

UNDOCUMENTED, UNAFRAID - PILOT EPISODE

Written by

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Besieged by a neighborhood street gang, a young father separates from his wife and child to come to the United States, not knowing what awaits him at the Mexican border.

EXT. RIVER SHORE - SUNDOWN

The Rio Grande, Mexican shore. MARIO, 18, and ISMAEL, 19, run to an embankment on the shore of the river. From the ridge they see a wide muddy flow winding down slowly towards the southeast. The sun is sinking, painting the landscape with a golden light.

Mario is tall and strong, dark skin, short, curly hair, he wears thread bracelets on his wrists.

MARIO

Wow! Finally! Can't believe I made it.

Ismael is tall, thin, short straight-black hair.

ISMAEL

Yeah, well, take it easy, you still have to get across.

They run west along a beaten path on the ridge of the embankment, both carry backpacks, wear tee shirts, cut-off pants, and sneakers.

MARIO

Doesn't look too difficult.

ISMAEL

Crossing is the easy part. The problem is what's on the other side.

Ismael leads the way and Mario follows. He sees a group of three migrants, two men and a woman walking on the trail fifty yards ahead of them.

The three migrants step down the embankment and stop on the edge of the shore.

MARIO

Look, those are getting ready to cross. Are they...?

Mario sees the migrants strip down to their underwear and stuff their clothes in plastic bags, one of them has a backpack. The woman puts on shorts and a tee shirt.

ISMAEL

Most people do that. They're keeping their clothes dry.

The three migrants wade in the river up to their waist, holding the plastic bags aloft with one hand. Mario and Ismael pass them by.

Halfway through, all three migrants are lifted by the current and they paddle as best as they can to get to the other shore.

The migrants arrive at a scrape of dirt on the American shore and pull themselves up awkwardly.

MARIO

Come on, let's pick a spot and go for it.

ISMAEL

Go down further. Not so close to those people.

Mario and Ismael run fifty yards further down the trail and step down to the shore. They take off their backpacks and strip down to their underwear.

Mario checks the twenty dollar bill he has been carrying on the inside of his right shoe one last time. He puts his shoes inside the backpack and looks down river, a slow muddy flow about seventy yards across.

MARIO

Okay, I'm ready.

Ismael wades in first, then Mario. They negotiate their crossing easily, they reach the shore in less than half a minute.

Ismael lends Mario a hand and he pulls himself up. Mario, safely on the American shore, quickly begins to put on his dry clothes.

ISMAEL

Ready to go? We're going to keep going that way.

Ismael points to the west while another group of migrants pass them by on the riverside trail heading east. The group is made of five to seven people led by a coyote.

MARIO

Hey, thanks for helping me get across. I will find a way to repay you, I promise.

ISMAEL

You're welcome, and sush. There are a lot of people on the trails, and some of them are *gangeros*. So be quiet and stay close!

MARIO

What about the Border Patrol?

ISMAEL

Yeah, and them, too. Let's go.

Mario and Ismael gather their belongings and set out on the riverside trail heading west.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

ONE MONTH EARLIER

A poor neighborhood in the sprawling coastal city of San Andres, near Panama.

Mario and his cousin FELIPE, 17. wait in front of a cinder block home with a metal door painted blue in front. Felipe is shorter than Mario, he wears straight black hair tied up in a short pony tail.

Like other homes around, it has several additions on the upper floors. Cables and powerlines crisscross from one side of the street to the other.

DON MATIAS, 72, an older man with grey hair approaches, He wears white linen pants, a blue *guayabera*, and sandals. He greets Mario and Felipe politely.

MARIO

Thanks again for letting us move in, Don Matias. We can pay the rest of the security deposit in two weeks.

DON MATIAS

Mario, Felipe, you are brothers in the church, just pay it when you can. I know how hard it is to just come up the monthly rent.

MARIO

Muchisimas gracias, Don Matias. We won't let you down.

Don Matias hands Mario the keys to the front door.

DON MATIAS

Well, here you are, Mario.
Bienvenidos muchachos, God bless.

Don Matias shakes hands with Mario and Felipe and parts ways.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mario and Felipe walk into the apartment which the previous tenants have cleaned out. A table and two white plastic chairs have been left behind in a small kitchen area.

A door to the right of the kitchen leads to the only room in the apartment. A mattress on the floor has also been left behind.

After a brief inspection, Mario turns to Felipe.

MARIO

What do you think?

FELIPE

Kind of a lot of money for a tiny little place.

MARIO

I know. And it took way too long to find it. Come on, let's go get Mercedes and the baby.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

A small yellow cab pulls up to the curb stuffed with four passengers and personal belongings crammed in every available space.

Felipe steps out first and opens the rear passenger door for MERCEDES, 18, traveling in the back.

Mercedes has long black hair tied in a single braid, wears a sweatshirt, jeans, sneakers. She holds CARLITOS, a two-month-old baby boy wrapped in a soft white blanket.

FELIPE

Here we are, *Merceditas*.

Mario steps outside. He pays the fare to the driver. Comes up carefully next to Mercedes.

MARIO

Hey, *nena*. Baby sleeping? That was quick.

