

THE BOUNDARY

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FADE IN:

EXT. PRAIRIE'S EDGE - DAY

A sea of tallgrass rises from the foothills, stretching to the horizon. Dense stalks reaching higher than a man.

SUPER: TALLGRASS PRAIRIE, SOUTHERN PLAINS, 1594

BOY, 11, Jumano Indian, crouches beside a rock cairn. A blanket wraps his thin shoulders.

He gazes at the wall of grass. Waiting. Silent. After a long moment he rises, tightens the blanket and pads away.

PEREZ (PRE LAP)
Lord, have mercy...

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE LAST MAN - DUSK

PEREZ, mid-20s, clothing charred and tattered, cradles his arm, an arrow shaft poking from the limb. A second arrow lodged in his thigh. A third in his side.

He limps through the thick undergrowth in a daze.

PEREZ
Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy...

Stalks rustle in the wind. A sound like a thousand whispers.

Perez closes his eyes and staggers on. Accepting.

PEREZ
Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - DAY

JUSEPE, late-20s, Jumano Indian, wrapped in a scorched blanket, sits cross-legged, despondent. His face soot-blackened and streaked with sweat.

Perez squats before him, breathless. Afraid.

PEREZ
Which is the way?

No answer. Perez rises, paces. No idea which direction to take. He turns. Jusepe looks off with a thin smile.

JUSEPE
(native dialect)
This is their land.

Perez sags in despair.

PEREZ
Lord, show me, light my way.

The wind rises.

Rattled, Perez pushes on.

Jusepe sits motionless, head bowed. His robe has fallen open to reveal a wound to his gut.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE FIRE - NIGHT

A wall of flame leaps high into the air. CRIES of suffering and despair from every direction. A massacre in the shadows.

FRIAR JUAN, 50s, clad in bloodied robes, kneels over CAPTAIN HUMANA, 40s, barrel-chested, thickly bearded, who lies gasping, his near-naked body riddled with arrows.

FRIAR JUAN
In the hour of death, and in the day
of judgment, help him, good Lord.

Perez grips the Friar's robe, urging him on.

PEREZ
Brother, come, save yourself.

Friar Juan ignores him, lost to prayer.

SOLDIER
Come on!

Perez, Jusepe, and a SOLDIER, 20s, take flight through a hellscape of smoke and flame.

THWIP - the Soldier drops, an arrow to the neck.

Friar Juan clutches his rosary, lips moving in silent invocation as the flames press in around him.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE LONG MARCH - DAY

Friar Juan stumbles forward on swollen and blistered feet. He clutches a bundle of possessions.

Ahead, MOULON, mid-30s, embittered, crossbow in hand, keeps a steady pace, trying to stay with the man ahead of him.

A rising wind sweeps the prairie. A low, haunting sound.

Friar Juan looks back to see a STRAGGLER, early 20s, fevered, struggling to keep pace.

MOULON

You can't help him, Father.

The Straggler falters, close to collapse.

Friar Juan slows, torn.

A dark figure cuts across the Straggler's path, vanishing ghost-like into the shadows.

The Straggler looks confused. A trickle of blood from his neck turns to a gush. He stands there, dumbstruck.

Panicked, the Friar rushes away. He trips, slams to the dirt. Looks back to see the source of his fall -

Moulon lies writhing in pain, clutching at his bloodied ankle - his hamstring severed.

MOULON

Help me, Father. Help me!

The terrified Friar snatches up his bundle and runs.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE MISSING - DAY

Perez stares into the sky, transfixed.

Friar Juan, beside him, head down, rosary clutched tight as he ushers a prayer beneath his breath.

Before them, three bodies, naked and mutilated. Necks tied to stakes driven into the ground. One body bound at the wrists with a red silk neckerchief.

Perez watches buzzards circle high above. Scavengers as far as the eye can see - each spiraling column speaking to some unseen horror far below.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE BEACON - NIGHT

A pair of flaming torches burn; fixed to wooden stakes, raised high above a small clearing.

