launcher.
(to Charlie)
Thank you.

CHARLIE
We're family, yo. And after what
they did...lets' send these
motherfuckers straight back to
hell.

ARMANDO
I appreciate it, Charlie and I'm
holding you to that. I need one
more favor from you though.

CHARLIE
Say it.

ARMANDO
Do you know Senor Fuentes?

CHARLIE
I know someone who knows
someone. Why?

ARMANDO
Can this someone get me a meeting
with him?

Armando goes back to his brand new toy without waiting for
an answer.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Armando...

...shooting at cactus.

...practicing more and getting better....

...firing off shots with one hand...

...firing off shots with the other hand...

...firing off multiple shots with a gun in each hand...

...drops the guns...

...and pulls out the shotgun strapped to his back...

(CONTINUED)

...and blasts the cactus over and over as he walks towards it.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

The sound of bowling pins crashing.

The bowling alley is empty save for Senor Fuentes and THREE BODYGUARDS

The bodyguards stop Armando and Juan as they approach and search them.

The bodyguard puts a hand on his own gun as soon as he realizes Armando is armed.

BODYGUARD
(to Senor Fuentes)
He's got a gun.

SENOR FUENTES
Of course he does.

He motions to let Armando through.

Armando and Juan walk towards him but the bodyguards only let Armando through.

JUAN
I change my mind. I'm going to
wait right here.

Armando takes a seat and watches as Senor Fuentes hits a perfect strike.

He walks back and sits down next to Armando.

SENOR FUENTES
Do you bowl, Mr. Calixto?

ARMANDO
No.

SENOR FUENTES
That's too bad. It's a wonderful
sport. Do you enjoy any physical
activity?

ARMANDO
I'll catch a baseball game every
now and then on TV.

(CONTINUED)

SENOR FUENTES

Ah, baseball. America's
pastime. The sport of spitting and
sleeping. Would you like some
pomme frites, Senor
Calixto? That's what they call
french fries - excuse me - Freedom
Fries in France.

ARMANDO

No thank you.

SENOR FUENTES

(to a bodyguard)

Two pomme frites, lots of ketchup.

(to Armando)

They have very good pomme
frites. So, Senor Calixto. What
is it you wish to speak to me
about?

ARMANDO

Alejandro Vicente.

SENOR FUENTES

The infamous Alejandro Vicente. He
is a problem.

ARMANDO

I can help you but I'm going to
need your help.

SENOR FUENTES

Be rest assured, that I have not
forgotten our Alejandro. I'll deal
with him and in due time. And why
should I help you? Correct me if
I'm wrong but you are the man who
watched his own nephew die in front
of him. You want my help but you
have nothing to give in return.

ARMANDO

Do you know what he's doing out
there right now? He's preparing
for war. Are you ready to die for
what you believe because he
is. You're right. I watched
someone I love die right in front
of my eyes. Now I do have
something to give. I can give you
my heart and it is full of
hate. Put him in front of me and I
will make him go away.

(CONTINUED)

The bodyguard returns with the pomme frites.

Senor Fuentes takes a fry and dips it into the side of ketchup before eating it.

SENOR FUENTES (CONT'D)
It doesn't need it but I love it.

He extends the paper bowl of fries to Armando.

Armando takes a few and pops them in his mouth.

SENOR FUENTES (CONT'D) (cont'd)
So, Senor Calixto. What is this plan yours? More pomme frites?

Armando reaches for more as Juan looks on.

EXT. MAIN COMPLEX - HILL - DAY

Armando, Juan and Charlie are overlooking the house a short distance away.

A limousine pulls up and Senor Fuentes - surrounded by FOUR BODYGUARDS - steps out. After a quick look around, he enters the house.

Armando hands Juan the binoculars.

ARMANDO
As soon as you see the signal,
that's when you move.

JUAN
What's the signal?

ARMANDO
You won't miss it.

JUAN
And you're sure you don't me to go
in there with you? To get your
back?

ARMANDO
I know you have my back. I just
need you to do it from out
here. Ready?