MERCEDES

We got lucky, we got a cab right in front.

SOLEDAD, 19, Mercedes' sister, gets out of a cab with two garbage bags stuffed with clothes. She is taller than her sister, with long black hair in a ponytail. She wears jeans, a tee shirt, and sneakers.

SOLEDAD

(looking around)

Wow, this already looks better than our old neighborhood. Any luck with more furniture?

MARIO

There is a used furniture store around the corner.

Mario leads Mercedes and the baby gently with an arm around her, they enter the small apartment. Felipe and Soledad follow.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mario leads Mercedes to the bedroom. A stained double mattress lays on the floor. Soledad follows inside and inspects the mattress.

SOLEDAD

I don't know. Questionable.

MARIO

We'll get a new one.

MERCEDES

Mario, thanks so much for getting this place. Really, we were so crowded at Don Jose's house.

Mario stands near his wife and holds her hand, Felipe brings in the trash bags filled with personal belongings.

MARIO

Nena, we're getting closer to what we wanted. It took us nine months to find a place but here we are.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Mario and Mercedes walk as they hold hands to the town square in their hometown of Playa Negra. Mercedes is showing a baby bump on her belly.

MERCEDES

I wish you weren't going out
tonight.

MARIO

It's alright, nena. I'll be making
extra money and building our
savings to move to the city.

MERCEDES

I'd be upset if I didn't know we
will be living together. I can't
wait until we find a place of our
own.

Mario reaches gently with his hand and pushes a stray hair from her face.

MARIO

No parents, no brothers, just you,
me and this little guy.

Mario reaches and gently touches her belly.

MERCEDES

How do you know its a boy?

MARIO

I have a feeling.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Mercedes sits in the small kitchen area breastfeeding the baby.

MERCEDES

I'm so glad we're here, Mario.
Let's hope we never have to deal
with the gangs again.

MARIO

I pray to God for that every day.

(to Soledad)

Hey, Felipe and I were going to buy
a few more things for the house.

(MORE)

MARIO (CONT'D)
Will you two be okay by yourselves
with the baby for about half an
hour?

SOLEDAD
I don't know, Mario. You know the
situation better than anyone.

MARIO
I think as long as you remain
inside and don't open the door for
anyone, you'll be fine. We won't
take long.

Mario and Felipe leave. Mercedes stands up with the baby in
her arms and walks over to the bedroom.

Soledad inspects the room and starts cleaning up. She
notices a metal door in the back of the room. She slides
open the metal bolt and swings the door open onto a small
patio.

MERCEDES
Oh, good. We have a place to sit
outside with the baby.

SOLEDAD
We should put a lock on this thing.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Soledad stands in front of the kitchen sink washing dishes
and organizing plates in the cabinets. A transistor radio
plays *cumbia* music in the background.

Mario and Felipe come back with two white plastic chairs and
trash bags filled with items for the home.

Mercedes sits quietly at the small kitchen table gently
rocking the baby. Mario comes over to them, kisses Mercedes
gently on the forehead, and touches Carlito's hair. He is
awake.

MARIO
(lovingly to his son)
Hola, nene lindo. How are you sweet
darling?

MERCEDES
Hola, mi amor. The baby is fine.
Any luck with the mattress?

MARIO

Yes, we're dropping these off and going back to get it.

SOLEDAD

Thanks for bringing those, Mario. Do you know where the nearest grocery store is?

MARIO

Its about half a block away. What can I get for you?

SOLEDAD

Thanks, Mario, just a few things. But don't you think Felipe should go? At least during the first few days. Didn't you say you didn't want to be recognized? We don't know this neighborhood yet.

MARIO

You're right, Sole. Thanks. I think that'd be best.

FELIPE

Of course, I'll go, Mario. Let me see that list.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Mario, Mercedes, Felipe and Soledad sit down for dinner at the small table. Mercedes nurses the baby with a cloth over his face.

MARIO

So, nena. Tomorrow Felipe and I go back to work, is there anything else we can get for you, while we still have time?

MERCEDES

I think we're going to be okay, Mario, thanks. We have our pots and pans, we got everything we need to make a batch of *empanadas* to sell, that will keep us busy.

SOLEDAD

And we have to scout a good location to sell. None of us have been to this neighborhood, so we may have to venture out for a bit.

MARIO
Just remember to keep a low profile. Don't be overly friendly, try not to talk to anyone unless you have to.

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

Soledad is cooking, getting dinner ready.

Mercedes walks around the small living room area holding the baby in her arms. She is rocking him trying to put him to sleep, she sings a lullaby in a quiet voice. She looks up when Mario comes in.

MERCEDES
Hola mi amor, how was your day?

Mario leans over to kisses her, he caresses the baby's face gently and whispers to him.

MARIO
Long day, *nena*. It takes for ever to get here. Is Felipe here yet?

MERCEDES
Yes, he's washing up.

Mario sees a small mattress on the floor in the living room area. Felipe comes out of the bathroom in shorts and tee-shirt, his hair is wet.

FELIPE
Hey, what took you so long?

MARIO
Is that your bed over there?

FELIPE
Yes, too crowded in the bedroom.

SOLEDAD
And a little too close for comfort.

