

TRIBULATIONS

Kidnapped at the U.S-Mexican border and conscripted into forced labor, a young father must escape a tyrannical farm owner in order to get back to work and send money to his family back home.

EXT. STREETS AND ROADWAYS - AFTERNOON

Mario, 19, and Felipe, 20, stand in a crowded bus stop in the city of Matamoros, Mexico. Mario has dark brown, skin, curly hair and carries a backpack. He checks his watch.

Felipe has floppy black hair in a pony tail, he is thin and smaller than his cousin, Mario. A small red bus with a hand-painted sign on the window stops in front of them.

The bus is crowded, Mario squeezes in and pays the fare for two, Felipe gets in and pushes his way in.

The bus travels fast along a highway heading west. Mario and Felipe sit in the back of the bus. They see produce fields to the right, to their left a two-lane highway leading back to the city.

MARIO

This is near where I got out last time. We're going about twenty miles further.

Moments later, Mario stands and calls for a stop.

EXT. ROADWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Mario and Felipe get off the bus and begin walking north on a dirt road. There are produce fields on both sides, a tree grove with a few houses up ahead.

MARIO

We are two, maybe three miles from the river. Keep an eye out for cars on this road, you never know.

FELIPE

As long as I don't see any cops in blue uniforms around here.

MARIO

That's okay, Felipe. It's the *gangeros* on the trail that I'm worried about.

A beat up red pick up truck with rusted paint kicks up a cloud of dust behind them. It passes by without incident.

EXT. ROADS AND TRAILS - CONTINUOUS

Mario and Felipe arrive at a tree grove lining an embankment. They run to the embankment and climb up to the ridge, the Rio Grande comes into view. It is about 75 yards wide, flowing east, out to sea.

FELIPE

Yes! *El Rio Grande!* Finally!

MARIO

(pointing west)

Let's go that way.

Mario and Felipe walk on a foot trail on the ridge of the embankment heading west.

EXT. RIVERSHORE - CONTINUOUS

Dusk is approaching, the sun is sinking behind the horizon. A few migrants arrive ahead of them and some are wading across the river, plastic bags and backpacks held aloft.

FELIPE

Should we go now?

MARIO

Not yet. A little further up.

In the distance, Mario spots a rope hanging over the river.

MARIO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

There! That rope looks like the one I saw. Let's use it.

Mario and Felipe run towards the rope. It is attached to a tree with metal clamps.

When they arrive they see two other men using the rope bridge, they are reaching the other shore.

MARIO (CONT'D)

This looks good, Felipe. They could be gathering on the other side, maybe going to a farm for a job.

FELIPE

Are you sure we can tag along?

MARIO

We could at least ask for a ride. Anything is better than going on those trails by ourselves.

Mario and Felipe step down to the shore, they strip down to their underwear, put their clothes in Mario's backpack and get ready to Cross.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Ready Felipe? Let's go.

Mario goes first, he holds on to the rope with one hand, with the other he holds the back pack above the water. Felipe follows close.

Mario climbs up on the American shore first, he lends a hand to Felipe and helps him up.

FELIPE

Yes! I made it to *Los Estados Unidos!* Finally!

MARIO

No time to celebrate yet. Get changed quickly.

FELIPE

Uh, that rope was useless, I could have swam across faster.

Once they are ready, they climb up the embankment and step on a trail running along the river.

Suddenly, TWO GUNMEN dressed in black with hoods over their faces are waiting for them and point machine guns at them.

GUNMAN #1

Stop, *cabrones!* Who the fuck do you think you are, using our bridge?

Mario and Felipe put their hands up.

MARIO

Wow, what the ---.

FELIPE

Hey, Man. Sorry, we were just trying to get across.

GUNMAN #2

Shut the fuck up! Did you pay to use that bridge? No, you didn't! Over there, now!

Mario and Felipe are shoved to the side of the trail. The two men that crossed before them sit with their hands bound with plastic ties, GUNMAN #3 stands before them.

GUNMAN #3 walks over to Mario and takes the backpack, he inspects it for weapons. GUNMAN #2 places ties on Mario and Felipe's hands.

MARIO

Hey what are you doing? You're not Border Patrol! Who are you?

GUNMAN #2
Shut the fuck up! You used our
bridge without paying, you're
coming with us!

Felipe looks bewildered, Mario keeps his cool.

GUNMAN #2 (CONT'D)
Sit down! And don't say a word!

Mario and Felipe sit on the ground next to the other two migrants, GUNMAN #3 throws the backpacks at Mario's feet.

GUNMAN # 1
Hey! There are three more coming!

GUNMAN # 3 stays behind while the other two round-up the next victims.

EXT. TRAIL - EVENING

It is getting dark. Mario and Felipe are marched at gunpoint down a side trail along with five other hostages, all of them bound with plastic ties on their hands.

The group comes upon a dirt road where GUNMAN #4 is waiting behind a white, windowless van, he opens the doors to let the hostages in.

GUNMAN #1 gets on the passenger seat, GUNMAN #2 jumps in the back first, GUNMAN #3 pushes the hostages inside the van, and gets in, GUNMAN #4 slams the doors shut.

GUNMAN #4 walks to the font and gets behind the wheel. The van tears out leaving a cloud of dust behind.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Mario looks around, tries to figure out what is happening. He whispers to Felipe.

MARIO
These guys are not gangeros.

GUNMAN #3
(threatening with gun)
Hey! I said shut the fuck up!

The van rolls down a dirt road, moments later it gets on a paved road, then onto a highway. Not a word is spoken amongst the hostages.

EXT. TRUCK WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The van makes a stop at a truck depot. It comes to a stop at the last berth where a large container truck is parked with the engine on.

GUNMAN #3
Orale, cabrones! Everyone out!

Gunman #1 and Gunman #2 escort the seven hostages out of the van, up a set of stairs to a loading dock, and through a door that leads to the inside of the building.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

About fifty men stand in a line inside a nearly empty storage warehouse. They carry backpacks, some carry plastic bags in hand with their meager belongings.

A fat man with a straw cowboy hat and a greasy tee shirt sits behind a folding table checking names off a list. His name is CHANCHO.

The line of hostages is made to stand near the table. Mario can see every worker is getting a piece of paper after they are checked in, then they are ushered into a trailer truck container through an open berth.

GUNMAN # 1
Here are six plus one, Chancho.

CHANCHO
That's one more than we need.

GUNMAN # 1
Look *cabron*, they arrived that way, okay? You decide what to do with the last one. I'm done here.

Gunman #1 walks away, Gunman #2 follows him.

CHANCHO
I said I needed six, not seven!
Fucking people can't do what they are told?!

Chancho stands from the table and walks close to the hostages with a clipboard. His giant belly rolls over his thin legs covered by dirty blue jeans.

CHANCHO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Okay, you fuckheads. You use our bridge without asking, now we're gonna make you pay.

Chanco steps up to Mario and asks for his name. A guard takes a blade and snaps off Mario's plastic ties, then he is ushered inside the truck container.

Felipe arrives moments later. The truck is more than half full with about sixty workers.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - NIGHT - TRUCK RIDE FROM HELL

Felipe joins Mario inside the truck. An armed guard stands by the entrance.

FELIPE

Mario, what in the world is going on?

MARIO

I have no idea, Felipe. I'm sorry.
I thought that rope bridge was safe to use.

Felipe asks WORKER #1 standing next to him.

FELIPE

Hey, what's on that piece of paper everyone is getting?

The worker shows him quickly.

WORKER #1

It's the work contract, everyone has one. Don't you have one?

FELIPE

For what type of work?

WORKER #1

Picking tomatoes at a farm.

The truck's engine revs up, loud cheers go up amongst some workers.

More workers push inside the truck until the last few step in. The man Felipe is talking to moves further down and disappears. Mario and Felipe stay together

MARIO

I don't like it that we don't have a contract.

FELIPE

The guys with the guns kept talking about us not paying for using the rope bridge. What was that all about?

The metal door closes loudly, the latches bang hard inside the container. Bam! Slam! For a moment its pitch black. Chatter breaks out amongst the workers.

Some workers use their cell phones or lighters to see inside, Mario reaches for a flashlight in his backpack. It is crowded inside.

Outside, Chancho throws a lock on the container doors and signals the driver to go. The truck rolls out slowly out of the lot.

Inside the container some men stumble towards the back. Some complain loudly, others push and shove.

Once the truck gets on its way, some workers squat down on the floor of the container, every space against the walls is taken up. Its is pitch dark inside.

The truck makes a turn into a highway and everyone leans to the right, then straightens out into a smooth ride.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Okay, so where is this farm? That's a gooood starting point.

Mario taps WORKER #2 next to him on the shoulder.

MARIO

Excuse me, where is this truck going?

WORKER #2

Supposedly, Florida. That's what they say.

MARIO

And who is they?

WORKER #2

Pues, los coyotes. Who else?

Mario thanks the worker and turns to Felipe.

MARIO

I don't know, Felipe. Looks like some people paid a coyote for this ride.

FELIPE

Did he say Florida? Isn't that like really far from here?

MARIO

This is crazy, Felipe. We have to get out of this truck.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - MORNING

As the hours pass in the dark container, some workers relieve themselves in the front end of the container causing rivulets of urine to roll down towards the back.

FELIPE

Jesus, it's starting to smell here.

MARIO

Argh. You can't sit down anymore.

FELIPE

You know, they should at least let us out to pee or something.

Two hours later a fight breaks out, there is shouting and cursing, shoving around. Mario grabs onto Felipe.

MARIO

Felipe, stay close!

There is a crush of bodies towards the rear of the truck, everyone is trying to get away from the scuffle.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER-EVENING

A very strong smell spreads inside the container.

FELIPE

Jesus! Did someone take a shit in here? It smells horrible in here.

Mario, Felipe and other workers cover their mouths and nose. Some cover their faces with tee shorts and cloth.

Moments later another scuffle breaks out this time towards the front.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE

Hey! Leave the old man alone!

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE (CONT'D)
Mind your own fucking business!

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE (CONT'D)
Stop! You're killing him!

Mario and Felipe push towards the back of the container.

FELIPE
This is a total freak show, Mario!

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - EVENING

Many hours later, with the temperature rising and the stench becoming oppressive, some workers jab the sides of the container with knives and twist the blade to open breathing holes.

FELIPE
If only we could get near one of those holes.

MARIO
Listen, I know this may not be the best time to eat something, but I'm starving. Do you want to eat some of the crackers we brought?

FELIPE
Hell, why not? I'll just cover my nose. Can you pass the water bottle?

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - MORNING

Mario can see the the bright morning sky through the holes in the container. The truck slows down, exits the highway, and comes to a stop minutes later at a parking lot.

A roar of shouts and loud voices go up as workers demand to be let out and bang on the sides of the container.

FELIPE
Good, I hope we get a bathroom break!

The container is decoupled, the truck pulls away and the men inside grow restless. Many complain loudly about the prospects of being left behind.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - HOURS LATER

One desperate worker tries to open a hole through the side panel to escape but he can only open one about a foot wide.

Another worker tries it and soon there are many large holes on the truck. Another worker is weeping in despair.

Six hours later, a sound of banging metal. The container jolts backward and another truck is coupled. A cheer goes up amongst the workers.

MARIO

Thank God, we're moving again.

FELIPE

Mario, what if there's a dead person on this freaking container?

MARIO

Don't even go there, Felipe. Just put it out of your mind for now.

FELIPE

Now, I have to go to the bathroom real bad. Man, this sucks!

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER- LATER

Felipe walks inside the truck's container keeping his balance by holding on to the walls. He joins Mario who is sitting down.

MARIO

How did it go?

FELIPE

Terrible.

MARIO

I can't believe no one opened the door to let us out.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - NIGHT - ARRIVAL AT THE FARM

Mario and Felipe are both sleeping while squatting on the floor of the container. The truck pulls away from the highway and onto a secondary road. Chatter breaks out amongst the workers.

MARIO

We're off the highway.

FELIPE

We must be in Florida, we've been on the road thirty hours.

MARIO

Can't wait to get out of here.

The truck rolls from a paved road to a bumpy gravel road. All workers stand up. The truck slows down and lurches forward, some workers lose their balance and fall down.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE
Hey, what the hell, *puto cabron!*

There is pushing and shoving. A small scuffle breaks out and quickly subsides.

LATER. After more than an hour of traveling on the gravel road, the truck comes to a full stop.

Shouts of anger rise up inside, there is loud banging against the walls of the container.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Metal gates open outside. The truck lurches forward again, makes a hard left turn and comes to a stop.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER-CONTINUOUS

All workers shout to be let out, many are banging loudly on the doors and the sides of the container.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE
Let us out of here, *cabrones!* We've been here two days!

The truck container's gates open and blinding floodlights shine on the workers. Many workers spill onto the gravel lot.

EXT. WORKERS COMPOUND-CONTINUOUS

A line of twelve ARMED GUARDS point weapons at the workers and order them to line up after they step down.

The lead guard, GERONIMO, shouts through a bull horn.

GERONIMO
Afuera todos! Out! Line up against the wall! Afuera! Vamos!

A large metal barn dominates the night landscape. There is a twenty foot chainlink fence topped with razor wire surrounding the gravel lot.

A sentry tower stands outside the perimeter. A water tower with guards in the rafters looms over a workers compound that takes up several acres of land.

A large sign with block letters on the water tower reads: TUPELO FARMS. OPALAKI, FL. Mario stands in line next to Felipe.

MARIO

What is this? Some sort of military camp?

Some guards hold their hands to their nose and mouth as they approach the truck, most workers have stained clothes with urine and feces.

Geronimo steps closer to the truck. He sees the holes on the side of the container.

