Widows

by
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Based on Widows, the play by Arial Dorfman
EXT. RIVER

The river runs quietly. The ground around the river is dark brown, with no grass growing in sight. This particular part of the river is a bend, turning a sharp right off into the distance. It’s secluded, and a small village is visible in the distance.

A GROUP OF WOMEN

Are sitting at the river edge, with handfuls of clothes. They’re washing their clothes in the river. Surrounding them are baskets, also containing clothes. All the women have brown hair, except for

SOFIA FUENTES

An older woman with grey hair and brown eyes. She doesn’t wash clothes, and sits up on a rock, staring at the river as it flows.

TERESA SALAS

A middle aged woman is scrubbing a piece of clothing, while talking to the other women.

YANINA

Sits a few feet away with

KATHERINA

Another middle aged woman.

TERESA

The baby won’t speak?

YANINA

Not a word.

TERESA

How old is he?

YANINA

Old enough to talk.

KATHERINA

It’s good that he’s quiet. He’ll stay out of trouble.

TERESA

He has to talk sometime.
KATHERINA
Not if he knows what’s good for him.

ROSA
Walks over and sits with them.

ROSA
There’s something wrong with the water today.

ALEXANDRA sits away from the group, listening to the conversation.

ALEXANDRA
You say that every day.

ROSA
Nothing’s coming clean.

TERESA
(To Yanina)
Whisper to him.

ALEXANDRA
(To Rosa)
You’re just not scrubbing hard enough.

TERESA
(To Yanina)
Whisper, right in his ear.

KATHERINA
That baby misses his papa.

YANINA
He never saw his papa.

The women stop washing for a second, then go back to it.

FIDELIA
The daughter of Alexandra. A young girl, 12, is wandering around the baskets, handing clothes to her mother.

FIDELIA
I’ll whisper to him.

TERESA
You need to work his tongue with your fingers, a little each day.

YANINA
Fidelia tells him stories.
ALEXANDRA
Instead of doing her chores.

FIDELIA
Mama.

ROSA
I’m telling you. There’s something strange about the water today.

YANINA
He’s a sad baby.

KATHERINA
You think his papa is...

Teresa shushes Katherina.

YANINA
He knows what I know.

FATHER GABRIEL
Walks up to the group of women. He’s an older man, in his fifties with short black hair.

FATHER GABRIEL
(Excited)
Everyone come, it’s time, it’s time!

Father Gabriel jogs away.

CECILIA
A woman in her early thirties walks up to the women.

CECILIA
The jeep’s just pulled up. The new captain’s here.

The Women
Stare at Cecelia, not saying a word. Cecelia stares back nervously.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
It’s a big jeep.

The Woman don’t answer. Cecilia walks away.

The Women put down their washing. They wring dry what is wet, and put their clothes into the baskets. They pick the baskets up, and whisper between themselves while they walk away.

Sofia
Sits alone, watching the river.

Fidelia walks back over, and stares at Sofia. Sofia doesn’t return the stare.

FIDELIA
Grandma, don’t you want to see...

Alexandra walks back over. She is dragging

ALEXIS
A young boy, 10. He has short brown hair and brown eyes.

ALEXANDRA
(To Alexis)
Say with your Grandma.

ALEXIS
But I want to see the new Captain. I want to see what he looks like.

ALEXANDRA
I don’t want him to see what you look like.
(To herself)
I’m a smart woman. Why did I have such stupid children.

FIDELIA
Grandma, they said this Captain is bringing news. Don’t you...

ALEXANDRA
(Cutting Fidelia off)
Fidelia, come.
(To Sofia)
You’ve turned everything upside down. The others think you’ve gone crazy and my children won’t listen to me now.

Alexandra and Fidelia walk away. Alexis watches Sofia, who doesn’t break her gaze of the river.

ALEXIS
Grandma.

No answer from Sofia.

ALEXIS (CONT’D)
Are you crazy?

SOFIA
Yes.
ALEXIS
When did you go crazy?