FELIPE
I told you, I don't bite, Sole.

Soledad finishes setting the table and calls everyone to dinner. The Lopez Household sits down for dinner.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER - THE GANG PAYS A VISIT

Mario, Mercedes, Carlitos, and Soledad are sound asleep in the main bedroom.

They are startled awake by the metal door in the room being kicked open, slamming against the wall. BAM!

Mercedes screams, the baby instantly wakes up and starts crying. WAHH! Three men known as GANGEROS barge in wielding guns.

GANGERO #1
Everyone up, *cabrones!* Let's go!

GANGERO #2 flips the light switch, they wear red bandanas, red shirts and sneakers. They are members of the local street gang.

GANGERO #3 goes for Soledad and pins her to the ground with his foot, pointing a shot gun at her.

Their leader, RATON, 23, is a tall, muscle-bound mulatto with the word 'MUERTE' (DEATH) tattooed on his forehead. He goes after Mario and grabs him by the scruff of his neck.

RATON
House call for Mario Lopez!

Raton pins Mario against the wall.

MARIO
Please, whatever you do. Don't hurt the baby!

There's a knock on the door.

FELIPE
(from the other side)
Mario! Is everyone okay?

Raton gives the signal and Gangero #3 goes for the door, he opens it and butts Felipe in the face with the shut gun. He is knocked out unconscious immediately.

Raton slips the gun behind his belt, and brings out a brass knuckle. He brings it up close to his face.

RATON
People have been asking for you in
your old neighborhood, *cabron!*
They're wondering where you went!

Raton drives the brass knuckle right through Mario's face. Mercedes screams.

SOLEDAD
Mario!

Mario's face is bloody and mangled. His nose is broken, his eye is bloodshot.

Soledad stands with Mercedes and the baby cowering in a corner. The other two GANGEROS, threaten the two sisters and the baby at gun point.

MARIO
Please don hurt them! Please don't
hurt our baby!

Raton squeezes Mario's neck with his left hand and slowly lifts him off the ground, his right arm is cocked ready to punch him in the face again with the bloody brass knuckle. Mario is gasping for air.

RATON
Welcome to the new neighborhood,
puto cabron!

Carlitos is crying loudly. Raton reaches with the bloody brass knuckle, pulls out the silver gun tucked behind his belt and points it at Mercedes and the baby.

RATON (CONT'D)
Shut that fucking kid up, now!

SOLEDAD
No! Please!

MARIO
Please, don't hurt the baby!

Soledad composes herself and helps Mercedes calm the baby down. Raton shoves the barrel of the gun on Mario's face.

RATON
*Puto Cabron, you owe money to the
gang and still refuse to pay?*

MARIO
(gasping for breath)
Please --- I can't --- breath!

Mario grasps the hand, his grip gets weaker.

RATON
Your friend Tacho called me the
other day.
(MORE)

RATON (CONT'D)

You owe him twenty-four thousand in taxes not paid. And four thousand a month for this rat hole. In advance!

MARIO

Okay, *señor!* Please don't hurt us! We will do whatever you ask! Please!

RATON

That's four thousand for each of you, *cabrones!* You have until tomorrow, Mario. Or I'm coming for you!

Raton gives Soledad a good up and down look.

RATON (CONT'D)

Or maybe, we'll take one of these pretty ladies over here. Put them to work for us.

MARIO

Señor, we'll do whatever you say. Please don't hurt them!

RATON

You have one day to pay up, *cabron!* We don't fuck around in this neighborhood. You don't pay the tax, you fucking die! Simple as that!

GANGERO #3

Hey, Raton. What about the other guy? He owes money, too. Should we fuck him up?

Raton let's go of Mario and he drops on the ground.

RATON

Fuck yeah. I'll finish off this piece of shit.

The two *gangeros* converge upon Felipe, raining down blows and kicks on him. Mercedes is screaming, the baby is wailing.

SOLEDAD
(angry)
Please stop! Haven't you done
enough!

Raton grabs Soledad by her hair and slaps her in the face several times. She falls to the ground by Mercedes's feet crying, terrified.

Raton turns to Mario, he spits on him and kicks him hard on the ribs. He rams the barrel of his gun to his head.

RATON
Don't you ever refuse to pay a tax
again, motherfucker! You pull that
shit again, you're fucking dead!

Raton stomps on Mario head and chest. Mercedes begs for mercy.

RATON (CONT'D)
In this neighborhood, we are the
law!
(to his gang)
Come on boys! We're done here!

Raton exits through the small metal door and the two men follow. They climb up the walls and disappear as quickly as they arrived.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Soledad goes to Mario, who is lying on the ground curled up in fetal position.

SOLEDAD
Oh, my God, Mario!

Mercedes collapses on the bed distraught and crying, holding baby Carlitos in her arms. The baby is crying loud again.

MARIO
Mercedes! The baby!

Mario slowly gets up off the ground and goes to Mercedes. Soledad comes close and helps soothe the baby.

MARIO (CONT'D)
It's okay, nena. The baby is
alright. You're alright.

Mario sees Felipe lying motionless on the ground bleeding from his eyes and forehead. Soledad sees him too and is alarmed by it.