GERONIMO

What the hell happened in here?
(To a guard)

You! Bring out the hose and clean out this mess!

GERONIMO (CONT'D)

(to a worker)

You! Who put those holes in there?

WORKER #1

People couldn't breathe from the stench, so they punched holes on the sides to breathe.

GERONIMO

Son of a bitch! Where is the driver?

A guard promptly produces the driver, carried by the scruff of his neck. Geronimo glares at him.

GERONIMO (CONT'D)

You are six hours late! And you didn't give these men a break?!

DRIVER

I'm sorry, *señor!* I was told to pick up the container in a hurry and bring it here!

GERONIMO

And who told you to come here?

DRIVER

Some guy named Chancho!

A guard comes to the edge of the trailer truck container and calls for Geronimo.

GUARD #1
Boss, we have dead body back here.

GERONIMO
What? Get him out of there! Now!

Geronimo turns to the driver enraged.

GERONIMO (CONT'D)
See what you've done, you, fucking moron? Why were you late?

Mario, standing in line next to Felipe comments.

MARIO
Oh no, they're bringing out the dead guy.

Two guards drag the body of a dead worker to the edge of the container, bloated, bloody, and stiff. Geronimo steps up and inspects the bossy

GERONIMO
Jesus Christ! What the fuck?!

Geronimo paces like a wounded beast, dreading his next step. He calls for a guard.

GERONIMO (CONT'D)
God dammit! Get Zorrillo, tell him we have a deceased worker here.

The guard turns pale anticipating the wrath of the boss. He turns and runs towards a large barrack building to the west side of the gravel lot.

FELIPE
(to Mario)
Well, if they had given us a bathroom break. Freaking idiots.

Enter, ZORRILLO, 73, the camp manager and farm owner, marching quickly on the gravel lot escorted by two guards.

Zorrillo is a short, thin and wiry man with a hook nose. He wears a straw cowboy hat rolled on the flaps, faded green tee-shirt, jeans, and snakeskin cowboy boots.

He shouts from a distance in a loud, raspy voice.

ZORRILLO

Geronimo! What the hell is this I
hear about a dead worker?

Zorrillo comes close to the back of the truck and is
overpowered by the smell inside.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

What in the god dam? What is that
smell? And who put those holes all
over the fucking truck?

GERONIMO

Zorrillo, it looks like there was a
fight in ---

ZORRILLO

I don't give a shit! Get rid of the
dummy! Now!

Zorrillo grabs the bullhorn from Geronimo, walks up to the
long line of workers standing by the barn wall.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Ojos aqui, cabrones! All eyes here!
Now! And turn that god dam hose
off!

A guard scrambles to shut off the valve inside the barn.
Everyone stands still and listens.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Listen up, cabrones! Who put the
holes in the truck?

No one dares speak up.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Okay. If no one speaks , I'll
charge all of you for it! Who did
it?!

Finally, WORKER #1 breaks the silence.

WORKER #1

Hey! No one ever told us we'd be
locked in the container for days!
And no bathroom breaks! Que puta
chingada!

Zorrillo hands the horn to a guard and makes a beeline for
the worker. He grabs him by the scruff of his neck and
wrestles him to the ground. He puts a knee on his neck and
berates him in front of all present.

Two guards position themselves and point their weapons at the worker.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D)
Who the hell do you think you are
to be making demands around here?
Did you put those holes on the
truck?! Huh, motherfucker?!

WORKER #1
(gurgling)
I can't breath!

ZORRILLO
What's your name, *carbon*! Say it!

Zorrillo lets go off his knee slightly.

WORKER #1
(gasping for air)
Abimael Perez!

ZORRILLO
Abimael Perez! I'll never forget
your name as long as I live! You
are gonna pay for every hole in
that truck, and your rate will be
cut in half! Go ahead, you piece of
garbage! Say another word and
you're dead!

Zorrillo stands up and the worker starts coughing.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Listen up, *cabrones*! You just
arrived and I'm already pissed! So
don't come to me or any of my
guards with any of your shit! I
don't give a dam! You're here to
work and you start tomorrow at 6
a.m.!

Zorrillo pauses to look at the faces of the workers.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
The rules are very clear, they are
in your contract! You break the
rules, you will be punished and
your earnings will be cut! Now,
everyone, get cleaned up and line
up to get your tent assignment! And
those of you who did not sign a
contract, you will be meeting with
me shortly!

Mario and Felipe look at each other.

MARIO

Oh no, are we gonna have to talk to that guy?

FELIPE

Oh, man, we are screwed.

Zorrillo hands the bull horn to a guards and hollers instructions to other guards to take the dead body away.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND-CONTINUOUS

A guard sits at a small folding table by the barn door with a clipboard checking names off a list.

The line of workers moves from the side of the barn into a gate at the far end where workers receive a blanket, a pillowcase, a sheet, and a towel.

Those whose names are on the list continue on through the barn and walk into the camp where several large army tents are visible.

Those whose names are not on the list are told to step beside the barn doors and form a line. Mario's tun come up and is told to line up on the side.

Felipe comes up next and he joins Mario on the line. The two men that crossed the border before them are also in line.

INT. MEETING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Mario, Felipe, and ten other workers are marched through a gate, and across a field surrounded by a chainlink fence. They come to a large wooden building that looks like a meeting hall.

The hall is empty inside, a single floodlight hangs from the ceiling on one end. The twelve workers are asked to keep the line while they stand under the light.

Zorrillo enters, his boots mark a steady cadence as he approaches the front center of the hall.

ZORRILLO

Ahora si, cabrones! We're gonna get a few things straight here. My men have been guarding the crossing we set up a month ago to bring workers who had paid for our coyotes.

(MORE)

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)

But now, you idiots, think you can
use our ropes and our trails, and
have to pay nothing?

Zorrillo paces to have a close look at each worker.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Had you come to work for us like
real men and paid your fee, you
would have signed an employment
contract like every honest man
here. But not you! Because you came
across without asking permission or
paying, your coyote fee will be
tripled! And you have no contract!
You're lucky we didn't shoot you
when you were coming across!

Zorrillo stops in front of Mario and gives him an up and down look. His face wrinkles in disgust at his dark skin and continues to pace.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

We know when you crossed the border
and with whom, we can turn you into
the Border Patrol at any time! We
can beat you, we can kill you if we
want. No one will ever know what
happened to you. If you try to
leave without paying what you owe,
we will find you, we will beat the
shit out of you, we will make you
work without pay and make you think
you have arrived in hell! But you
won't leave until you pay your debt
and we agree to let you go! And if
you try to escape, well, there are
a number of things that can happen.

Zorrillo returns to the center.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

So wake up, motherfuckers! It's
time to work like fucking slaves
because you have a lot of money to
pay back!

Zorrillo turns and leaves the room.

A guard comes around with a clipboard and writes down the workers' names. Mario and Felipe are marched out of the meeting hall and back to the barn.

INT. WORKERS' COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Mario and Felipe receive their sheets and towels and step into the workers compound covering about 3 acres of land.

Six large army tents marked with letters A to E at the entrance surround a large tent where latrines and showers are located.

A smaller barn is located adjacent to the large metal barn. Next to it, a larger tent operates as a mess hall.

There are guards stationed at the entrance of every tent and others make rounds along the perimeter.

Mario and Felipe step out of the barn with their blankets and sheets.

MARIO

Triple the fee? Is he nuts?

FELIPE

I am not paying shit!

MARIO

There is no way I'm going to work for these people for free. I have to send money home!

FELIPE

We have got to find a way out of here, Mario. What tent are you in?

MARIO

I'm in tent C. What about you?

FELIPE

I'm in tent E.

A guard walks by and sees Mario and Felipe talking.

GUARD #1

Hey! You two! Get in your tents!
Now!

MARIO

Let's find each other first thing in the morning!

END OF ACT I

INT/EXT. TENT - EARLY MORNING

Mario steps down from a top bunk inside a tent where a single lightbulb hangs from one of the main posts. He walks past a row of five double bunks, there are four rows per tent, and heads for the exit.

Mario walks to the latrines to wash up and comes back outside. A guard stands by the entrance of every tent. Mario sees two workers leaving Tent A, and head for the larger tent next to the small barn.

INT. MESS TENT - LATER

Mario walks into the mess tent, some workers are already sitting down for breakfast.

Mario stands in a short line, takes a cup of oatmeal cereal with and a cup of water. He finishes and steps out to look for his cousin, Felipe.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND-CONTINUOUS

Mario walks to Tent E and runs into Felipe coming out of the tent.

MARIO

Hey Felipe, what's up? You should get some food now before things get going here.

Mario shows Felipe to the mess tent and stand in line with his cousin.

INT. MESS TENT-CONTINUOUS

FELIPE

Were you able to sleep last night?

MARIO

Hardly. I was going crazy with all this thoughts in my head.

FELIPE

Same here. I was wracking my brain trying to figure out how to get out of here. This place is locked pretty tight.

Mario and Felipe find a seat at a table.

MARIO

Well, first we have to figure out
how these guards operate, when they
do their rounds and all of that.

FELIPE

Yeah, and in the meantime we'll be
working for free.

An announcement is made to the camp through loud speakers.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE

Attention all workers:
Transportation for the fields will
begin in five minutes. I repeat:
Transportation ...

Mario and Felipe go to their respective tents to line up.

FELIPE

Let's look for each other in the
fields. Maybe we can work together!

EXT. TENT C. LATER

The guard in front of Tent C is SARGENTO, he is tall, thin,
and clean-shaven.

Sargento wears black fatigue pants with steel-toed boots, a
black tee shirt and a green canvas cap. He carries a semi-
automatic weapon on his shoulder.

SARGENTO

All workers of Tent C! Line up!
Four rows of ten! Get ready to move
out!

The workers of Tent C walk as a group in four loose lines to
the gravel lot where three medium sized cattle trucks await.
The drivers use the ramp in the back to bring the workers
into the truck. The trucks have an open canvas roof.

EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS - morning

Mario steps down from the truck and follows the workers to
one of four tractors pulling flatbeds.

A foreman with a shotgun at the shoulder stands next to each
picking groups of 12 to 15 workers.

Each tractor carries a crew of workers to their designated
field.

The workers step down and the FOREMAN of the crew writes down the names of each worker on a clipboard. He carries a shotgun at the shoulder.

FOREMAN

Grab your bushel bag and line up on the edge if the field!

Mario walks to a pile of canvas bags with a wire rim next to the tractor and picks one up.

A group of twelve older workers has been assigned to pick on that field. They will show the new workers how the harvesting is done.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

Pick an empty row in between those workers and line up next to them.

When all the workers are ready, the foreman gives one last set of instructions:

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

New workers, you can ask the person next to you how its done. It is 5:58 minutes, we start sharp at 6!

Chatter breaks out amongst the workers, some help the new ones, others ignore them.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

Workers! *A trabajar!* Let's get to work!

Mario tries his best at picking the right type and size of tomatoes, but he struggles to move as fast as the older workers.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

Vamos cabrones! You gotta learn to pick fast!

The foreman drops a pair of sunglasses over his eyes and gazes at fields of green tomato plants, as far as the eye can see.

MONTAGUE- EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS. DAY

-Mario fills up a bushel bag with green tomatoes and walks it to the tractor container parked on an access road.

-The driver accepts the bushel, Mario hands it to another worker who dumps the bushel on a special truck bed. It is a quarter full at this point.

-A water cooler is set up near the cab of the tractor for workers to take a water break. Mario helps himself.

-Mario works alongside a crew of twelve men, the sun is getting hotter.

-Food is brought out for the workers on metal trays on top of a flatbed pulled by a tractor.

-Mario sees some workers bring out their own food to complement their lunch. Soup cans, potato chips, canned tuna.

-Mario resumes work in the intense heat of mid-day.

-Mario brings out the tenth bushel, the foreman accepts it, the flatbed is nearly full.

-Quitting time. All workers walk back to the road where they started and climb up on a flatbed to get to the trucks.

END OF MONTGAUE.

EXT. COMPOUND - EVENING

Mario runs into Felipe at the entrance of the mess hall tent before dinner. They walk in and stand in line together.

MARIO
Hey, how did it go?

FELIPE
Pretty rough. The foreman was total jerk. He turned my bushels away like five times.

MARIO
Did you know which ones to pick?

FELIPE
Yeah, and he took them but he didn't give me credit for it.

Mario and Felipe get a portion of black beans and rice in tin cups. They find a seat together at one of the folding tables.

FELIPE (CONT'D)
I think black beans and rice is all they have around here.

MARIO

The foreman I had was pushing us to work fast the whole time. I had a hard time keeping up.

FELIPE

So, did you notice every foreman had a weapon? Either shotgun or a semi?

MARIO

I did, and that's scary. It's not gonna be easy to get out of here.

INT. WORKERS' COOP - EVENING

Mario and Felipe walk out of the mess hall and see the line forming before the small barn.

The line is for workers that want to make a phone call or send remittances. Mario and Felipe walk in.

To the left of the door, there are shelves with food and snacks. To the right of the entrance, there is a small room with phone booths made with plywood partitions, no doors.

Mario and Felipe look for groceries.

FELIPE

What? Five dollars for a can of tuna? Five dollars for a can of soup? Three dollars for a bag of potato chips?

MARIO

This is crazy. That's just what they do at the plantations back home. They charge crazy prices at their coops and get them in debt.

FELIPE

Not surprising, coming from that guy, Zorrillo.

Mario asks a guard about the price of a phone call. He thanks the guard and walks away.

MARIO

Five dollars for 3 minutes. That's the same as ICE detention.

Felipe asks another guard about sending money home through Western Union. He returns with the information.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Really? They're not taking a cut on
this one?