JUAN
Ready.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Always, homes.

They bump fists.

Armando makes his way down the hill as Juan watches him through the binoculars.

Armando takes out ONE OF ALEJANDRO'S MEN and does it fast and brutal with his knife.

JUAN

Jesus.

Armando is proceeding towards at a good clip when he suddenly stops.

JUAN (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

He changes direction and heads for the barn.

INT. BARN - DAY

The cars are now all put back together again.

Armando does a quick inspection of one of them before turning his attention to the TWO GUARDS at the secret door.

He picks up a rock and throws it at one of the cars.

One of the guards, upon hearing the noise the rock makes, goes over to where he heard the noise.

He takes a look, his gun drawn but finds nothing.

He turns around and sees that his partner is dead with a knife in his throat.

Armando grabs the surviving guard from behind, covers his mouth and slices his throat open.

He drops the dead guard to the floor and heads for the door.

INT. SACRIFICE CHAMBER - DAY

Armando looks over at the dangling hooks and the large puddles of dried blood beneath them.

He looks over at the altar.

He looks over at the tunnels.

INT. MAIN COMPLEX - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Senor Fuentes - surrounded by AN ARMY OF BODYGUARDS - is seated at a large table when Alejandro walks in. He, too, has come prepared with his own ARMY OF MEN.

Alejandro takes a seat opposite his adversary.

ALEJANDRO

Good day, Senor Fuentes.

SEÑOR FUENTES

Let's dispense with the pleasantries, shall we?

ALEJANDRO

We live in a civilized society, Senor.

SEÑOR FUENTES

You were very civilized in the way that you killed Gonzalez.

ALEJANDRO

I do admit that I was a bit heavy handed in my approach. Then again my point was made or you wouldn't be here.

SEÑOR FUENTES

What is it you wish to discuss with me?

ALEJANDRO

The same deal that I proposed to Gonzalez. You hand over everything and I let you live. I am after all a fair man. There is no need for further violence.

SEÑOR FUENTES

A fair man. I have heard that about you. I've also heard that you are another kind of man.

(CONTINUED)

ALEJANDRO

And what is that if I may ask?

SENOR FUENTES

A dead one.

Without warning, Alejandro's men turn and train their weapons on their boss.

SENOR FUENTES (CONT'D)

I propose a new deal.

Alejandro's men aim...and are gunned down by Senor Fuentes' men. After the smoke clears, Fuentes stand alone.

Fuentes looks over at Alejandro.

ALEJANDRO

Yes. Time to die.

And on cue, Alejandro's men are cut down by a barrage of bullets.

Everyone runs for cover including Senor Fuentes.

Alejandro can see Armando from his hiding place and motions for the remainder of his boys to outflank him.

Armando sees this and tries to improve his position.

There are too many of them, however, and begin to converge on his position.

EXT. MAIN COMPLEX - DAY

As soon as they hear the gunfire coming from inside, bullets begin to fly from both sides as they gun each other down.

EXT. MAIN COMPLEX - HILL - DAY

Juan and Charlie aim their weapons at the men and then find themselves surrounded by Captain Garcia and his officers. But the cops aren't here to kill them.

Instead - much to Juan and Charlie's relief - they're there to help them.

Everyone comes out of their hiding place shooting.

INT. MAIN COMPLEX - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Armando is taking a lot of fire and soon gets pinned down. Just when it looks like he's not going to make it, the room is flooded by the people from the cages.

The room explodes into chaos. Alejandro fights his way through the mob and gets to the tunnels.

Armando goes after him.

INT. TUNNELS - DAY

Armando catches up with Alejandro and they fight hand-to-hand. Armando gets the better of him and Alejandro starts running again.

INT. SACRIFICE CHAMBER - DAY

Alejandro rushes over to the altar and looks but no machete; Armando comes in brandishing it. And then Armando does the unexpected and tosses the machete over to Alejandro.

They have a brutal knife fight - Armando with his SIG Sauer and Alejandro with the machete. Armando wins and finishes Alejandro off with multiple stab wounds.