SOLEDAD
Felipe! Please, oh my God!

She goes to Felipe in the hallway and tries to wake him up.

Mario reacts, gets up off the bed and staggers towards the hallway. He kneels next to his cousin and takes a closer look. He puts his ear on Felipe's chest and he can see it rising and falling slowly.

MARIO
It's okay, Sole. He's breathing.

Mario sits back against a wall.

SOLEDAD
Mario, your face. You're bleeding all over the place.

Soledad gets up to fetch a rag from the kitchen and notices she is bleeding from her nose and lip. She washes up quickly and returns to Felipe.

SOLEDAD (CONT'D)
Dear Lord, he is out cold. Should we call an ambulance?

MARIO
I'll go get my phone.

Mario gets up but loses his balance and falls down on the hallway.

MERCEDES
Mario! Are you alright?

Mercedes quickly comes over to check on Mario. He shakes his head and gets up slowly.

MARIO
I'm okay, nena. Thanks. Ah, I got dizzy, everything is spinning.

Mario puts his right hand to his eye and winces in pain. He pulls his hand away covered in blood. Soledad cleans the blood off his face carefully.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Merceditas, nena. Are you okay? Is Carlitos okay?

Mario gets up, gives Mercedes a strong embrace, holds her tight, and kisses her. Mercedes can barely talk through the tears and shock. She rocks the baby nervously.

MERCEDES

The baby is fine, Mario. But what about you? They wouldn't stop beating you, I was so scared!

Mercedes can no longer speak recalling the scene. She cries over the baby and Carlitos cries loudly. Soledad retrieves her phone, returns to Felipe's side and dials 911.

SOLEDAD

Mario, can you keep an eye on Felipe?

(on phone)

Hello, yes. This is an emergency.

While Soledad is on the phone, Mario helps Mercedes walk to the kitchen. He helps her sit down at table and takes the baby from her arms, he is quieting down.

MERCEDES

I can't believe this, Mario. How did they find us? We were being so careful.

MARIO

They have informants everywhere, nena, we knew that. It could have been some one in our church.

Soledad puts the phone down and walks over.

SOLEDAD

Mario they know where we live we can't stay here another day. We have to move today.

MERCEDES

But we just got here.

MARIO

I know, nena. But we are all in danger here, we can't stay.

MERCEDES

God, I'm so tired of running from one place to the next! I want it to stop!

Soledad offers to hold Carlitos, Mercedes cries and walks to Mario, they hold each other while they stand.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

A PARAMEDIC tends to Felipe as he lies on the floor. His face has been cleaned, his head has been bandaged, a bloody dressing covers his right eye.

Mario is also wearing bandages around his left eye and his head. The cuts on his face and body have been treated, he looks alert and strong again.

Soledad is nearby, she has bruises on her face and a swollen right eye. Mercedes rocks the baby asleep in her arms. Mario approaches the paramedic.

MARIO

Is he going to be alright?

PARAMEDIC

It looks that way. He has a concussion, he's going to need a couple of days' rest. He should not go to work.

MARIO

Hum, I don't know about that.

PARAMEDIC

Well, it is up to him, when he wakes up. If he is not well, and we can't tell for sure what's wrong with him, he could collapse and die in the middle of his shift.

MARIO

We'll let him decide.

PARAMEDIC

Okay, I'm waking him up.

The medic waves a stick of smelling salts close to his nose and Felipe sits up startled.

FELIPE

What? What's going on? What?

MARIO

The gang paid us a visit. And they hit you in the head.

PARAMEDIC

Hello, there. You had a concussion and got knocked out pretty badly. You should be seen by a doctor about that.

Felipe shakes his head, rubs his eyes and sees Mario.

FELIPE

Wow, Mario, they really messed you up.

MARIO

There were three of them.

The Paramedic tests Felipe's eyesight and reflexes.

PARAMEDIC

And you shouldn't go to work. You were knocked out for more than an hour.

FELIPE

I can't do that. They'll give my job away in a second.

PARAMEDIC

Suit yourself. You guys are lucky they didn't kill you.

Felipe touches his face and winces in pain. The paramedic gives Felipe a card in case of any other emergencies and exits the apartment.

FELIPE

So, what happened? Did they put a tax on us?

MARIO

Worse, they are also making us pay everything we owed before.

FELIPE

What? How did they find out?

MARIO

Apparently, Tacho got a hold of the guy in charge in this neighborhood and spilled the beans on us. Now they want all their money back. Tomorrow.

FELIPE

That's ridiculous, no one can pay that kind of money. We need to skip out of this neighborhood today.

Felipe stands up with difficulty, Soledad and Mario help him up.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

But wait, didn't Pastor Ospina say that there were no gangs in this neighborhood?

SOLEDAD

Pastor Ospina has been wrong about a lot of things, we all know that.

MARIO

Look, whether it is the '*nortenos*' or the 18th street gang, it doesn't matter. Whoever holds this neighborhood is going to collect their tax.

MERCEDES

Mario, if we're moving out, it might as well be to another city. I've had it with this place.

SOLEDAD

What about the capital?