FELIPE

I don't think they can or they
would have already. I have forty
dollars plus three that you have.
I'm willing to share it with you
and Mercedes and the baby.

MARIO

But what about your mom? Her and
your sister are all alone?

FELIPE

Well, we're gonna have to wait for
another day, anyways. Look at the
line.

The line for remittances grows longer almost reaching the mess tent.

INT. MESS HALL - MORNING

Mario and Felipe are eating breakfast, Mario recognizes the worker next to him and strikes up a conversation.

MARIO

Hey thanks for the help yesterday.

WORKER #1

No problem, looks like you were
getting the hang of it by the
afternoon.

Mario introduces himself and Felipe next to him.

WORKER #1 (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you guys, my name is
Jose, this is my friend Martin.

JOSE is tall and thin, short black hair, MARTIN, sitting to his left, looks like him but is much shorter.

MARTIN

So where are you guys from?

FELIPE

We're from Darien, Panama. Pacific
Coast. What about you guys?

JOSE

We're from Honduras, Covenas, small town on the Atlantic Coast. Are you two related?

MARIO

Yes, we're cousins.

An announcement goes over the loudspeakers to line up for work at the parking lot. Mario, Felipe, and their new friends exit the mess hall tent.

EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS - DAY

Mario is walking away from a tractor container after turning in a bushel of green tomatoes. He sees an OLD MAN lagging far behind on a row of tomato plants and a guard walking behind him, shotgun on shoulder.

As Mario comes closer, He sees the old man is very weak and can barely do the work. He approaches the worker.

MARIO

Hola, Señor. Are you okay? Do you need help?

The guard steps in with his weapon drawn, Mario steps back.

GUARD #1

Hey! What the hell you want? Get back to to your line, *cabron*!

The old man glances at Mario as he walks way.

OLD MAN

Thank you, young man, I'm okay.

GUARD #1

I said move faster, old man! Or you won't get credit for shit!

INT. MESS HALL - EVENING

Mario and Felipe sit down for dinner. Matin joins them.

FELIPE

The guy kept rejecting my bushels, so I complained. Then the guy pushes me back, points the shotgun at me and tells me to shut the fuck up. This is nuts, Mario. These people are cocked and ready to shoot at the drop of a hat.

MARTIN

That tent manager of yours, Rambo.
He is nut case. Better to stay out
of his way.

MARIO

I saw something troubling today,
too. Some older guy was barely able
to stand and do the work, and when
I approached to offer him help, the
guard came up with a weapon ready
to fire and told me to scram. Why
are they like that?

MARTIN

They are not like that to
everybody. Wait, I haven't asked,
are you guys working without a
contract?

Jose comes back from his tent and joins them.

FELIPE

Hey Jose, we were just talking
about the guards here. Why are they
such ass holes?

MARIO

And, yes, Martin. We are working
without a contract. Something about
us not paying a coyote fee to use a
rope bridge on the border.

JOSE

Is Zorrillo saying you owe him a
coyote fee?

FELIPE

Yes, three times over.

JOSE

(glancing at Ariel)

I don't know, guys. This is our
second season here and last year we
heard about stuff like this and saw
some questionable stuff. But this
year things have gotten way worse.

MARTIN

Like for one, there are less
pickers than last year. That's why
we're working an extra half hour
per day.

JOSE

Did you guys arrive on the second truck last week? I heard it was a total shit show.

Felipe notices Don Gregorio coming into the mess tent.

FELIPE

Speaking off ... He just came in for his grub.

MARIO

Everybody, keep things on the down low about what happened today. I'm goin to ask him to join us.

EXT. COOP BARN - EVENING

Mario and Felipe take their place in line in front of the small barn to make a phone call.

FELIPE

So did you think about what you are going to tell Mercedes?

MARIO

I was thinking of saying we're paying for a coyote that helped us get a job. That it will be a couple of weeks before we send any money.

FELIPE

Good one. Let's go with that.

Mario's turn comes up and Felipe goes to the phone booth with him. He stands close to the receiver as Mario speaks with Mercedes on the other line.

MARIO

(on the phone)

Merceditas, mi amor! How are you, I've missed you and the baby too!

Mario and Felipe talk hurriedly, both of them smile and talk animated during the small family reunion.

FADE IN

EXT. HARVEST FIELDS - DAY - MONTAGE - THE DAILY WORK

Mario works with Felipe during one shift, during lunch, they sit against the wheels of a tractor.

Mario works under the hot sun, stops to wipe his brow, and sees Don Gregorio lagging a hundred yards behind.

Mario and Felipe watch a group of about thirty workers dressed in their Sunday best, step on a cattle truck on their way to the town of Opalaki.

Mario and a group of workers hide near a tractor container from a torrential downpour.

Mario and a group of workers are sprayed by a crop duster airplane on a hot afternoon. Some curse the plane as it flies by.

Mario and Felipe attend a showing of 'The Terminator' on a large screen in the large barn, the film is dubbed in Spanish.

Mario and Felipe attend a church service on Sunday.

END OF MONTAGUE

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

Mario lines up in front of Tent C to speak to his tent manager, SARGENTO. This guard is tall, strong, mulatto always dressed in black assault gear.

Mario's turn comes up.

SARGENTO
What the hell do you want?

MARIO
I picked seventy five bushels of tomatoes this week, I wanted to ask if I could get any kind of credit for my work. Maybe an allowance at the coop?

SARGENTO
Ha! You have no contract, *cabron!* You can't complain about nothing! You owe money to Zorrillo! He is the one who decides when you get paid. Not you!

MARIO
Okay. Just saying, I picked more tomatoes than any other worker this week.

SARGENTO
Get out of my face, *negrito*.

MARIO
I'm not your 'little nigger'. Don't call me that name again.

SARGENTO
Or else, what?

MARIO
That wasn't a threat, it was a request.

Mario steps aside, unfazed by Sargent's aggressive stance. Another worker steps up to make a request.

INT. LARGE BARN - NIGHT - MOVIE NIGHT

Mario and Felipe are sitting near a tractor that is being repaired.

Felipe sees a pair of wire cutters left behind a a tractor wheel and takes it without anyone noticing.

EXT. COMPOUND - LATER

Mario and Felipe walk out of the barn when the movie is over.

FELIPE
(whispering)
Hey Mario. I just found a wire cutter. It looks strong enough to cut through a fence.

MARIO
For real? Let's talk in the morning. Early, four a.m.

INT. LATRINES - DAWN

Mario meets Felipe in front of the row of port-a-pottys. They walk into the same stall, Mario checks with a flashlight that the stalls next to them are empty.

MARIO
(whispering)
Where did you find it?

FELIPE
Behind a tractor wheel, on the ground. They must have been putting up fences or something.

A worker comes into the stall next to them to pee. Mario signals to Felipe to be quiet. The worker leaves.

MARIO

So, how are we going to do this?

FELIPE

The fence behind your tent faces east of the camp. We cut through a few feet of fence with the cutter, crawl under and to the bush about twenty yards away. We get on the road heading east and start running.

MARIO

That's a lot of miles to Opalaki, We were on that truck for a long time on the gravel road. I remember it was about one hour until we got here.

FELIPE

I know, it's probably thirty, forty miles. But if we leave after supper and no one notices until midnight or the next day, we'll have good head start.

MARIO

Let's think about where we could hide along the way. We're not ready yet. We have a lot of details to work out.

FELIPE

Okay Mario. let's keep a tight lid on this. No one can join us. Just you and me.

Mario and Felipe exit the port-a-potty.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND - AFTERNOON

Mario lines up in front of Tent C to speak with Sargent.

SARGENTO

Lopez, Mario. Seventy five bushels. You've been approved for seven dollars, fifty cents at the coop. Next!

Mario moves away from the line without saying a word. He meets with Felipe a few yards away, and walks towards the coop barn.

MARIO

Don't know whether to say thank you,
or punch him in the face. How did
it go with Rambo?

FELIPE

Same as last week. But I'm going to
try again next week, maybe I'll
wear him down.

MARIO

Jose was right, sometimes you can
negotiate with these thugs.

Mario and Felipe enter the coop barn.

I/E. WORKERS' COMPOUND-NIGHT-ESCAPE ATTEMPT

Sunday evening after dinner, the workers gather in the large barn for another movie night. Mario exits the barn a few minutes after the movie has started. A light rain is falling.

Felipe walks out minutes later and sneaks behind Tent C. He meets Mario, they look around for guards and make a dash for the chain-link fence.

MARIO

Quickly, we have one minute before
the next guard comes around.

Felipe cuts the chain link fence three feet from the bottom and they crawl under to the other side.

EXT. ROADWAYS - NIGHT

Mario and Felipe run across to a bush and hide while a guard passes on the other side of the tent. They wait until the guard is out of sight.

FELIPE

Let's go!

Mario and Felipe continue walking on the edge of the bush, getting further away from the compound.

Mario and Felipe get on the dirt road about 500 yards from the compound, just out of sight from the tower guards. The rain helps them blend with the surroundings. They start running on the road heading east.

MARIO

I'll keep an eye ahead. You keep an eye behind us.

Half an hour into their run the heavy rains begin. Mario and Felipe keep going even though they are drenched. There are produce fields to their right, sawgrass swamp to their left.

One hour later, the winds pick up and the rain falls heavier. There is thunder and lightning.

MARIO (CONT'D)

This is not good, Felipe. This rain is going to slow us down!

FELIPE

Let's keep going! Maybe we can find a good place to hide further down!

The rain continues to fall steadily.

EXT. ROADWAYS - HOURS LATER

The rains continue and Mario's right shoe is starting to fall apart. He stops to tie his shoe lace around the sole to keep it together.

There are produce fields on both sides of the road. A farm house can be seen a few hundred yards from the road.

MARIO

Let's take a break, I can't run anymore. Let's walk for now.

FELIPE

Dammit this rain!

Later, the rain lets up, Mario and Felipe resume their jog over the dirt road.

MARIO

What time is it?

FELIPE

Two thirty. I don't think they know we're gone.

MARIO

Let's go a mile after this farm house and take a break.

Later, the rains return and fall in sheets driven by wind. Mario signals to stop.

MARIO (CONT'D)

This is crazy, Felipe. I can't even see where we're going!

FELIPE

Let's just walk. At least we'll be moving!

An hour later, the rains let up and the cloud cover lifts. A slight drizzle fills the air. Both are exhausted from the run.

MARIO

How far are we from the town, you think?

FELIPE

We're probably halfway there.

MARIO

Well, there's no turning back at this point. We have to push through.

Mario sees a beam of headlights approaching in the distance.

MARIO (CONT'D)

(to Felipe)

Car coming! Get out of the way!

Quickly!

Mario and Felipe jump to the side of the road and hide from a service truck heading towards Tupelo Farms.

EXT. ROADWAYS - DAWN

MARIO

We have to be close, the sun will be out soon. We've been running for about eight hours.

The sun comes up from the east, a breeze teases the clouds apart and fills the sky with colors.

FELIPE

Man, where is that freaking town?

MARIO

We're almost there, Felipe.

They come up before a fork on the road. The sun begins to climb.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Let's go right.

FELIPE

I hope you're right, Mario.

MARIO

They should know we're gone by now.

FELIPE

Where is that dam town?

MARIO

Look! I see a water tower.

FELIPE

That's about half a mile away.

Felipe looks back and see a car coming from behind. He warns Mario and they both jumped to a drainage culvert brimming with rain water.

They wait until the car passes by. Felipe notices several alligators resting still near them in the water.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Mario don't look, but when I count to three, lets get out of here quickly. One, two ...

Mario turns his head and sees the alligators moving slowly towards them. Suddenly, Felipe jumps out into the road, and Mario follows. The alligators scamper and rustle the water.

EXT. ROADWAYS - DAY

The sun is climbing slowly, the heat is rising, the air is thick with moisture. Thin steam clouds rise in the horizon.

Mario and Felipe run past the water tower and they come up before more produce fields as far as the eye can see.

MARIO

We have to find a place to hide.
They have to know we're missing.

FELIPE

There's a tree grove at the end of that field. Let's hide over there.

Mario and Felipe stop their run. They jump across a drainage culvert, then onto a plowed field. They make a run to a tree grove about a thousand yards away.

EXT. PRODUCE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Mario turns and sees a black truck speeding up the road.

MARIO
Car coming!

FELIPE
Shit, it's them!

MARIO
Go to the trees!

Mario and Felipe run across the field as fast as they can. The soil is soft and muddy, their feet sink as they run.

The truck comes to a screeching halt on the side of the road. Sargento is at the wheel, RAMBO, the E Tent manager looks on through a sighting telescope mounted on a high-powered rifle.

RAMBO
It's them. I got Suarez on my sight. Lopez is running ahead.

SARGENTO
Poor bastards, don't know what's coming.

THREE GUARDS jump down the back of a truck with wooden bats in hand.

Felipe sees the guards jump over the culvert.

FELIPE
Three guards on our tail, Mario!

MARIO
We're gonna have to fight, Felipe!

Felipe falls, Mario stops, turns and comes back to help Felipe. The guards are closing in.

MARIO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Come on, keep going!

Before they reach the tree grove, a guard catches up to Felipe and starts beating and kicking him. Another one joins them.

A third guard goes after Mario. Mario stops, turns and runs after the guard, he punches him in the face and knocks him down.

Felipe is subdued, a second guard arrives and beats Mario up. The other guard gets up and rains blows on Mario.

Mario and Felipe are dragged across the field all the way back to the edge of the field, across the culvert and next to the truck.

Rambo kicks Felipe and spits on him.

RAMBO

You're going to pay for this, *puto cabron!*

SARGENTO

Zorrillo is going to be glad to see you two!

Sargento stomps on Mario's face.

Mario and Felipe are thrown in the back of the truck. Sargento turns the truck around and sneers as he begins the long drive back to the camp.