SOFIA
Do I scare you?

ALEXIS
No.

SOFIA
Little rabbit.

ALEXIS
I’m not. I’m a man.

SOFIA
Not yet. Lucky.

From the clearing

THE CAPTAIN

A big man with black hair and blue eyes, walks towards the river. He’s dressed in the traditional army uniform, and is alone. He’s looking around. He’s lost. He spots Alexis.

CAPTAIN
Excuse me.

Alexis spots The Captain, turns and runs away. The Captain watches him go. The Captain looks around, and sees Sofia.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Excuse me. Mrs... uh... I’m trying to...

Sofia ignores him.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Is this the bend where the women do their washing?

The Captain looks down at the ground. He spots a loose sock, still wet. He nudges the sock with his shoe.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Must me.

He looks at the ground.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
I thought it would be greener.

He turns his attention back to Sofia.
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
We’re going to build here. Did you know that? A big plant for fertilizer manufacturing.

Sofia mutters to herself.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Are you from around here? Your husband, does he ever talk about fertilizer? Well, I think you just have to look at how arid it all is to see. It’s poor soil nutrients, that’s why. Does your husband ever express the need for modern fertilizers for his land?

SOFIA
(Coldly)
No.

CAPTAIN
Oh.

Pause

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Well I think fertilizer would help. The army’s going to build a plant here, then he’ll see what he’s missing. Your husband. Bigger crops. Exports. Are you... What are you doing here? Are you waiting for somebody?

SOFIA
Yes.

The Captain takes a few steps towards her, extending his right arm to shake hands.

CAPTAIN
I’m...

SOFIA
(interrupting)
I’m waiting for my father.

CAPTAIN
Your father?

SOFIA
And my husband.

CAPTAIN
How old is your father?
SOFIA
And my sons.

CAPTAIN
Your father must be at least...

SOFIA
(interrupting)
Old.

CAPTAIN
(To himself)
Been waiting long.

Sofia looks at The Captain, the first time she’s moved her gaze off the river.

SOFIA
The others. They all ran off to the village. To have a look at you.

Sofia laughs, a small dry laugh. The Captain is uncomfortable at first. Then he laughs too. Sofia stops laughing suddenly.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
All of us. We have all been waiting a long time.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The hotel room is pretty bland. Small bed. White walls. But the attention is on an unnamed man sitting at a table, smoking a cigarette. He talks to the camera.

NOTE: FOR THE STORY’S SAKE, WE’LL CALL HIM “NARRATOR”

NARRATOR
It was when I was in exile. That’s when. I couldn’t go to sleep at night. I would wait for silence, for all the foreign noises of the foreign country. I was waiting for it all to die down. I would wait for the children in the apartment next door to go to bed so their voices wouldn’t remind me that they were not my children, that my children were far away.

(MORE)
I would wait for their parents, and every other mother and father in the neighbourhood to stop arguing to the death in that language I still could not understand, but which everybody for miles and miles around me spoke. I would wait for the stars to darken so I wouldn't have to see them, be reminded of how different the stars were back home. Even the bitching constellations were my enemies. That’s when. When even the dogs had stopped barking in the way that dogs bark when you are far from your country and you cannot sleep. My country? Does it matter? Do I really have to name that country? Among all the countries, the ones you see on television and the many that you don’t, when a few good men decide the life and the death of the rest of the people, a few good men decide that one man shall disappear, that another man shall go into exile and never see his children again. Do I really have to name it? Just like the country where a river flows and an old woman waits. Do you really need me to name that country?

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN’S OFFICE

The Captain is standing over his desk, with maps laid out. He’s looking over them.

EMMANUEL

Stands a few feet away. He’s in his mid twenties, with brown hair and brown eyes. He is wearing plain green clothes.

EMMANUEL

Did you find the bend in the river, sir?

CAPTAIN

Of course I did. I can read a map. And the river’s not exactly a mystery to follow.
EMMANUEL
I’m supposed to drive you sir, that’s my job.