FELIPE

Sole, that's a bigger city with a bigger problem with the gangs.

MARIO

And besides, we don't know anyone there.

FELIPE

Guys, I mentioned this before and both times I was told I was crazy. But going to the United States is sounding more like a good idea after all of this.

MARIO

Pipe, we talked about this already. Where is Mercedes and the baby going to live? How's is she going to afford an apartment and pay rent?

SOLEDAD

We can stay with Pastor Ospina until you start sending money. And besides, Mercedes and I were already making money selling *empanadas* at the bus stops.

MARIO

Guys, the last thing I ever want is to separate from Mercedes and our baby. They need me now.

FELIPE

We have nowhere else to go, Mario. And they're after us, not them.

MARIO

Felipe, I know this is all hopeful thinking, but there is no guarantee of it ever happening. First, we have to get to the United States, then we have to find a job.

FELIPE

Mario, Mercedes, we are running out of choices, and we're running out of time. My plan has one advantage, that is we don't have to pay a coyote to get to the United States. And more importantly, it will take three days on a cargo ship instead of months by bus, on foot, or whatever.

MERCEDES

I don't know, Felipe. What if they find you out, then what? They'll probably throw you overboard.

FELIPE

Mercedes, Sole. I told you there is a guy that does this every year. I work at the docks, I see the schedules every day. It's the safest way to travel.

A phone rings and Mario reaches for his phone.

MARIO

The police are on the way.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Mario and Felipe are interviewed by TWO POLICE OFFICERS with green-yellow vests in the small living room. Soledad, Mercedes and the baby stand in the kitchen.

POLICE OFFICER #2 inspects the bedroom and the small metal door. He returns to the living room and exchanges a few words with Mario and Felipe. The two officers exit.

MERCEDES

So what did they say? Are they
going to look for them?

MARIO

He said that they would file a
report. That's about it.

SOLEDAD

That's not very reassuring.

MARIO

And we're back to getting as far
away from this place as soon
possible.

FELIPE

Well, for now, the only place we
can go to is wherever the church
can take us.

MERCEDES

Guys, please, I would at least like
to be with Mario. We hardly spend
any time together.

MARIO

We will, *nena*. But for now, we
should go back to the arrangement
we had before. Felipe and I stay
with Gabriel, you and Sole stay at
Pastor Ospina's house.

MERCEDES

I guess. God, give me patience.

Mario's brother, GABRIEL, 32, arrives. He is tall and thin,
dark brown skin and straight black hair in crew cut.

GABRIEL

My goodness, Mario. Is everyone
okay? Dear Lord, look at your face.
And you too, Felipe.

MARIO

Thanks for coming, Gabriel.

GABRIEL

My Goodness, Mercedes. How is the
baby?

MERCEDES

He is fine for now, but he cried so
much last night.

GABRIEL
Sole, you got hit, too?

Gabriel inspects Soledad's bruised and swollen right eye.

SOLEDAD
I'm just glad they didn't hurt the
baby, or Mercedes.

MARIO
(looking at Carlitos)
But they did point a gun and
threatened to shoot him. Gabriel,
this is insane. We have to leave
this city. We can't stay here any
longer.

GABRIEL
I agree Mario, but let's talk about
it later. Right now we have to get
you back to a safe place. I was
able to borrow a truck. Come on,
let's get your belongings and go.

Mario and Felipe begin loading the truck, Soledad and
Mercedes put away dishes and pots into cardboard boxes.

END OF ACT I

EXT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mario, Felipe, Mercedes and Carlitos in her arms, Soledad
and Gabriel, sit at a long table in a crowded room at the
home of PASTOR OSPINA, the leader of a congregation of a
radical Christian church.

Pastor Ospina, 72, is a short, thin man of great vitality,
thinning white hair and leathery brown skin. He is dressed
in jeans, white collar shirt and sandals.

Pastor Ospina sits at the head of the table, next to Gabriel
and his wife BEATRIZ, 29. She is medium height, brown eyes,
curvy with a braid of long brown hair falling down her back.

BETTI and LILIANA, 8, twin daughters of Gabriel and Beatriz
sit to the left of them, along with CATALINA, 16, eldest
daughter. Mario and his companions sit across from them.

PASTOR OSPINA
I would count the cost in this
venture before you begin your
journey, Mario. You have heard the
stories of what it's like at the
border.

(MORE)

PASTOR OSPINA (CONT'D)
You can die trying to get to the
other side.

MARIO
I know the risks, Pastor Ospina.
But the risk of staying here seems
grater at this point.

PASTOR OSPINA
Why don't you move to the capital?
Our sister church can provide
housing for you and your family,
and you can find work easier over
there.

MARIO
Come on, it took them three days to
find me in the new neighborhood.
How long do you think it will take
them to find me there? A week, two
weeks?

PASTOR OSPINA
Mario, I understand, you have no
easy options. The only thing you
can do is give it to the Lord in
prayer and let Him guide you in his
wisdom. Remember what's a stake,
Mario, your wife, and your son
depend on you.

MARIO
I am aware, Pastor. I am aware.