SARGENTO (CONT'D)

Stupid fucks, they almost made it.
Just a couple miles from town.

INT. MEETING HALL - DAY

Mario and Felipe are strapped to metal folding chairs wearing only their underwear. They have been doused with cold water and sit under the single light bulb in the large, cavernous room.

The two cousins are half awake, dazed and disoriented after another beating.

A guard wheels a metal stand with several electric car batteries attached to jumper cables. Zorrillo's boots are heard entering and walking across the wooden floor.

He stands in front of Mario and Felipe and leans forward to talk to their faces.

ZORRILLO

I told you what would happen if you try to escape, *pinches cabrones.*

Zorrillo reaches for the clamps, touches them together to make a spark.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I should fucking kill you both, but I need workers for the farm.

Zorrillo buries the jumper cable clamps on Mario's neck. Mario convulses in pain and lets out a curdling scream.

MARIO

Ahhh!

Mario's body tightens up in pain and collapses on the chair moments later. Zorrillo moves over in front of Felipe.

ZORRILLO

We will keep you alive just enough to get some labor out of you, putos cabrones. Then we will kill you.

Zorrillo buries the clamps on Felipe's neck, his body stretches, convulses and collapses moments later. Zorrillo moves over to Mario and repeats the process over and over.

EXT. TENT C - MORNING

Mario is woken by Jose who has been caring for him since he was returned to his bunk the previous night.

Mario's eyes are swollen, bruised, and bloodied, his lips are swollen, cut up, and bloody. He has cuts on his face neck, and arms. He has bruises and bloody, welts in his chest, abdomen and legs.

JOSE

Here Mario, eat something, please. They're going to come for you at any moment.

MARIO

Gracias... Jose?

JOSE

Don't talk Mario. Just eat and rest.

Jose feeds Mario a spoonful of porridge. He swallows with difficulty. Don Gregorio stops by to check on Mario.

DON GREGORIO

How is he doing?

JOSE

Not good. They beat him up real bad.

DON FERNANDO, an older man of middle age with salt and pepper hair, approaches with a can of spam.

DON FERNANDO

Hey, how is the kid doing? Here, give him this when he wakes up.

Sargent walks into the tent followed by a guard. He carries a bucket of water. He shoos the workers out of the way.

Mario's is doused with cold water, Sargent grabs him from the top bunk and throws him to the ground.

SARGENTO

Get up you piece of shit! Time to get to work!

Mario struggles to get up and Sargent kicks him to the ground. A few workers gather nearby.

GUARD

All of you! Get to work! Or you gonna get some of this, too!

The guard picks Mario up and drags him outside. He drops him in front of the tent.

SARGENTO

What's the matter? You have the energy to run away, but not to work? Get in line!

INT. TENT E - SAME TIME

Rambo shoves Felipe through the doors of tent C and he falls to the ground. His face has been rearranged, his shoes are missing and his clothes are torn to rags.

RAMBO

Let's go mother fucker! We're gonna get some work out of you before we kill you!

The workers are lined up, Rambo drags Felipe to the front and drops him on the ground for all to see.

RAMBO (CONT'D)

All of you *cabrones* are here because you owe money! If you don't come up with your quota or try to run away, this is what will happen to you!

Rambo gives the order to march to the parking lot and calls a guard.

RAMBO (CONT'D)

You! Bring that piece of garbage to the fields, dead or alive!

EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS - DAY

Mario is able to stand and attempts to work but he is moving slow. He is falling behind the other workers by more than a hundred yards.

Jose walks back near Mario from turning in a bushel and drops an apple in front of him. Mario picks it up with difficulty and puts it in his pocket.

EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS - AFTERNOON

Around midday, Mario collapses in one of the rows of produce and lies prone in the dirt. Don Gregorio who is also lagging behind rushes after him. He pulls out a small bottle of water and gives him some to drink.

DON GREGORIO

Good God, these criminals will stop at nothing. God will punish them someday. Here Mario, drink.

Mario's energy comes back, enough to thank Don Gregorio. Suddenly, Sargento shows up, he kicks Don Bernardo to the ground and points his shotgun at him.

SARGENTO

Mind your own fucking business, old man! Keep it moving!

Don Gregorio gets up and walks back to his spot on the field. Sargento berates Mario and kicks him around some more.

INT. TENT C - NIGHT

Friends gather near Mario's bed to care for him.

JOSE

(to Martin)

So how is Felipe doing?

MARTIN

Not good. Rambo is relentless. He does nothing but kick him around and treat him worse than anybody.

DON FERNANDO

They have taken this way too far. I will not work another season for these criminals. I don't care if I don't get hired at another farm.

JOSE

I heard they were within a mile of
Opalaki.

Mario wakes from his semi-conscious estate.

MARIO

Felipe? Where are you, Felipe?

DON GREGORIO

It's okay, Mario. He is resting
now. He ate some food and he is
feeling better.

MARIO

What happened? What are they doing
to us?

PACO

Don't think about that right now,
Mario. Just try to get some rest.

Jose offers him some water, Mario lifts his head and takes a long drink.

EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS - DAY

Mario is picking tomatoes in a large field with a crew of twelve men. He is keeping up, the bruises on his face and body are healing.

Mario returns to the tractor flatbed with a bushel full of tomatoes. Sargent checks him in and another worker empties the bushel.

SARGENTO

Not ripe enough. It doesn't count.

MARIO

That's the fifth bushel you have
rejected and there's nothing wrong
with those tomatoes.

SARGENTO

(pointing the shotgun)

Look, *negrito de mierda*. I am the
one who says if it counts or not.
Keep it moving!

MARIO

I'm not your 'little nigger'. Don't
call me that.

Sargent jumps down from the flatbed and shoves Mario back to the field.

SARGENTO
I can call you 'little nigger' or
whatever I want, you piece of shit!
Keep it moving!

Mario walks away defiantly without saying a word.

INT. TENT C - EVENING

Mario shares a poker game with Felipe, Jose, Martin; Don Fernando is the dealer. They are in mid game.

FELIPE
He called you 'negrito' again?

MARIO
He did, and he doesn't know who
he's messing with. That shit is
important to me.

JOSE
Why? What's the matter?

FELIPE
Calling someone a 'negrito' in our
country is a major no-no. You can
get your ass kicked for that real
fast.

Don Gregorio joins them at the table. Don Fernando deals him in.

DON GREGORIO
Buenas noches, muchachos. How are
you boys holding up?

Mario and Felipe glance back and smile.

JOSE
(to Martin)
That's like calling someone
'prieto' back home.

FELIPE
There used to be a lot of slaves
slaves where we grew up in Panama,
back in the day of the Spanish
colonies. So calling any one a
'little nigger' is pretty bad. And
you better be ready to put 'em up
if you call someone that name.

MARIO

He's been doing that all week. I'm ready to punch him out. See what happens.

JOSE

Be careful, Mario. These guys don't mess around.

MARIO

I know. I have a beautiful wife and an a blessed baby boy to think about. Not going to throw it all away because somebody disrespects me.

FELIPE

No shit, Mario. At this point we either die trying to escape or we'll be here working for free for years.

DON GREGORIO

Look, guys, you didn't ask me last time you tried this, but the only true way out of here is heading west through the swamp.

Mario and Felipe do a double take.

MARIO

What? Excuse me?

FELIPE

Now you tell us?

DON GREGORIO

You didn't ask. It is the only way out. If you wanted to go east you'd have to steal a car from a garage and that's nearly impossible, a suicide mission. A footrace to Opalaki Well... Forty miles is a very long way. There's a canoe tied to a dock that goes into the sawgrass swamps. You can use it to get across. Follow the streams of clear water and it will kick you out to sea.

MARIO

And how do you know this Don Gregorio?

DON GREGORIO

I saw the canoe one time when I was clearing brush on the lot at the end of the road. I also heard other people talking about it. They use the canoe to dump dead bodies in the swamp.

FELIPE

Dead bodies from where?

DON GREGORIO

Well from here. People die on the fields from time to time.

FELIPE

Jesus Christ. Relatives don't even know they died.

MARIO

So, how come you've never tried it, Don Gregorio? Escaping that way.

DON GREGORIO

I'm too old for that. It takes three to five days on a canoe, You have to go all the way across the swamp and then all around the Florida Peninsula and Flamingo Point. If you're lucky you'll make landfall in one of the keys, jump on a highway going east and head to Miami. But if you get lost in the mangrove swamps, forget it. You'll be stuck there for days, maybe weeks.

FELIPE

Oh, so there are mangrove swamps also? I know about those, we have some back home.

DON GREGORIO

Yes, but before you get to those you have to get across the sawgrass swamps. It's a long way to the mangroves, about a hundred miles, but once you're out there, no one can find you. Not even Zorrillo.

MARIO

Well, thanks a lot for the info, Don Gregorio.

Mario and Felipe glance at each other, a light of hope is lit between them. Jose makes a sign with his hand for all present to keep the conversation confidential.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Days later, after dinner, before lights out, a guard named CABO, walks into tent C and marches up to Mario's bunk.

CABO
You, Sargento needs you in the barracks. Let's go!

MARIO
What for?

CABO
Shut the fuck up, and go.

Mario goes reluctantly. Every worker's eyes are on the two of them as they leave.

INT. BARRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Mario arrives at the barracks building in front of the gravel parking lot and is escorted to the second floor to Sargento's room.

Sargento opens the door, grabs Mario by the shirt and pulls him inside. The door slams and Mario looks at him defiantly.

MARIO
What do you want?

SARGENTO
Shine my shoes, *negrito*.

MARIO
I told you not to call me that.

SARGENTO
And I told you I can call you whatever I want.

Sargento walks behind him. Mario stands with his eyes fixed forward.

SARGENTO(CONT'D)
And I can make you do whatever I want. Turn around.

Mario turns and sees Sargento naked, pointing a gun at him.

SARGENTO (CONT'D)
On you knees, negrito.

MARIO
(indignant)
What?

Mario fills with rage. He swats the gun from Sargent with his left hand and it discharges with a loud bang. Mario punches him in the jaw with a right hook.

Sargent's head swings back and hits the door hard. Mario punches Sargent with a left hook between the eyes and he goes down.

Cabo and a guard run to the room.

CABO
(banging on the door)
Hey, what's going on here?
Sargent?

Mario picks up Sargent by the arm and neck and throws him out the window.

Sargent crashes through the glass and lands naked, bloodied, and almost dead on the gravel lot below,

Cabo kicks the door and is met with Mario's fist in the face. He goes down.

A guard uses the butt of his shotgun to hit Mario in the head and knocks him unconscious. Cabo quickly gets up with a bloody broken nose.

Zorrillo, comes out of his room on the other end of the hallway and walks over to Sargent's room. The heels of his boots mark a quick cadence.

ZORRILLO
What hell is going on here? Who
discharged their fucking weapon?

He looks at Mario lying unconscious and kicks him. He walks over to the broken window and sees Sargent's naked body below.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
That fucking homo! Taken him to the infirmary. And this piece of garbage, put him in solitary!

CABO
 (covering his nose)
 Right away, Zorrillo.

INT. TRAILER TRUCK CONTAINER - DAY

A trailer truck container half-eaten by rust and covered in weeds on one end is parked on the gravel lot near the docks.

Mario opens his eyes in the dark interior and can see through the rust holes that it is day outside.

It is hot, humid, and smells like stale urine and feces inside. Mario breaths heavily. A moan of pain from the strained voice of a man is heard from the other side of the container.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE
 Please help me, Please ...!

The voice makes a gurgling sound and a body is heard dragging itself towards Mario. He prays desperately.

MARIO
 God, what have I done to deserve this? Please end this nightmare!
 Please, let me see Mercedes and my baby boy again. Please, God, don't let me die here. I promise I'll be righteous and blameless, and I will forever have faith in you. Please God, help me!

The painful moan is very close and Mario feels a hand touch his foot. He recoils in horror and starts screaming and crying out loud.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Mario and MERCEDES, then Mario's girlfriend, walk hand in hand and find a park bench to sit in. She is three months pregnant, a baby bump is visible on her belly.

They talk for a few minutes before Mario goes to work.

MARIO
 ... Yes, *nena*. I talked to my brother Gabriel and he says we're welcome to stay at his place for as long as we need to.

MERCEDES

Oh, that is wonderful, Mario. Even if it is for a couple of weeks, that would help us out so much.

MARIO

He did warn me, that it is going to be a little tight.

MERCEDES

Oh, that is no problem at all.

MARIO

And then we can start our life together. You, me, and this little guy.

Mario reaches with his hand and gently caresses her belly.

MERCEDES

How do you know it's a boy?

MARIO

I have a feeling.

MERCEDES

Hey, I made you a bracelet while I was waiting for you. Here.

Mercedes reaches in her pocket and pulls out a thread bracelet she weaved for Mario. She puts it on his right hand over many others she has already given him. Mario smiles.

MARIO

Thank you, Nena. They always bring me good luck. I love you.

BACK TO PRESENT.

INT. TRUCK CONTAINER - EVENING

Mario weeps as he descends into a dark hole of despair. He prays to God out loud, repeating the same scripture over and over.

MARIO

"...But know that God is faithful. He won't let you suffer beyond what you can bear..." "...But know that God is faithful..."

INT. MESS HALL TENT - SAME TIME

Felipe is having dinner talking with Don Gregorio.

FELIPE

So, he was summoned to Sargento's room last night? And he never came back?

DON GREGORIO

I'm not sure what happened, Felipe. I hope he's alright.

Jose and Martin join them with more information.

JOSE

Felipe, we know where Mario is. Tell him Martin.