As he dies, Alejandro thanks Armando.

Juan comes into the room and finds Armando kneeling over Alejandro's body. All of Armando's emotions come flooding out of him and he finally breaks down into tears.

EXT. MAIN COMPLEX - DAY

Armando and Juan are approached by Fuentes and Capt. Garcia. Fuentes is impressed by Armando and offers him employment the next time he's in town; he tells Armando that he's "a good man" to have around.

As they drive off with the drug filled cars, Armando is still lost in thought regarding the last jab at him.

INT. LUZ' HOUSE - ARMANDO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Armando takes a look at some KIDS playing in a neighbor's yard.

He bends down and places his Sig Sauer knife back into its resting place underneath open floorboard.

Juan comes in just as Armando finishes putting the board back in it's place.

(CONTINUED)

JUAN

You just about ready?

Armando goes over to the bed and picks up his bags.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Where's Luz?

Armando says nothing.

JUAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(pointing at Armando's bags)

You alright with that?

ARMANDO

I'm fine.

Armando walks past Juan and out the door.

EXT. LUZ' HOUSE - STREET - DAY

Armando and Juan walk out to find Elena sitting in the front seat of Juan's truck. Charlie, meanwhile, is standing in front of another car.

Armando walks over to Charlie.

ARMANDO

Come to see me off, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Wanted to make sure you got where you were going. You never know about devil worshiping motherfuckers.

ARMANDO

I think I'll be alright.

CHARLIE

Alright, yo. But remember: if you ever need something, give me a call. I'll be here.

Charlie gives Armando pounds and then another awkward half-hug/half-handshake thing.

Charlie gets back behind the wheel of his car, starts it up and drives off.

Elena - she's gotten out of the truck - stands next to Juan and Armando as they watch Charlie drive away.

(CONTINUED)

ELENA

He's still crazy after all these years. Why do you hang out with him?

ARMANDO

Because he's family.

ELENA

Where's Luz?

JUAN

She'll probably meet us there.

ELENA

Let's get going then.

As everybody piles into the truck, Armando takes a last look at the house.

INT. AIRPORT - BATHROOM - DAY

Armando dries his hands and looks over at himself in the mirror. He takes a deep breath and then walks outside.

INT. AIRPORT - SECURITY CHECK - DAY

Armando looks over at the LONG LINE OF PEOPLE and then back at his friends.

JUAN

I guess this the end of the line for us.

Elena goes first.

She grabs Armando by the face and gives him a kiss that makes every guy in the area crane their neck. She pulls away and...

ELENA

(trying to sound tough)
You tell this twenty-eight year old dancing white girl of yours...

(softens)

You tell her that she's a lucky woman. And if she doesn't know how to take care of you, tell her to come to me and I'll show her how.

She gives him another kiss but this time softer.

(CONTINUED)

ELENA (cont'd)
(to Juan)
I'm going to wait for you in the
truck.

And with that, Elena turns and walks away.

JUAN
(to Elena)
I'll be right there.
(to Armando)
I know you got high hopes but don't
expect nothing like that from me.

ARMANDO
Juan.

JUAN
You don't have to say anything. I
just wanted to see you off at the
airport the first time around. Now
I got my chance.

ARMANDO
I'm sorry.

JUAN
You are and always will be my best
friend. You never have to
apologize to me.

They start off giving each other a handshake but finish with
a warm hug.

As Juan pulls away...

JUAN (cont'd)
I felt that. You were going for my
junk.

ARMANDO
You wish.

Juan gives Armando a hard but playful smack to his face and
then starts walking away.

JUAN
Go home. But come back soon.

ARMANDO
I will.

A wave of his hand and Juan is gone.

(CONTINUED)

Armando turns...

...and finds Luz standing right in front of him.

ARMANDO

Luz...

But that's all can get out.

As he finally breaks down, Luz rushes over to Armando's side.

ARMANDO (CONT'D)

I didn't keep my promise.

LUZ

Yes you did. You brought him home.