Mario takes a deep breath and a drink from a glass of water.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Pastor Ospina, I know you have an
answer for everything based on
scripture. But just once, I'd like
to hear something that is not based
on the good book. Something
reasonable, something that makes
sense.

PASTOR OSPINA
Well, what is it, Mario? What do
you want to know?

MARIO
Same thing that I've been wanting
to know since I arrived to this
city. Why is this happening?
(MORE)

MARIO (CONT'D)

I didn't come here because I wanted to. I lost my father and two brothers to the guerillas, and then I come here right into the arms of the street gangs. Why have our lives been upended so much and everything that follows is worse than what happened before?

PASTOR OSPINA

It's a time of tribulations, Mario. There is always a period of confusion before you begin to understand.

MARIO

Yes, a time of testing and all of that. But let's talk straight. Right now, all I want is to work to support my wife and child and live peacefully. I can find plenty of work - not the best-paid work - but is there a place in this city where the street gangs will not take everything I earn and threaten my life *every single day*?

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Mario and Felipe are building an addition to their ramshackle home in a favela in the city of San Andres. The home is built on a hill on the outskirts of the city with similar homes nearby.

BEATRIZ, 30, stands in front of a stove cooking in large blackened pots over a wood stove in an open kitchen. Mercedes and Soledad work at a table nearby making empanadas and *pupusas*.

BETTY and LILIANA, 8 year old twins, sit on a side table doing homework, a transistor radio warbles cumbia music from the top of an old refrigerator.

MARIO(V.O.)

Why is my life unraveling to a point where I don't recognize myself anymore? I don't have a home, my family is scattered and I can't see a future any longer?

Five teenagers wearing gang attire and wielding guns, baseball bats and brass knuckles kick the front door and pour into the open kitchen area.

PASTOR OSPINA(V.O.)
Mario, actions have consequences.
When you took matters into your own
hands and broke the golden rule of
non-violence, that's when you lost
control.

Mercedes and Soledad back away from the table towards the stove. Beatriz steps forward.

BEATRIZ
Excuse me? How many times do you
have to be told there is nothing
for you here?

GANGERO #1
We're here to collect! Where's your
idiot husband?

TACHO, 16, the leader of the gang, a muscle-bound *mulatto* covered in tattoos points the gun at Beatriz. Mario and Felipe step forward.

MARIO
Put the gun down, Tacho. You're not
scaring anyone around here.

Tacho points the gun at Mario.

TACHO
And you haven't made a single
payment in three months, *puto
cabron!* Time to pay up!

Betti tries to sneak out of the back, but one of the *gangeros* runs after her and brings her back kicking and screaming.

TACHO (CONT'D)
What? Do you think bringing more
church people is going to stop us
from doing what we're here to do?

Tacho orders two *gangeros* to hold Mario and Felipe back.

TACHO (CONT'D)
You stupid-ass Christians don't
know what you're up against.

Soledad, hiding behind in the back pulls out her cell phone and quietly sends a message to a neighbor.

BEATRIZ

We know who you are Tacho, and you used to be a good kid. You need to repent and change your ways before its too late.

TACHO

Lady, shut the hell up!
(to Mario)
You! Where is the money?

GABRIEL, 35, Bratriz' husband, comes through the door with two other women who are part of a crew that sells food at the bus stops. They are carrying coolers and bottles of soda with cups. Gabriel walks towards Tacho.

GABRIEL

Get out of my house! You are not welcome here!

TACHO

Oh yeah, puto cabron?

Tacho slips the gun behind his belt and grips the brass knuckle. He grabs Gabriel by his shirt and pushes him up against a beam that holds the tin roof of the home.

TACHO (CONT'D)

Well, guess what? Today I have permission to blow YOUR head off if you don't pay. Where's the money?

GABRIEL

Bring my daughter back!

PASTOR OSPINA, 75, thin, balding with white hair, and three women CHURCH MEMBERS arrive and place themselves between the other four gangeros.

PASTOR OSPINA

Stop what you're doing, Tacho! In the name of the Lord! You are hurting innocent people!

TACHO

Well, looks like you are all here for an ass beating. The more the merrier!

(turning to Gabriel)
Where is the money, cabron?

GABRIEL

I told you, bring my daughter back!

Tacho cocks his fist and unleashes a punch with the brass knuckle that rips through Gabriel's face.

Beatriz screams, a *gangero* holds her back. Tacho grabs Gabriel with both hands and throws him over a kitchen table.

The table breaks, food and containers spill out and Gabriel falls on a patio with a low brick wall. He walks up to Gabriel and rains down blows on him.

PASTOR OSPINA
Stop! In the name of the Lord!

TACHO
(standing up)
Or else you're going to do what?

Tacho reaches for his gun with the bloody brass knuckle and points it at Gabriel. Mario is struggling to get free.

TACHO (CONT'D)
Where's the money?

More church members arrive, amongst them, Tacho's MOTHER. She holds Tacho's four year-old brother, ROBERTO, in her arms.

MOTHER
Ignacio, mijito! Please don't hurt these people. They work hard for their money.

Tacho is taken aback and stands up when he hears his mother's voice.

TACHO
Ma'? Ma'! What the hell are you doing here?

MOTHER
Mijo, it is not fair to collect taxes on these people. They barely make enough to feed their families.