MARTIN

I heard the guards talking, one of them said that Sargento was taken to the hospital, that he fell out of his bedroom window from the second floor. But also that Mario was the one who threw him out.

FELIPE

What? Mario threw Sargento out of a window? Shit, Mario told me he had been calling him 'negrito'. He said he was about to go off on him.

MARTIN

Well, get this: The reason the guards were talking was because Sargento was naked when he flew out of the window. He crashed right through it.

FELIPE

What are you saying? Do you think Mario was fighting Sargento off? This is nuts, Martin.

Don Gregorio holds up the proceedings.

DON GREGORIO

Wait just a second. Are you saying Sargento is a homosexual?

JOSE

Yes, a homo. Go Martin.

MARTIN

No one knows what happened. All everybody knows is that he landed right on the parking lot, all broken up, coughing blood and shit.

FELIPE

Holy shit, so what happened to Mario?

MARTIN

Rumors are that he was sent to solitary.

FELIPE

Solitary? There's no jail around here, is there?

DON GREGORIO

Solitary is a trailer truck container at the end of the road. That's probably where he is.

FELIPE

(getting up)

I have to go find him. They must have beat the shit out of him ten times already.

JOSE

(holding him back)

Don't Felipe. Be careful, we gotta do this right, or else they'll throw you in there with him.

FELIPE

Jesus, did they beat him and torture him before they put him in there? He could be half-dead for all we know.

MARTIN

Relax, Felipe. Take a deep breath. We'll figure out a way to help him. We need to think.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT - NIGHT

Felipe and Martin arrive at the end of the gravel road and find the trailer truck container where Mario is being held. He turns on a flashlight, climbs on top, and looks inside through a rusted-out corner on the roof.

FELIPE

Mario! It's me, Felipe. I brought you food and water.

MARIO

(struggling)

Felipe! Felipe! Thank you!

FELIPE

Hang in there, Mario! Everyone at the camp is rooting for you. Here is some food. Where are you? I can't see you.

Mario calls out and waves a hand. Felipe spots him and throws a plastic bag with food.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Hang in there, Mario. I'm coming back at the same time tomorrow.

Felipe throws a bottle of water through the rust hole. Martin urges Felipe to hurry and get back to camp.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT - DAY

A white truck with the emblem of the State of Florida on its doors is parked at the end of the gravel road. A black truck is parked behind it, Geronimo and Cabo are accompanying a state inspector.

RON JOHNSON, Regional Inspector for the Florida Department of Water Resource Management is conducting a routine inspection of Tupelo Farms.

Ron Johnson is tall, thin, he wears the state agency's olive green uniform. He has thinning white hair and wears aviator glasses.

He inspects the shed, checks behind it and removes a tarp from a canoe. It has been tied to a pole and left upside down.

He walks to the wooden docks into the swamp and conducts a visual inspection of the structure. Geronimo trails him and takes notes.

Ron Johnson comes back to the road and looks out across the gravel lot to the rusted trailer truck container. He walks up to it and notices a new lock has been placed on the door latches.

RON JOHNSON
(to Geronimo)
I'm gonna take a look inside,
please open the doors.

GERONIMO
(glancing at Cabo)
I'm sorry, Senor Johnson, but
neither of us has the keys. They're
with Zorrillo.

RON JOHNSON
Then get the keys from him and open
the doors. I'll wait.

Geronimo and Cabo look at each other, reluctantly Geronimo
get on the truck and drives off to get the keys. Cabo stays
behind near the shed.

Ron Johnson goes to his truck, turns on the radio and pops a
stick of gum in his mouth while he waits.

Minutes later, the black truck pulls up, Geronimo walks up
to Ron Johnson, still sitting in his truck.

GERONIMO
Sorry, Mr. Johnson, he said he
can't find them at the moment.

RON JOHNSON
That's alright. I got a pair of
cutters back here.

Ron Johnson steps out of his truck, reaches for a heavy duty
metal cutter behind his seat and walks up to the rusty
container. Geronimo and Cabo follow him close.

Ron Johnson snaps the lock and Mario's limp body falls to
the ground. Mario can't see, he is blinded by the sun.

RON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Nothing to see here? Get this man
some water and put him in the
truck.

Ron Johnson shines a flashlight further down the dark
container and spots the limp body of a worker.

RON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
And bring this man out too. I want
to take a closer look.

INT. BARRACKS BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Ron Johnson parks his truck in front of the farm house barracks and walks to Zorrillo's office.

Geronimo and Cabo are helping Mario from the cab and walk him into the barrack's building to a meeting room.

Ron Johnson enters Zorrillo's office and finds him on the phone. He signals to the inspector to wait. He hangs up.

ZORRILLO

What do you want?

RON JOHNSON

(amused)

That dead worker on that truck container at the end of the road? He better be gone without a trace before I finish up today. And that other worker, the one that's almost dead, he better be restored to good health before inspection, or I will shut you down.

ZORRILLO

Excuse me?. I don't know what's getting your panties in a bunch, Mr. Johnson, You are a nobody to be making threats like that.

RON JOHNSON

First of all, Zaorrillo, you're not in Mexico, you're a nobody in this country. There are cowboys with bigger dicks than you around here. Second, I'm not going down with you. If I have to turn you in today, I'll do it.

ZORRILLO

Mr. Johnson. Do you mind explaining what this is all about?

RON JOHNSON

That dead worker in your solitary confinement unit. That body better be gone by the end of the day. I thought you said you weren't doing that any more?

ZORRILLO

I changed my mind. I need a way to
punish people who break the rules.

RON JOHNSON

Well change it back, because I told
you, this has to stop. No more dead
workers in your farm, or I'll shut
you down.

Ron Johnson turns around and leaves. He pauses at the door
and turns to deliver a parting shot.

RON JOHNSON

And come next week, Friday? You
better be ready for inspection.

Ron Johnson turns and exits. Zorrillo slams his fist on the
table.

ZORRILLO

Geronimo!

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - AFTERNOON

Three guards dressed in Tyvec suits and gas masks stand near
two large blue plastic barrels loaded on the front of an
airboat. The boat sits idle in a remote corner of the
sawgrass sloughs near a water cypress stand.

Two guards tip over the contents of the barrel into the
water, a brown and red lumpy mix, the chemically melted
remains of the worker that died in the truck container.

Alligators gather near and try to bite at the bloody sludge,
but are repelled by the taste of the chemicals.

INT. MEETING ROOM - AFTERNOON

TITO, The farm's vet, tends to Mario in an empty room in
front of Zorrillo's office across the hall. Mario lies in an
army cot with an IV stuck to his arm.

Mario moans in pain and moves his head to the side. The vet
gives him water to drink and offers him a spoonful of rice.

INT. C TENT - EVENING

Felipe comes in hurriedly looking for Mario and meets Jose.

FELIPE

Hey, how is Mario doing?

JOSE

He is fine, he looks a little beat up, but not too bad.

They approach Mario's bunk as he lies down sleeping heavily. Don Fernando is there next to him, so is Martin.

DON FERNANDO

He is doing okay, they had the vet put him on a IV. He will be fine.

Mario wakes and sits up, calls for Felipe.

MARIO

Hey cuz, so glad you're here. Thanks for bringing that food back there.

FELIPE

Don't even mention it, Mario. Are you feeling better? What happened?

Don Fernando hands Mario a sandwich.

MARIO

That idiot Saregento. He called me up to clean up his room and when I got there he took his pants in front of me.

JOSE

So, its true he's a homo.

Other workers join in the background.

MARIO

And then he pointed a gun at me. So I took it from him and let him have it. Then there was a fight and I don't remember much after that.

FELIPE

Mario you did a lot more than beat him up. You threw him out of a window.

MARIO

I did? Wow. Is he okay?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE

Who gives a shit?

FELIPE

Well, he wound up in a hospital.
And so far he not coming back.

MARIO

Oh, no. Poor guy.

MARTIN

Poor guys? If you ask me, he had it
coming. How many other guys you
think he's dona that shit to?

MARIO

I'm worried about what Zorrillo is
going to do.

DON GREGORIO

Guys, you don't have to worry about
him. There is an inspector hanging
around. Some are saying Mario got
out because of him. There's a big
visit next week and Zorrillo always
puts on a good face.

JOSE

You mean that thing they do every
year? With the state inspectors?

DON FERNANDO

Yes, and if there is anyone
Zorrillo lowers his head to, it is
the guy in charge of the water.

Mario is still feeling tired. He lays back down for a bit.

MARIO

Guys if you don't mind i'm still
feeling kind of woozy.

JOSE

Okay everybody, back to your tents.
Give Mario some space.

Only Felipe remains by Mario's side.

EXT. COMPOUND - DAY - GETTING READY FOR INSPECTION

Zorrillo and Geronimo direct a team of 15 workers bringing
out lumber planks from a truck.

Sargent and Rambo direct a crew of 15 workers building new
bunkbeds for Tent A.

Mario works with crew on the fields, a crop duster plane sprays the crew with pesticide. Some curse the pilot.

A crew of 15 workers raise a brand new Tent F. Felipe helps out building new bunk beds.

EXT. PRODUCE FIELDS - DAY

Mario is harvesting tomatoes, he is dragging behind working alongside Don Gregorio.

DON GREGORIO
How are you holding up, Mario?

MARIO
I have a big headache.

DON GREGORIO
Here have some water.

Mario looks around, there are no guards nearby.

MARIO
Thanks. Don Gregorio. So, what do we do if we don't find the canoe?

DON GREGORIO
(looks around to check)
You look inside a shed near the dock. Break the lock if you have to.

MARIO
What if it is not there?

DON GREGORIO
Then you head back to camp and wait for another day. You have to leave after lights-out, so you will have enough time to come back.

Mario takes a long swig and checks for guards again.

MARIO
Don Gregorio. I keep thinking that I want you to come with us.

DON GREGORIO
Oh no, Mario. That is too risky for me. I could die out there, I'm too old. You and your cousin have a much better chance. I'll be alright.

MARIO

And stay here with Zorrillo,
running this camp the way he
does? What if I report Zorrillo to
the police or someone?

DON GREGORIO

Oh no, don't do that, Mario. They
will round up anyone without papers
and deport them, including me. Many
will lose a chance to work and send
money to their families back home.

MARIO

This is so unfair, Don Gregorio.

DON GREGORIO

Mario, God is just and he sees all,
and He will dispense his divine
justice. Zorrillo day is coming. I
know it will.

A guard walks nearby and Mario stops talking. When the guard
is far away enough he whispers to Mario.

DON GREGORIO (CONT'D)

Come to think, Mario. Tell the
world about what's happening here.
Find somebody who will do
something. Keeping quiet because
people may lose their jobs is not
good enough.

MARIO

I completely agree, Don Gregorio. I
promise I will.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT - DAY - CLEANING UP THE DOCK'S PARKING LOT

Zorrillo directs a truck to latch on the rusted trailer
truck container. As the truck pulls away, the roof of the
container breaks apart and collapses. Zorrillo rages at the
driver.

Zorrillo directs a landscaping crew to clean the weeds
around the shed. The canoe with the tarp is moved to the
edge of the road in the tall grass.

Geronimo directs a guard to back up a truck with a carrier
to a ramp next to the dock. They hook the airboat to a hitch
and lift it out of the water.

Geronimo gets on the passenger side and the truck rolls out
towards the workers' compound. The canoe is left behind.

INT. MESS TENT - DAY

Mario and Felipe run into each other during the lunch break.

MARIO

Hey, Felipe. What are you up to?

FELIPE

We're covering potholes on the road. What about you?

MARIO

I talked to Don Gregorio.

Felipe perks up and looks around discreetly.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Meet me at my tent after dinner. Just you and me.

INT. TENT C - NIGHT - A FIRE BREAKS OUT

Mario is woken up in the middle of the night to the sound of screaming voices and his tent lighting up on fire from the east side.

He jumps out of bed and runs for the exit with other workers.

EXT. WORKERS COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Mario steps outside and sees tents A and B consumed in a roaring fire. One man engulfed in flames runs out of tent B screaming, a guard splashes a bucket of water on him and he falls to the ground.

There are screams of pain and anguish, several voices call for help. Guards without their guns run a long hose to try to put out the fire.

Tent C goes up in flames. Several men are pulled out of the fire, their clothes charred and black. Zorrillo comes out barefoot with nothing but a pair of jeans.

ZORRILLO

What the fuck is going on?
Geronimo! Get the fire hose from the barn! You! Step away from the tent!

Zorrillo yells directions, while other guards direct the workers towards the gravel lot. Mario carries a worker limping with an arm charred and dangling.

Rambo tends to some of the men lying on the ground and turns to Zorrillo.

RAMBO
Zorrillo, we have four dead! Lots of them burned!

ZORRILLO
Fuck! Get them out to the meeting house!
(he finds Geronimo)

Geronimo! Call Tito! Now! Tell him to get here, on the double!

Zorrillo runs the fire hose to tent D which is starting to catch fire. He yells at another guard.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
Hey, you! Put a hose on the coop barn! Don't let it burn!

Mario stays behind to help bring other burned men away from the fire to the meeting house. Felipe runs into Mario.

FELIPE
Mario! Thank god, you're okay!

MARIO
Here! Help me with this guy!

EXT. ROAD - SAME TIME

A black truck breaks through a chain link gate in the vehicle lot and speeds down the gravel road away from the workers' compound.

Worker #1 is at the wheel. WORKER #2, on the passenger seat looks behind them.

WORKER #2
Shit, the fire is spreading!

WORKER #1
Good! That will keep them busy!

EXT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Zorrillo has put on a tee shirt and his cowboy boots. He is directing a guard pointing a hose at the coop barn which is fully engulfed in flames.

Rambo comes to Zorrillo with important information.