ARMANDO

There's so much I wanted to say. To you, to everyone. I don't even know where to begin.

LUZ

Listen to me. You're a good man no matter what anyone says. No matter what you say. You deserve everything good in the world. you just have to believe it.

They kiss. It's sweet and tender and Luz is the first to pull away.

She smiles and without another word, turns and walks away.

Armando looks a little bewildered. Finally he turns and gets on the security check-in line.

INT. RESTAURANT - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone goes quiet when they see Armando walk in.

They watch as Claudio walks past Armando towards the door.

Armando pulls out his uniform and turns suddenly into Claudio. They bump and Armando drops his chef jacket onto the floor.

Everyone holds a breath.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO
Sorry about that.

CLAUDIO
No problem.

Claudio hurries out of the locker.

Michael walks in, sees Armando and goes over to him.

MICHAEL
Hey! I didn't think you were going
to be coming in for another couple
of days.

ARMANDO
I decided it was time for me to
return.

MICHAEL
You do anything? Go anywhere?

ARMANDO
I visited my family.

MICHAEL
Back to Mexico?

ARMANDO
Back to Mexico.

MICHAEL
Nice. What happened to your face?

ARMANDO
I ran into a little trouble while I
was down there.

MICHAEL
Damn, dude. You sure you're
alright for tonight? We got
one-eighty on the books.

ARMANDO
I'm good. You want to go out
later? Get a drink?

MICHAEL
(surprise)
Yeah, sure.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO

You're going to have to pick a place.

MICHAEL

No problem. We can grab a beer and you tell me all about your trip.

Nothing.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Or whatever.

The both of them continue dressing in silence.

INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Armando is in full swing.

He puts his finished plate onto the pass. The Chef takes a cursory look at it before passing it over to a waiting server.

He looks over at Armando.

CHEF

Armando!

Armando looks over at the Chef.

CHEF (CONT'D)

Glad to have you back in the land of the living. Tres soignee, amigo!

ARMANDO

Thank you, Chef!

Armando turns back around and gives the pan in front of him a good shake.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Armando realizes that he doesn't have enough quarters and goes over to the old woman behind the counter.

ARMANDO

Two dollars please.

The woman reaches underneath the counter and counts out the change. She finishes and hands them to Armando.

(CONTINUED)

ARMANDO (cont'd)
Two dollars.

Armando goes back to the machines and continues putting in the money.

He holds the last quarter over each machine slot and pushes them in simultaneously. The machines start as Armando heads for the door.

He stops in his tracks and turns back towards the lady.

ARMANDO (cont'd)
Thank you.

OLD WOMAN
No problem, sweetie. I'll keep an eye on them for you.

Armando smiles and continues towards the door.

INT. DINER - DAY

Armando is sitting in a booth watching the people walk by when the waitress walks up.

WAITRESS
What can I get you, hon?

ARMANDO
Just a cup of coffee, if that's alright.

WAITRESS
That's fine with me, sweetheart, less to carry. One cup of coffee coming up.

And then Armando turns back to the window and his dancer walks right past him.

He didn't recognize her at first - she's dressed in street clothes - but it's definitely her.

He pauses for a second before he gets up and bolts for the door.

ARMANDO
(to the waitress)
I'll be right back!

The waitress watches as he flings the door open and runs.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Armando slows down as he catches up to the woman. Along with several other people, the woman is waiting for the light to change.

Armando stands by her side. He can't even bring himself to look at her. He turns to face her.

ARMANDO

Everyone says that they're waiting for the courage to come in order to live their lives. But what we don't realize is that courage doesn't exist and that we'll be waiting a long time. A good friend of mine told me that when I see an opportunity, I should take it. It's good advice.

DANCER

Excuse me? Have we met before?

ARMANDO

My name is Armando Calixto and I'd like to know if you'd join me for a cup of coffee.

We can't hear what they're saying but a conversation has started between them.

At one point Armando smiles and extends a hand to her.

His dancer looks at him, a puzzled look on her face.

She slowly smiles and shakes his hand.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END.