TACHO
(turning to a *gangero*)
Can you get her out of here? What the fuck?

BAZUKO, 16, lets go off Mario and takes the old lady out by the arm.

TACHO (CONT'D)
Ah! What pain in the ass!

More CHURCH MEMBERS arrive close ranks. Tacho slips the gun back behind his belt. Tacho's mother tries one more time from the back of the room.

MOTHER

*Mijo, please stop all this! Please!
Come home!*

TACHO

Ma' enough of this shit! Get out of here!

KIKE, 15, one of the gangeros who enjoys humiliating his victims, walks over to Gabriel while he lies on the ground, pulls down his pants and begins urinating on him.

Mario sees this and he boils up with rage. He runs towards the offending gangero and kicks him from behind very hard.

PASTOR OSPINA

Mario, no!

Kike tumbles over the low wall and falls fifteen feet to the house below, and crashes through a tin roof. Felipe gets loose and punches Tacho in the jaw and drops him on the ground.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE

Everyone please stop!

BAZUKO is swinging a baseball bat, Felipe grabs him by the neck and wrestles him to the ground. Pastor Ospina is hit across the face with a bicycle chain and goes down. Mario punches Gangero #4 while he is beating an old man.

Felipe grabs the bat from Bazuko and breaks his knee. Mario sees Tacho getting up, he punches him straight on the left temple and knocks him out. Tacho's gun comes loose.

Kike comes around the corner and back up to the house to help the gang. Mario sees him coming in, he squares up and delivers a straight jab to the jaw. He goes down.

Felipe grabs hold of the gun and fires two rounds in the air. BANG! BANG! The bullets rip through the tin roof.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE (CONT'D)

Oh, my God, he's dead!

Everyone standing runs at the sound of gunfire and the remaining two gangeros are trampled by the mob running towards the door.

Mario runs towards Pastor Ospina, who lies unconscious on the ground, Beatriz rushes for Gabriel. Mercedes stands back with Betti and Liliana, holding the baby who had just woken up and is crying loudly.

There are many injured. Tacho and Kike, are lying on the ground unconscious. Bazuko is writhing on the ground screaming in pain.

MARIO
What do we do with them?

FELIPE
I hate to think what they'd do to us when they wake up.

MARIO
Let's tie them up.

SOLEDAD
Are you guys nuts? And then what?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE
Turn them into the police!

MARIO
Good idea.

FELIPE
Then we better make sure we tie them up real good. Somebody get some rope!

END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MARIO
I told you then, and I'll say it again, Pastor. I am not a saint. I am a human being. That man was about to kill my brother and another was humiliating him in front of his family. I could not sit still and watch that happen.

PASTOR OSPINA
I understand, Mario. Let's talk about another important matter, going to the United States without working papers or a visa.

MARIO

And like I told you before, Pastor,
I am not afraid of ending up in
jail or deported because that is
still better than staying here.
Whatever money I can make for
however long, will be much better
than giving it away to those thugs.

PASTOR OSPINA

Even if you end up in jail?

MARIO

Yes, if that is the prize I have to
pay for taking care of my family,
so be it. I will not be immobilized
by fear. I can't do anything by
staying here.

PASTOR OSPINA

There's no good options here,
Mario. But leaving your family
behind is not right.

MARIO

And once again, I'm a dead man if I
stay here. My mind is made up.

PASTOR OSPINA

Very well, then, lets pray.

Pastor Ospina opens his palms to the side and joins hands with all present at the table. The room quiets down and those who are walking stop moving out of respect.

PASTOR OSPINA (CONT'D)

Dear Lord our God, and your son
Jesus Christ, we pray for our
brother Mario and his family as
they face these incredible
difficulties....

Pastor Ospina weaves scripture in a stream-of-consciousness oration, all present at the table respond with amens and halleluias.

MONTAGUE - PREPARATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

- Felipe comes home and places a paper copy on the refrigerator door of the docking manifest to the Port where he works. Everyone gathers around.

-CLOSE UP of the document. A ship named 'Odisea' with destination Brownsville, Texas, is circled with a pen.

-Felipe and Mario walk past the busy loading docks of large cargo ships in the port of San Andres. Felipe describes the buildings and ships to Mario.

-At a check cashing store, Mario and Felipe send remittances to themselves to safeguard their money during their journey.

-Mario and Felipe arrive at Gabriel's home, they sit at the table with Mercedes and Soledad, and Gabriel and his wife, Beatriz. Figuring out logistics.

-Mario and Felipe shop for cheap backpacks at a dollar store.

-Mario and Felipe make copies of their ID's.

-Mario lies with Mercedes in bed while she nurses the baby. They sleep sweetly with a content smile.

END OF MONTAGUE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

A subdued and somber dinner despite Beatriz best efforts in the kitchen, a send out gathering for Mario and Felipe.

Mercedes and the baby sit next to Mario, Soledad sits next to her. Beti, Liliana, Catalina also sit at the table.

As the time of Mario's departure approaches, Mercedes grows restless, she excuses herself from the table and walks over to a small indoor patio, Mario follows. Soledad holds the baby in her arms at the table.