RAMBO

Zorrillo, the vet is on his way!
Two more men are dead. The count is
six. We have ten men badly burned.

ZORRILLO

Fuck! Take all the wounded to the
meeting hall! Plenty of room there!
(to a guard)

Hey, you! Put a hose on the big
barn! Now! If it catches fire,
we're fucking done!

Cabo comes in with more news.

CABO

Zorrillo, there's a truck missing!

Zorrillo stops and walks up to Cabo.

ZORRILLO

What are you saying? You get on a
truck with another guard and you
bring whoever is on that fucking
truck dead! You hear me? I want
them dead! Go!

The guards and workers begin to get the fire under control.
Zorrillo runs to the meeting hall. Eight dead, many more lie
severely burned.

EXT. ROAD - COTINUOUS

Tito, the camp's vet is speeding down the gravel road with
an assistant towards the workers' compound. He sees a truck
with the lights on coming down the road straight at him and
he squints his eyes.

He slows down and swerves suddenly to the side of the road
to avoid a collision. The truck speeds past them.

TITO

What is going on? Are they coming
to find us?

Tito gets back on the road and drives fast to the camp.

INT. MEETING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Zorrillo looks at the dead workers being wrapped in white
sheets. Geronimo comes in with a report.

GERONIMO

Zorrillo, the fire is under control. What next?

ZORRILLO

Comb through the rubble and bring out any other bodies. And start cleaning up that fucking mess!

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Tito is speeding down the road again and sees another set of lights coming fast towards him.

Cabo is driving another black truck coming in very fast.

Tito tries to pull to the side but the road is too narrow. He swerves and hits the breaks to keep from falling on a ditch.

Cabo swerves to avoid a collision, the truck's rear tire catches the the edge of the road and Cabo loses control.

The black truck drifts to the left, Cabo tries to correct and the back of the truck swings out to the right. The truck flips over and tumbles several times.

Tito sees the accident on his rearview mirror.

TITO

Oh, dear God! We have to help them!

Tito slams on the breaks, reverses the truck and speeds towards the scene of the accident.

He steps out of the car with his assistant and runs towards the wreck. The truck has landed upside down on a ditch.

Cabo is trapped in the wreckage, bloodied on his head and face, unconscious, held upside down by the seatbelts.

The right side headlights are still on, the engine is steaming. One rear wheel is still spinning.

The other guard is half out of the truck, dead.

TITO (CONT'D)

Dear Lord! Help me get him out!

The vet and his assistant bring Cabo out of the truck and lay him on the side of the road. Tito gets on the phone with Zorrillo. The assistant is giving Cabo CPR.

TITO (CONT'D)
Zorrillo, it's Tito! We just saw a terrible accident! Cabo is badly injured, and the other guard is ---

ZORRILLO
Tito! I need you here now! We got a real fucking situation here! Leave him, I'll send for him!

LUCHO
But Zorrillo, the other guard is dead -

ZORRILLO
I said, get your ass here now!

Tito hangs up stunned. He shakes himself and tells his assistant to help him put Cabo in the truck with them.

EXT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Mario is ordered back to the gravel lot while a team of guards search for dead bodies in the rubble.

Mario runs into Felipe as he exits the large barn.

FELIPE
Mario, what the hell happened?

MARIO
Two workers from tent A escaped. They set their tent on fire as a decoy.

FELIPE
Son of a bitch. They almost burned the whole camp down.

MARIO
I know. That kind of throws a wrench on our plans.

FELIPE
That crossed my mind too, Mario. But maybe not. There's that inspection coming up in a couple of days. There is going to be a lot of disruption around here. We have to be alert and take our chance.

Their conversation is interrupted by a black SUV coming through the gates and slamming the breaks in front of the barracks.

The guard at the gates rush to help Cabo out of the truck
Tito and his assistant rush out of the truck with EMT boxes.

INT. MEETING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tito, his assistant, and Rambo walk into the meeting hall.
Twelve men lie on the floor covered in white sheets.

Twenty other men lie in cots on the far end of the room,
many of them screaming in pain from their burns.

TITO

Rambo, what in the world happened
here?

RAMBO

Ah, there was a fire, it spread
really fast to other tents.

Rambo directs Tito to the cots with the burned men. Several
guards are attempting to provide first aid.

RAMBO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

These men need medical attention
now, Tito. They're dying in front
of us!

LUCHO

Okay Rambo, get me lots of hot
water and bandages. We need lots of
bandages.

Zorrillo walks up to Tito.

ZORRILLO

What the hell took you so long?
Tell me what you need!

TITO

Zorrillo, we need to take these men
to a hospital! I don't have the
equipment for this!

ZORRILLO

Out of the question, Tito! Tell me
what you need to save these men!

LUCHO

Okay, okay! I --- I need IV bags -
I need lots of them. I need
hospital equipment!

ZORRILLO
We'll get it! What else?

LUCHO
I need morphine, I need
antibiotics! Penicillin!

ZORRILLO
(to Rambo)
Get him whatever he needs!

Zorrillo walks away and exits the meeting hall.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT - CONTINUOUS

The workers who are not injured or helping have been ordered to gather in the gravel lot, about 120 of them. They are grouped by tent assignments.

Zorrillo is barking orders to a guard on his phone.

ZORRILLO
Write this down! 300 beams of 2x4's
100 sheets of 1/4 inch plywood! 200
beams of aluminum siding! 150
pounds of 4 inch screws!

Zorrillo flags down a front loader slowly rumbling on the edge of the gravel lot, heading for the tent area. He grabs a bull horn and stands on the tractor's blade.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
Listen up, *cabrones*! Two workers escaped today, I'm sure with the help of some of you! And they burned half the camp down, and we have a bunch of dead fucking workers because of them!

Zorrillo steps down and walks closer to the workers.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
Mark my words, I will find out who helped them! In the meantime, all of you *cabrones*, are going to rebuild this camp! And we are going to be ready for inspection on friday morning!

Zorrillo paces as he stares down workers with fury.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
We are going to be working all day
and all night to raise this camp
again! No one will refuse to work!
No one will get paid and if you
complaint, you will be silenced!
Permanently!

No one in the camp speaks a word. Faint screaming is heard
all the way from the meeting house.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
Materials for the new camp will be
arriving shortly! That will be all!

Zorrillo hands the bullhorn to a guard and walks towards the
meeting house.

MONTAGE - EXT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

-Mario wades in the charred remains of the tents with a crew
of workers to clear burnt debris.

-Dawn. Felipe follows a front loader with a crew with rakes,
leveling out the ground where the tents once stood.

-Morning. Crews of workers unload lumber and plywood from
trucks

-A front loader tears down the barn where the workers' coop
once stood.

-A guards crew replace the aluminum siding that burned on
the large barn.

-Six new army tents arrive on a truck, workers unload.

-Three tents have been erected, Mario helps erect the posts
on tent D.

END OF MONTAGUE.

INT. MEETING HALL - AFTERNOON

Zorrillo enters. Tito, his assistant and several guards tend
to the fifteen wounded men. There are seventeen bodies
wrapped in sheets.

ZORRILLO
Tito! Get ready to move these dead
bodies out of here!

TITO
Hum, where to, Zorrillo?

ZORRILLO
Your house.

TITO
Wha--- My house? Why ---

ZORRILLO
Stop fucking stammering! They're
going in your basement. There's a
truck waiting outside!

TITO
Zorrillo I can just fill up my
house with dead ---

Zorrillo squares up to Tito.

ZORRILLO
Don't fuck with me, Tito! Do what
you'e told or you too will be
walking out of here in a body bag!

TITO
Okay, Zorrillo. I'll do it. Please.
It's okay. I'll do it.

Zorrillo exits the hall.

INT. TENT C. EVENING

Mario is building bunks in a crew with Jose.

MARIO
I never used these drills before.

JOSE
Good experience if you ever do
construction.

MARIO
So, what do you think Zorrillo is
going to do with all those dead
workers? He can't feed them all to
the alligators.

JOSE
Huh, Zorrillo? He'll probably burn
them all in pyre.

MONTAGUE. EXT. COMPOUND - NIGHT

-Mario and a crew unload mattresses from a truck and bring
them towards the tents to finish the bunks.

-Felipe and a crew bring out bags of pillows and sheets and distribute them to the different tents.

-The front loader levels the ground where the coop barn once stood.

-A crew power washes the side of the big barn that has been stained with zoot.

-A new mess hall tent is erected.

-A row of new port-a-pottys is brought in near the latrines.

-Mario and several workers are brought out to the fields to do maintenance work on water drainage canals.

-Mario and his crew sleep while sitting down on the main gravel lot.

END OF MONTAGUE.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND - DAY

Felipe and Jose are sitting near the mess tent eating their lunch. They look sad and tired. Mario joins them.

MARIO

Hey, guys. Is everything okay?

FELIPE

Not good, Mario. We just learned
Don Fernando didn't make it.

Mario is shaken by the news.

MARIO

Oh, no. But he was looking forward
so much to see his grandchildren.

Mario sits next to his cousin, utterly dejected.

INT. TENT C - EVENING

Mario, Felipe and Martin sit down for a portion of rice and beans. Jose joins in. Mario looks around to make sure no guards or workers are within earshot, he lowers his voice.

MARIO

Say, Jose ... We were thinking of
going for it tonight. But I don't
know anymore.

JOSE
(keeping his voice down)
I wouldn't recommend it. Zorrillo
is going to be on full alert until
this inspection is over. Try it
tomorrow. It's a Friday night, he
usually gives his guards some rest.

MARTIN
You have to wait a few hours after
lights out.

Mario and Felipe look at each other with renewed determination.

MONTAGUE - EXT. COMPOUND - DAY - THE YEARLY INSPECTION

-Early morning. Mario hands out tee shirts from a cardboard box to other workers in his tent.

-Later, Mario hands out tee shirts to workers who just arrived from other farms to replace the dead workers.

-Six, a.m. All guards wear olive green uniforms, without weapons. They direct the workers to transportation to the fields on three white school buses.

-Felipe and his crew hoist a white tent on a strip of grass near a field. Others bring in foldable tables, and chairs.

-A convoy of three black SUVs and a white pick up truck with Ron Johnson at the wheel arrives at the compound's gate. They proceed and park in front of the farm house.

END OF MANTAGUE.

INT. MEETING ROOM - MORNING

The Farmhouse. A room across the hall from Zorrillo's office is arranged conference style with coffee, pastries and fresh fruit.

Zorrillo is the host of a gathering of government officials for a yearly inspection. He wears pressed jeans, same cowboy boots and a pressed white shirt with cuff links, a cowboy Style, Panama Jack-hat and a charming smile.

Ron Johnson, a STATE REPRESENTATIVE and Zorrillo converse.

STATE REP

I see you have a picture of Cesar Chaves behind you, Mr. Rendon. Any particular reason?

ZORRILLO

Well, my father knew him, back in Chocoala, in northern Mejico. They were just kids, and even though they never quite agreed on everything, he has been kind of a friend of the family. Even after his death.

STATE REP

I understand. So where do you get most of your workers?

ZORRILLO

They come from farms around the area mostly, but we do accept referrals from temporary employment agencies on a regular basis.

STATE REP

I see. Well Mr. Rendon, I'm looking forward to seeing your operation running at full steam. I'm sure everything is up to the highest standards.

ZORRILLO

It is indeed. Please help yourself to some coffee and pastry.

Ron Johnson is left alone with Zorrillo for a moment.

RON JOHNSON

Everything looks so new, Zorrillo. Like it just went up yesterday.

ZORRILLO

I got this, Ron. Stay in your lane.

RON JOHNSON

Not to mention, the forty or fifty new workers on the payroll. What happened to the others?

ZORRILLO

A staff reshuffling, that's all.

RON JOHNSON
I smell a fucking rat, Zorrillo. I
don't like it.

Ron Johnson accompanies the state rep to his black SUV parked outside. The parking lot is crowded with other similar vehicles and vans.

INT. ZORRILLO'S BEDROOM - EVENING - ESCAPE ATTEMPT # 2

A corner room with no curtains, dingy, bare walls. Zorrillo lies on a bare mattress on a metal bunk, exhausted from long hours of work without sleep.

There's a knock on the door, Zorrillo is snoring. There's another knock on the door, he gets up angry,

ZORRILLO
Who the fuck is it? This better be
important!

Zorrillo opens the door, Geronimo, Rambo and another guard are standing on the other side.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
What the fuck you want?

GERONIMO
(hesitating)
Hum, boss ... Myself and a couple
of guards where wondering if we
could still go on leave for a few
hours? It's Friday night?

Zorrillo rubs his eyes, runs his fingers through his hair.

ZORRILLO
Yes, fine. But you stay back. You
can go when the other guys get
back. And only four at the time.

Zorrillo closes the door and opens it again.

ZORRILLO(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Rambo! You're going to Lupe's
place? Get me one of those girls.
The usual.

RAMBO
Sure thing, Zorrillo. Thanks.

ZORRILLO

And one more thing. Tent managers
in my office at 5:00 a.m tomorrow
morning. Pass the word.

INT/EXT. WORKER'S COMPOUND - SAME TIME

Felipe crawls under the canvas of Tent C from the back. He reaches Mario's bunk and taps him on the shoulder.

Mario and Felipe run outside the perimeter of the compound, behind the truck lot. They jump on the gravel road and run heading west. A crescent moon hangs on a starry sky.

FELIPE

It's about two miles, we should be
there in about a half hour.

EXT. ROADWAYS - LATER

One mile down the road Felipe spots a large animal crossing the gravel road. It turns and looks at them, its round bright eyes reflect towards them.

FELIPE

Is that a big cat?

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Looks like a puma. I didn't know
they had these around here.

The panther walks across the road and jumps onto a produce field. Mario and Felipe walk carefully for a few feet and continue running on the road.