Two dozen men watch the perimeter in silent hope.
Jusepe stares at the torches. His dark eyes inscrutable.
Moulon appears behind him.

MOULON
Where are they?

No answer. Moulon grabs Jusepe and throws him down.

MOULON
I know you understand.

He draws a dagger - Perez blocks him.

PEREZ
We need him.

MOULON
The wretch tricks us. He knows where
the gold is. He means to lead us in
circles. Starve us from our wits!

Captain Humana steps around them. He towers over Jusepe,
hand on his sword hilt as if weighing his fate.

JUSEPE
Thoe Khoot.

There's defiance in Jusepe's tone. The Captain bridles.

FRIAR JUAN
Two days. He says the valley of
Quivira is just two days.

Captain Humana looks darkly from Friar Juan to Jusepe -
A distant CRY calls their attention.

Captain Humana, Moulon, and Friar Juan drift to the edge of
camp. Another SHOUT - from the opposite direction now.

The men trade nervous glances. Some call out in reply.

Perez catches the sudden fear in Jusepe's eyes.

PEREZ
No, no, stop - be quiet!

But more take up the cry. Calling out in answer.

Perez looks to the beacon in horror. He rushes towards it -
a SOLDIER blocks his path, knocks him down.

PEREZ

Kill the fire! It's not them. It's
not them!

Jusepe closes his eyes. Calm. Accepting.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE TRAIL - DAY

Perez crouches, sweltering in the heat. He unfastens his grimy breast plate and lets it fall.

Jusepe moves along a line of soldiers, pausing to let each sip from the waterskin. Most have abandoned their heavy armor. They watch him pass, tired, suspicious.

Moulon snatches the waterskin and pushes Jusepe away. Jusepe weathers the indignity in silence.

Captain Humana, still clothed in his finery, crowds his way down the line of men, face clouded with anger.

CAPTAIN HUMANA

Leyva, why are we stopped?

LEYVA, mid-20s, dabs at his face with a red silk neckerchief. He looks off along a faint trail, marked only by a discarded breast plate.

LEYVA

Felipe's group...

CAPTAIN HUMANA

Send a man to find them.

LEYVA

I did. And another after him.
Darkness will soon be upon us.

CAPTAIN HUMANA

Then you shall go. The Lord lights
our way. On your feet!

He turns and marches away, the men rising in his wake.

Leyva stares off.

EXT. TALLGRASS PRAIRIE - THE MARCH IN - DAY

Jusepe pushes into view, moving stealthily through an endless ocean of grass.

Moments later, a SOLDIER, 40s, follows in his steps. One by one, Captain Humana...Friar Juan...Perez...Leyva...Moulon file past. A mix of wonder and trepidation on their faces.

EXT. PRAIRIE'S EDGE - DAWN

Wind hisses through the tallgrass. It's as if the land itself were sounding a warning.

Forty men stand gathered at the threshold. Each man kitted with armor, laden with provisions.

Captain Humana kneels, armor gleaming in the sun. He sifts a handful of dirt through his fingers in some private ritual.

Jusepe and the Boy hang back, waiting at a small rock cairn at the base of a rise.

Perez breaks from the group.

PEREZ

Come, Jusepe. We go.

Jusepe takes a waterskin from the Boy. The Boy grabs his hand, looks to the cairn in great concern.

BOY

Thoe Khoot.

JUSEPE

(native dialect)

*I must. This is the only way. They
would never leave us be.*

He gives the child a last look and steps past the cairn to join the soldiers already filing into the prairie.

The Boy watches them until only Perez remains. Their eyes meet. Perez registers the child's dread with unease. He looks to the cairn, trying to fathom.

The Boy crouches, scowling, sullen.

Perez shoulders his pack and follows, soon lost from view amid the swaying grass.

FADE OUT