MARIO

Are you alright, *nena*?

MERCEDES

I'm feeling sick to my stomach.

Mario comes close and gently puts an arm around her. Soledad approaches slowly with the baby in her arms.

SOLEDAD

You alright, sis?

Mercedes is holding back tears, she lets them out slowly.

MERCEDES

No, Sole. I'm trying to be strong
but I can't.

Mercedes lets out her tears and covers her eyes with her hands.

SOLEDAD

Come here, sis. Let's go back to the table. People are starting to go to bed.

The gathering breaks up slowly, and many wish Mario and Felipe good luck and blessings on their trip. Everyone gathers around Mercedes.

BEATRIZ

Merceditas, miya. God is watching over all of us, have faith. We have endured so much together, we can do this. Gabriel and I will be here for you, And Soledad is here too.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Mario and Felipe are waiting for a cab outside Gabriel's house. Both are donning backpacks, ready for their journey. Mercedes holds Carlitos in her arms, and Soledad stands near them.

Gabriel stands by the door with Beatriz, he looks down the street for the cab to arrive. Mercedes speaks to Mario quietly through tears in her eyes.

MERCEDES

Please, Mario. Call me as soon as you can. I need to know you're safe.

MARIO

I will, nena. I promise.

GABRIEL

The cab is here guys.

Mercedes lets the tears flow, Soledad comes close to her.

MERCEDES

Oh, Mario. I wish you didn't have to go. But I know it's for the best.

Mario wells up with tears.

MARIO

I love you, *Merceditas*, with all my heart. And this precious boy, please God watch after them.

The taxi pulls up to the curb. Gabriel steps forward and asks the driver to wait. Felipe comes close to Mercedes, gives her a gentle hug, and says goodbye.

FELIPE

Merceditas, I promise you I'll look after, Mario. I'll bring him back to you, I swear.

He gives Soledad a strong hug, moves on to Beatriz and finally Gabriel.

MARIO

Thanks so much for taking us in Gabriel. I'm so sorry things didn't work out.

GABRIEL

(holding back tears)

God has a plan for you, Mario. And remember: The path of the righteous is like the first light of dawn.

MARIO

Shining ever brighter until the full light of day. Thanks, Gabriel. Tell mom I'll call her as soon as I can. Sole?

Soledad is crying, she hugs Mario and lets her tears flow.

Mario turns to Mercedes, puts her arms around her, kisses her forehead, kisses her lips with tears in his eyes.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You are always in my heart, *nena*. I will be back, I promise. I love you.

MERCEDES

I love, Mario. God help us.

Mario speaks softly to the baby.

MARIO

Carlitos, my baby boy, I love so much. I will come back soon, I promise.

The cab driver checks with Gabriel. Mario caresses the baby's face one last time. He kisses Mercedes while he touches her hand and separates.

Felipe opens the door for Mario, gets in after him and gives the address to the driver. Mario puts his head down and cries quietly.

FELIPE
To the shipping docks, Maribel
Entrance.

Mercedes collapses in her sister's arms. Gabriel and Beatriz wave good bye to them.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Mario is emotionally torn apart, covering his face with his hands, Felipe puts an arm around him.

FELIPE
It's going to be alright, Mario.

MARIO
I never thought it would be this
hard, Felipe.

FELIPE
It's alright, Mario. I'm here with
you. I got your back, cuz.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT - GETTING ON THE SHIP

Mario and Felipe climb over a long chain link fence and trespass into the shipping docks. They walk amongst the shadows of large warehouse buildings and reach the docks where ships are loaded.

Felipe finds an open door and steps into an empty warehouse.

FELIPE
Let's wait here. The ship has been
loaded, inspected, and is ready to
go. It leaves in five hours.

EXT. CARGO SHIP - LATER

Felipe runs across from the shadow of a large warehouse building towards a large cargo ship anchored on the dock. Mario follows seconds later.

Felipe climbs up the service entrance ladder, Mario follows close behind. They step on deck, walk ten yards to the left and enter a port door on the bridge structure.

INT. CARGO SHIP - CONTINUOUS

Mario follows Felipe as he lights the way through dark tunnels and passageways inside the ship. They come upon a door with a turning lock. Felipe turns to the left opens the door and its pitch black.

FELIPE

Careful, we are in the hold.

Felipe lights the way inside. They can see canvas strips covering square blocks of green bananas.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Watch your step. There are gaps between sections that go all the way down. You can fall a long way.

Felipe finds a spot near the cargo hold wall. He lays his backpack down, Mario joins close to him.

MARIO

Is this it?

FELIPE

Yes, Mario. We leave in one hour.

INT. CARGO SHIP - LATER

Mario and Felipe feel a low rumble beneath the ship. A nudge and a brief feeling of levity alerts Felipe.

FELIPE.

We're moving, Mario.

MARIO

Finally. Dear God, please watch over us. Please look after our little baby. I love you Mercedes.

FELIPE

Okay. We're looking at thirty-five to forty hours from now until we dock again.

Mario does the sign of the cross and so does Felipe.

END OF ACT II

INT. SHIP'S HOLD - LATER

Mario turns on the flashlight for a moment.