INT. ROOM. LATER

Zorrillo is woken up by Geronimo knocking on the door. He is delivering a YOUNG PROSTITUTE to his room.

Zorrillo grabs the girl by the arm, pulls her inside and slams the door shut.

EXT. GRAVEL LOT - NIGHT

Mario and Felipe reach the end of the road and look behind the shed.

FELIPE

Damn it! it's not here.

MARIO

Let's look around. Wait, what is
that over there?

Mario points to the edge of the road, a side of the aluminum
canoe is lit up by the moon.

FELIPE

Yes! Don Gregorio was right. Let's
get this thing in the water.

They flip the canoe right side up and carry it off. There
are two rowing paddles inside, the tarp lays nearby.

MARIO

Wait. Let's take the tarp with us.
It may come in handy.

Mario and Felipe fold the tarp quickly and throw it in the
canoe. They port the canoe to the dock, set it on the water
and get inside.

Mario sits up front, Felipe steers from the rear. It is a
clear, starry night.

MARIO (CONT'D)

So far, so good, Felipe. Ready?

FELIPE

Let's do this, Mario. God help us.

Mario and Felipe push off and paddle into the dark waters of
a sawgrass channel.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - CONTINUOUS

A wide channel lined with wild brush and sawgrass winds
through a sawgrass prairie.

MARIO

I don't see any streams in the
water.

FELIPE

Maybe they're only visible during
the day. Let's keep looking.

The channel widens and the expanse of the sawgrass sloughs
comes into view under the light of a crescent moon. The sky
is awash with bright stars.

FELIPE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Pretty quiet around here.

MARIO
Mark the time, is quarter past
midnight.

The canal opens wide into a vast lagoon several miles long.

INT. ROOM - LATER

Zorrillo is finished with the young prostitute, he smokes a cigarette by the window while she sleeps.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - LATER

FELIPE
I can see a stream. Look.

Felipe points to a stream of clear water running port side. A slight breeze shows a change in the texture of the water.

MARIO
I see it too. Maybe they're easier
to spot in open water.

FELIPE
(moments later)
Hey, do you think Zorrillo knows
we're missing?

MARIO
I pray he doesn't. He's gonna go
ballistic when he finds out.

FELIPE
Hopefully him and the guards are
still drinking. Trying to forget
about that fire.

MARIO
I can't believe we survived that.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND - DAWN

Rambo and two guards are standing in front of all the workers in Tent C. Rambo is making an announcement.

RAMBO
Listen up, cabrones! We have been
telling you over and over that when
one of you fails, the whole crew
fails!

Rambo paces with a shotgun on his shoulder.

RAMBO (CONT'D)

Those two *cabrones* that escaped the other night, they set back this camp and this farm, weeks, maybe months! And because of them, all of you are going to pay! Today is Saturday and it will be a full work day!

There are groans of displeasure amongst the workers.

RAMBO (CONT'D)

And I don't want to hear any shit from any of you! You're too tired to work? Too bad! You refuse to work, well, there's always solitary! You'll be doing time in a locked port-a-potty!

A guard comes to Rambo and hesitates to interrupt.

GUARD #1

Rambo there is a worker unaccounted for, it's Mario Lopez.

RAMBO

What? You gotta be fucking kidding.

Rambo paces on his spot like wounded beast.

RAMBO (CONT'D)

Fucking shit! God Dammit! Go to tent E and find out if Suarez is missing. Go!

The guard sprints to Tent E while Rambo berates the workers some more. The guard returns moments later.

GUARD #1

Sir, Suarez is missing too.

Rambo is unsure what to do next. He knows how Zorrillo is going to react to the news.

RAMBO

Damm it! Go get Zorrillo. Tell what's happening.

The guard rushes to the farm house.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - SAME TIME

Mario and Felipe make their way through a wide canal. A faint glow of dawn is rising on the east. The birds' morning chorus is begining.

MARIO

They gotta know we're missing. How many miles do you think we've gone?

FELIPE

My best guess is fifteen, twenty miles. We've been rowing for five hours, doing 3 or 4 miles per hour.

MARIO

What if they send one of those airboats for us?

FELIPE

There's no way they'll find us. They would have to follow every turn we've made, exactly as we did it. All they have to do is make a wrong turn and its over.

EXT. WORKERS' COMPOUND-CONTINUOUS

Zorrillo marches up to Tent C, he can be heard cursing and yelling before he arrives.

ZORRILLO

Rambo, what the fuck is this I hear Lopez is missing?

RAMBO

I... I don't know, boss...

Zorrillo grabs Rambo by his shirt and drags him away from the group.

ZORRILLO

Stop fucking stammering! Get on a fucking truck and you drive up and down the fucking road looking for those two! I want them dead! Bring them to me in a fucking body bag!

Rambo grabs a guard next to him and they rush to the vehicle lot. Geronimo happens to be passing by and Zorrillo calls him over.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
Geronimo! Come here, you deep shit!
Did you know we have two workers
missing?

Geronimo hesitates to give an answer.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
No, you don't! Lopez and Suarez,
are gone! If those two don't return
to me dead today, I'm docking your
pay for a whole fucking month!

Zorrillo grabs Geronimo by the arm and shoves him.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)
You go to the docks and find out if
those two went that way! I want a
report in five fucking minutes!

Geronimo takes another guard and rush to the vehicle lot.
Zorrillo puts another guard in charge of Tent C and gets him
to move the workers to the gravel lot.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - DAWN

The sun is coming up over the sawgrass wilderness, the
bird's morning chorus is heard loudly. The sky is streaked
by flocks of birds in search of food, a few clouds are lit
up by the sun.

MARIO
They have to know we're missing. We
should hide soon.

Mario and Felipe look around for a good place to land, they
are traversing another lagoon.

FELIPE
What about that tree stand near the
shore?

Mario and Felipe paddle to a stand of water cypress near the
sawgrass shore about forty foot tall. They climb up the
branches and take a look to the east. The vastness of the
wilderness is breathtaking.

MARIO
I don't see any signs of anything
that looks like the camp.

FELIPE

Me either. We must be more than twenty miles away.

MARIO

They do have that crop duster plane. They could send it after us.

EXT. DOCKS. MORNING

Geronimo and a crew are bringing down an airboat from a lift and setting it down on the ramp to the canal. Zorrillo arrives on a black truck and makes a bee line for Geronimo.

ZORRILLO

You! Get on that boat and find those two and bring them to me dead! Or we're going to have a big fucking problem!

Geronimo runs back to his truck to get in sniper gear. Another truck pulls up, it is Rambo. He steps out with the tail between his legs.

RAMBO

No sight of Lopez or Suarez, boss!

ZORRILLO

You dumb son of a bitch! You get on that airboat and you bring me those two. And from here on, you're working without pay! Get out of my face!

Rambo runs back to his truck and gets his gear on. The boat is ready to go. Zorrillo gets on the phone on the way to his truck.

ZORRILLO (CONT'D)

(talking on the phone)

Yes! Get the crop duster up! Do a two hundred mile search. Silver canoe, two workers. Two mile grid due southwest!

Zorrillo gets on his truck and drives back to the camp. Rambo runs to the boat, gets on and they're off.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - DAY

Mario and Felipe advance through a large lagoon four miles wide, six miles long.

FELIPE

Finally I see the shore.

MARIO

And I see a good tree stand to make landfall.

Mario and Felipe make landfall in a muddy shore surrounded by sawgrass. They climb up a tall birch and look east. The birds chorus is subsiding.

FELIPE

Nothing around.

MARIO

Wait, can you hear that?

Felipe listens intently and detects the faint sound of an airplane engine. Mario spots it.

MARIO (CONT'D)

There! Straight due south.

FELIPE

I see it, its heading west.

Moments later, the plane makes a turn due south. Mario and Felipe breath a sigh of relief and climb down.

MARIO

Lets cover up this canoe. Just to be sure.

FELIPE

And get some sleep. I'm exhausted.

EXT. SAWGRRASS SLOUGHS - LATER

Mario wakes up and sits up next to Felipe, who is still sleeping on the ground. They take shelter from the sun after extending the tarp and covering it with leaves and branches.

Felipe wakes and sits up.

FELIPE

Damm it's hot.

MARIO

Wonder what is happening back at the farm.

FELIPE

I just hope Zorrillo doesn't find us.

A twenty foot Brumese python slithers past them from the shade towards the water. Mario knocks Felipe on the arm.

MARIO
Wow, that's huge. A boa?

FELIPE
The markings are darker on this one. Maybe a python?

They watch the snake slither away in the water.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - DUSK

The sky is lit up in sharp colors as the sun goes down and the first evening stars come out. Mario and Felipe tie up next to a cypress stand and use the tarp as cover.

Mario doles out food rations from a back pack.

MARIO
So far so good, Felipe, I think we might have lost them.

ZORRILLO
Never count Zorrillo out. Now we have to go through the mangroves.

MARIO
I won't feel safe until we hit the mangroves. No one can find us there.

EXT. SAWGRASS SLOUGHS - DAWN

Mario and Felipe set out into the sawgrass wilderness down a wide canal heading west. They cross a vast lagoon and as they approach the shore they see a fringe of green.

MARIO
Are those the mangroves?

FELIPE
Yes, those are it!

MARIO
(elated)
Oh, thank God, we made it!

FELIPE
Yes! Fuck you, Zorrillo! Rot in hell! *Cabron de mierda!*

They paddle into a wide channel, following a braiding stream of clear water. There is an eerie quiet.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - NIGHT

Mario and Felipe huddle in the rain, collecting fresh water from the tarp.

MARIO

This is it for the rations. We are going to have to hunt our food from now on.

FELIPE

No problem, Mario. Leave it to me. Plenty of fish around here.

MARIO

I wish this rain would stop.

FELIPE

I know. It makes it hard to find those streams.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - AFTERNOON

The rain lets up a bit, Mario and Felipe continue paddling down the channel. They come upon a large lagoon a couple miles wide and several miles long. A stream of clear water is visible hundreds of yards away.

Ominous dark clouds approach. There is lightning flashing and the rumble of thunder echoes in the distance.

FELIPE

We should take a break, Mario.
Let's go back to the edge.

Mario and Felipe tie the canoe to a red mangrove trunk. They use the tarp to keep off the rain and huddle close to each other to keep warm.

MARIO

Slow going today.

FELIPE

This rain is tough.

The rains let up some but the winds pick up. Small waves rush against the mangroves, the canoe bangs against the roots. The tarp flaps around Mario and Felipe, they hold it fast with their hands.

In the distance a water spout forms over the lake. Mario sees it first and points to it.

FELIPE (CONT'D)
Oh, my God. Is that a tornado? I have never seen one before.

MARIO
I don't know, but it looks like its coming our way.

FELIPE
Shit! The canoe! Let's tie it up!

Mario and Felipe rush to bring the canoe out of the water. A second spout comes down from the clouds and curls around the first one. Mario sees it.

MARIO (CONT'D)
It's getting bad, Felipe!

The two spouts combine into one large funnel, picks up strength over the water and the winds whip up very fast.

MARIO (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Felipe! Hang on!

The tarp flies off, it rips through the tree branches.

FELIPE
It's coming staright towards us!

Mario and Felipe cling with all their might to the trunk of a red mangrove as the wind picks up speed.

MARIO
Hang on!

The tornado picks up water, leaves and plant debris. Mario and Felipe close their eyes and cover their heads.

The winds pick up the canoe and fling it up in the air, the rope strains against the ties.

The high winds die down slowly and a light rain follows. Mario and Felipe open their eyes and survey the damage.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Oh, my God, the canoe!

FELIPE
Holy shit, Mario.

The canoe remains tethered to the rope, but half of it has been destroyed. The front half of it is encrusted in the tree's branches. The tarp is torn to shreds.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Oh, my God. We are so screwed,
Mario! What are we gonna do without
a boat?

MARIO

Wait, Felipe. Think. Let's get the
canoe down and see what we can do.

Mario climbs up the tree where the canoe got thrown into and helps bring it down to Felipe who is pulling from below.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - LATER

Mario has brought down the canoe and pounded it back to its original shape.

FELIPE

Okay, what next?

MARIO

Grab a couple of pieces of wood and
pound the surface until its is
smooth again.

Felipe follows Mario's technique of flattening the aluminum hull of the canoe, one inch at the time. Dusk approaches.

MARIO (CONT'D)

You keep working on the hull, I'm
going to start a fire.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - NIGHT

Mario has built a fire and is melting one of Felipe's sneakers to plug in the holes on the boat. He tries out the first hole.

FELIPE

This is a crazy idea, Mario, but it
may just work.

Mario blows gently on the melted rubber and sees the result.

MARIO

I think it's holding. Let's plug in
as much as we can tonight and
tomorrow we'll put in in the water.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - DAY

Mario and Felipe slowly put the canow down in the water. Mario gets in the back with a paddle.

MARIO
It's holding.

Moments later, a slow leak comes in from the front. Mario gets out and together with Felipe, they pull up the canoe.

Later, Mario and Felipe put the canoe down and it holds. Felipe gets in carefully. They set back out on the lagoon.

EXT. MANGROVE SWAMP - LATER

Mario and Felipe take a break at midday under the shadow of a mangrove. Felipe pulls up a four foot long silver fish.

MARIO
Wow, nice catch.

FELIPE
Atlantic tarpon. They lay their eggs on the estuaries.

MARIO
We could really use some pine pitch. we got water seeping in again.

EXT. MANGROVE FOREST - AFTERNOON

Mario and Felipe paddle past a large pine tree grove as they float along a wide channel. Mario asks Felipe to stop.

MARIO
There is a channel up ahead.

Mario steers into a narrow canal, a tunnel of green and yellow leaves, sunlight cuts slanted through the canopy. A smell of dead fish permeates the mangrove forest.

MARIO (CONT'D)
Not sure if we should. There's a clearing on the other end.

As they advance, they see a flock of about 50 vultures perched on the mangrove branches. Dead fish float in the surface of muddy water.

FELIPE
This place gives me the creeps.

50 yards ahead, a vulture flops down to grab a fish and flies up to a nearby branch.

MARIO
Looks like logs in the water up ahead.

FELIPE
Those are not logs.

Mario and Felipe raise their paddles as the canoe glides over the backs of about 30 alligators. The water is rustled as they scamper away. They come out of the tunnel into a small pond.

EXT. POND - CONTINIOUS

A spit of sand about the length of a football field is crowded with straight and tall slash pines. Felipe steers to the shore, about 50 yards away.

MARIO
I hope those are not coming after us.

Felipe raises his paddle and gets ready to get out in a hurry.

FELIPE
Ready up front, Mario.

The keel hits the sandy spit and Mario jumps out first. Felipe splashes in the water. Mario grabs one end, Felipe the other, they port the canoe twenty feet away from the shore.

MARIO
Okay! The coast is clear!

FELIPE
I have a feeling ... that's the only way out, too!

Mario jumps on the task to collect pitch from the pine trees.

Mario and Felipe climb different trees to have a look around. They can see the line of the ocean.

Mario collects some pitch and taps another pine tree.

A large alligator bull emerges from the clear pond and lumbers its way towards the pine grove. Mario and Felipe climb up one of the pines.

The bull alligator stops in front of them.

FELIPE (CONT'D)
That's a big boy down there.

MARIO
I don't thinks it wants to go
anywhere.

FELIPE
He looks like the king of this
pond.

MARIO
We need to get out of here. Do you
want to be the decoy?

FELIPE
Okay. What should I do?

MARIO
Well, you run one way, I run
another. We meet back at the canoe.

FELIPE
Do you think we can outrun it?

MARIO
I'm pretty sure. Just don't trip
and fall.

FELIPE
Hold on to that pitch.

On the count of three, Mario and Felipe climb down from the tree, Mario holds the bag of pine pitch, and Felipe tries to distract the large bull. The bull turns slowly around.

Mario steps in the canoe and gets ready, Felipe joins moments later. The bull starts to make its way towards shore.

Mario and Felipe push off the small beach, they row gently past the group of 20 to 30 alligators at the entrance of the pond. The large bull lumbers back into the water with a small splash.

Mario and Felipe ride the mangrove tunnel out to the riverway.

MARIO
That was a little too close,
Felipe.

FELIPE

Yeah, let's not do that again.

EXT. MANGROVE FOREST - EVENING

Mario and Felipe pull the boat out of the water and are applying pitch along the seams of old patches.

FELIPE

I think we're getting closer to the coast. Can you smell the sea breeze?

MARIO

I can. I wonder how much longer we have to go.

FELIPE

I don't know, but the earlier we leave tomorrow, the better.

EXT. MANGROVE FOREST - DAWN

Mario and Felipe set the boat down on the water as the sun is coming up on the east. The push away, the water looks calm, deep and black.

FELIPE

I think we'll reach the coast today. I can feel it.

MARIO

I'm hungry, I need to eat.

EXT. MANGROVE FOREST - MORNING

As the sun comes up and the sky turns bright blue, Felipe spots a fin slicing through the calm waters moving in zig zag motion.

FELIPE

Bull shark.

Mario lifts his paddle as the shark passes by.

The mangrove channel widens and the canoe glides by rookeries with hundreds of birds. Clouds of cattle egrets lift before the blue sky as they pass by. Flocks of flamingos in line formation fly above.

MARIO

We're definitely near the coast. All these birds are looking for food.

The water changes color to a green muddy silt. The edges of the channel widen further and the mangrove trees look smaller. A flock of Roseatte spoonbills graze for shrimp in shallow waters as the canoe glides by.

FELIPE

We're very close to the coast.
Everything is changing.

The channel disappears. Mario and Felipe are gliding past an aquamarine estuary dotted with small mangrove trees. Frigate birds circle high above, flocks of white pelicans fly in close formation a few feet above the water.

A mile further the small mangrove trees disappear and there are sand banks dotting a wide bay. White sand beaches with short vegetation can be seen towards the south.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

I can see blue water.

MARIO

Yes! We reached the coast! We did it Felipe!

Mario and Felipe get a burst of energy.

FELIPE

I can't believe we did it, Mario!

MARIO

I am done working in farms, Felipe.
Nothing but trouble.

FELIPE

Now we have Miami to think about.

MARIO

And God knows how many more miles,
but we're out of there. Stuff it
Zorrillo!

FELIPE

Here comes the blue water.

Mario and Felipe are elated. They turn due south and pick up the pace. Soon they come upon gentle ocean waves. Mario reaches down to taste the water with a smile on his face.

EXT. COAST - AFTERNOON

Mario and Felipe pull up the canoe to a white sand beach. They step out and both sit down to rest.

MARIO

I am so hungry. We have to find something.

FELIPE

And I'm so thirsty.

After a search for food, Felipe comes back to the camp with his tee shirt in hand making a bag for crabs, clams and oysters. Mario has found two coconuts that floated up on the beach is husking them against a rock.

Mario and Felipe pick apart the crabs and eat them one by one. After eating, they sit on the beach and they see a large Florida crocodile, about sixteen feet long, slowly coming up from the waves onto the beach.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

What the hell is that?

MARIO

That's bigger than the big boy in the pine grove.

FELIPE

Is that thing coming towards us?

MARIO

I think we better move.

FELIPE

Good thing they're slow on land.

Mario and Felipe stand and walk around the salty croc and get back in the canoe.

EXT. COAST - EVENING

The sun is going down setting the sky ablaze in color. Flocks of birds return to their rookeries, Mario and Felipe keep an eye on the coast. A string of lights can be seen many miles in the distance.

MARIO

Is that a highway, you think?

FELIPE

Looks like it. But over there looks like a small town.

MARIO

We're still a long way out.

FELIPE

let's head due southeast. We'd be getting closer to the city. Less miles to walk.

EXT. FLORIDA BAY - NIGHT

Mario and Felipe paddle across a wide bay heading south. They advance in the darkness with moderate boat traffic. The lights in the highway and homes nearby seem closer.

MARIO

I hope we don't get hit by one of those boats.

FELIPE

I'll let you know when to jump.

Mario points to a cluster of lights.

MARIO

That looks like a good place to land.

FELIPE

Let's aim for it. Careful with the boats.

Mario and Felipe close in on the shore and paddle near some luxury homes. They glide past luxury yachts and homes with manicured backyards.

MARIO

Wow, there's some really rich people around here.

FELIPE

I have never seen boats so big. Not even fishing boats that big.

MARIO

Imagine living in a boat like that?

FELIPE

Imagine living in a house like that.

MARIO

Let's get ready to jump out.

EXT. MANSION GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Mario and Felipe pull the canoe up to an empty dock and step out. They port the canoe to some bushes nearby and hide it. A couple of rooms on the upper floors are lit up.

They are both wearing rags for clothes. Their tee shirts are ripped, muddy and blood stained.

FELIPE

Careful, there's probably alarms all around the house.

Mario and Felipe walk around to the front of the house. There is a black luxury car parked in front of the house at the end of a long driveway. They stop and hide behind a shed.

MARIO

Felipe we need to find new clothes as soon as possible. Look at us, we will be noticed right away if we go out looking like this.

FELIPE

We need to find a place where we can dumpster dive. Like a mall or something.

MARIO

Let's get out to the main street over there, maybe we can look around.

Mario and Felipe run towards the end of the driveway and come upon a busy road with lots of fast traffic.

EXT. ROADWAYS - CONTINUOUS

They stop and look around before continuing.

MARIO

I think this is the road we saw from the canoe.

FELIPE

What do the signs say?

MARIO

Key Largo. Is that the name of the town?

FELIPE

Look, over there!. A mall!

Mario and Felipe run towards a light dome beyond a few set of lights and come upon a strip mall. They walk around the back alley and find a row of dumpsters from the stores and restaurants.

Mario and Felipe search the dumpsters for clothing and food. When they are finished they look for a place to set down and sleep, they find a small strip of grass and shrubs.

EXT. STREETS AND ROADWAYS - DAY

Mario and Felipe are woken up by a garbage truck emptying dumpsters in the alley.

FELIPE

What is all that racket?

MARIO

Oh, my goodness, it is seven!

FELIPE

Come on, let's get out of here.

Mario is wearing a stained tee shirt, a pair of jeans a couple of sizes too big and black sneakers. Felipe is wearing the same pants he had, an oversize tee shirt and flip flops.

Felipe reaches inside a plastic bag for some food he collected the night before. He shares some with Mario.

MARIO

We need to find a way to get to the city. I wonder how far we are from Miami?

The truck leaves the alley, Felipe is distracted with a car in the alley. He inches up to the edge of the greenery.

FELIPE

Hey, Mario. Wait for me here. I'll be right back.

Felipe walks across the alley, goes inside the back door of one of the stores and comes out in a rush.

MARIO

Felipe, why did you go in there?

FELIPE

Mario we have to go.

Felipe shows him a woman's wallet and he takes off running along the greenery, going towards the other end of the strip mall.

MARIO

Wait a minute, Felipe. Did you steal that wallet?

Felipe is walking away fast, Mario follows him close.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Felipe, that's not right, put it back!

FELIPE

(stopping)

Mario, you asked how we were going to get back to Miami? Here is our chance. Let's open up this wallet and see what's in there.

MARIO

I didn't say steal whatever to get out of here!

Felipe opens the wallet under the shade of a tree. He counts three hundred and eighty five dollars.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Felipe, that's a lot of money, we are going to get in big trouble if we get caught.

FELIPE

Oh, for crissakes. Who carries that much money in their god dam wallet?

MARIO

It is wrong, Felipe. It will bring nothing but trouble.

FELIPE

Alright, do you want to stay here? Looking like this? Eating out of garbage cans? I don't see any cattle trucks we can hitch a ride on, or small buses we can take.

MARIO

Fine! But we will never do this again, promise?

FELIPE

It's just this one time, Mario.

Felipe takes the cash and puts it in his front pants pocket. They walk to the end of the strip mall, Felipe ditches the wallet in a trash can.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - CONTINUOUS

Felipe comes out of a super market wearing brand new water shoes. Mario carries a plastic bag with food and drinks for later.

MARIO

Alright, let find that bus station.

INT. BUS STATION - LATER

Mario and Felipe stand at a ticket counter, they are purchasing tickets to Miami. A woman clerk asks them to provide identification. Felipe struggles to communicate in English.

FELIPE

Sorry, no I.D. Lost wallet.

CLERK

Sorry, no I.D no ticket.

FELIPE

We had accident, no phone...
Please?

There are no other customers at the station. The clerk gives Mario and Felipe an up and down look, they don't look like criminals to her.

CLERK

Alright, I need your name. You boys are lucky I'm in a good mood this morning.

FELIPE

Thank you, thank you. Uhm, my name is Felipe Duarte.

Mario elbows Felipe discreetly. Duarte is not Felipe's last name. The clerk asks Mario for his name and he gives his true name. The clerk process the tickets and hands them to Felipe. They turn and sit at a small row of benches.

MARIO

(in a quiet voice)

Why are you giving a different name?

The bus pulls up to the front, Felipe gets up and avoids the conversation.

INT. BUS- CONTINUOUS

Mario and Felipe show their tickets and find a seat on the bus.

MARIO

Felipe. It occurs to me you don't want to use your name because you don't want to leave a trail, is that right?

FELIPE

That, and the fact that I have a record in Mexico, too. When I was detained by immigration, they got my real name.

MARIO

But you used your real name at the farm. Why?

FELIPE

They totally caught me by surprise. Remember they first asked us our name when they bought us to that warehouse.

MARIO

Yes, first by the fat guy, and then by the guards.

FELIPE

Once I said it first, I figured, what the hell. But now is different.

Mario settles back into his seat and takes a deep breath. Felipe reclines on the aisle seat. The bus pulls away from the station. Mario stares out the window.

No words are spoken for a long minute.

FELIPE (CONT'D)

Mario, I want to give you fifty dollars so you can send something to Mercedes.

MARIO

What? No, Felipe. What about your mother?

FELIPE

I was thinking of sending her the same amount.

MARIO

Felipe, you shouldn't.

FELIPE

Mario, we're family. We take care of each other. We all need this. Look, I admit I was wrong, I shouldn't have taken that wallet. But are we really that deplorable? Are we using this money to entertain ourselves? No. This is for your child, your wife, my mother.

MARIO

Okay Felipe, I'm sorry. I just don't want to do anything that will get us in trouble with the law, That's all.

FELIPE

That's okay Mario. Look, we're out of that awful place, we can start over now. We can get real jobs and get back on track.

MARIO

My God, that was such a waste of five months. I can't believe we were there that long.

The bus rolls slowly out of the station and into the streets of Key Largo. Luxury stores and restaurants line the main boulevard out of the city.

MARIO (CONT'D)

So many rich people out here.

FELIPE

There's got to be some decent job for us around here.

As the bus travels on a highway, Mario's thoughts turn to his wife and son. The skyline of Miami looms in the distance on the other side of the glass.

MARIO

I wish we didn't have to lie or hide who we are to find a job.

FELIPE

Freaking laws in this country are so stupid. But we knew about this before we came, so here we are.

MARIO

I have a feeling we're going to be dealing with this problem for a while.

FELIPE

And I just want to get a job so I can send money home to my mother.

Mario sighs as he looks upon the skyline of Miami in the distance.

THE END.