The Captain turns his attention to Emmanuel. He storms up to Emmanuel, standing only a few inches away. They lock eyes.

CAPTAIN
I’ll let you know what your job is, orderly.

EMMANUEL
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN
When I want to walk, I’ll walk. Understood?

EMMANUEL
As you say sir.

CAPTAIN
Good.

The Captain takes a few steps back. He walks back to his desk, but still keeps his attention on Emmanuel.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
You’re from around here, aren’t you?

EMMANUEL
On the other side of the hill, Captain. Forty miles from here.

CAPTAIN
So you understand these people?

EMMANUEL
Sort of, Captain.

CAPTAIN
Sort of. Captain Urqueta said you knew your way around.

EMMANUEL
I’m different from them, Captain. I was employed by Mr Kastoria. I know better. With your permission, sir, I don’t think I’ll stay here my whole life. I’d like to.

CAPTAIN (interrupting)
I met an old woman. Tough old bitch. By the river.

(MORE)
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
She gave me the impression that she was expecting someone on a raft or something.

EMMANUEL
Old Sofia. The Fuentes woman.

CAPTAIN
You know her?

EMMANUEL
She sits by the river all day, sir. Has for months. Probably a little...

Emmanuel raises his left hand to the side of his head, and twirls his finger, indicating “crazy”.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)
She told you she was waiting for her men?

CAPTAIN
I could barely get a word out her. Her father and her husband and...

EMMANUEL
(interrupting)
Her sons. A lot of the men in the valley are, they’re gone sir.

The Captain is surprised by this.

CAPTAIN
Gone?

EMMANUEL
Disappeared.

CAPTAIN
Arrested?

Emmanuel doesn’t answer.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
How many men in all are missing?

EMMANUEL
All, sir.

CAPTAIN
All? All the men?

EMMANUEL
I think you need to speak to the Lieutenant, sir.
CAPTAIN
All the men? That wasn’t mentioned in my briefing.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
In my other jurisdictions I kept a lid on that. Making men vanish like that, it’s no good. It drives the women out of their minds. Even if you give them a finger to bury, but when there’s just nothing, they go crazy. And then the world does.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Hard times.

EMMANUEL
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN
She had a little moustache.

EMMANUEL
Sir?

CAPTAIN
I hate women with moustaches.

The Captain stares out the window.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Her whole family?

EMMANUEL
All the men.

CAPTAIN
I suppose then we’ll have to forgive her, her moustache. Won’t we?

Father Gabriel walks into the office.

FATHER GABRIEL
We’re glad you finally made it, Captain. We’d heard you were lost.

CAPTAIN
Who told you that, Father?
FATHER GABRIEL
Oh, in Camacho we end up knowing everything, Captain. But the women are waiting.

CAPTAIN
Women waiting. We don’t want that.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN
The Captain stands on a small podium, addressing the women.

CAPTAIN
The war is over. In the cities, in the mountains, in this valley. What remains is the national task of building a deep and true peace, the peace that brings prosperity. But in the memories of some, the war goes on.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Terrible, strict measures have been necessary. We all have suffered great loss, the people and its army. Those of us with determination and courage for the future are ready to let of. We are ready to forgive your disobedience if you are willing to forget our stern response to it. If you learn to behave.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
If you join us, if you are prepared to forget the past, the wounds may finally begin to heal. Democracy and technology will be brought to bear on your backwardness, fertilizer plants and animal husbandry, pesticides and, and libraries. A new land for a new people. And if you let us, we will bring your sorrow and great loneliness to an end.

CUT TO:
EXT. RIVER

Sofia sits at the river, alone.

    SOFIA
    (To the river)
    What are you bringing me? I’m an old woman. I can’t be expected to wait much longer.

Fidelia runs up to Sofia, excited.

    FIDELIA
    They’re coming home, they’re coming home!

Alexandra follows Fidelia, looking around.

    ALEXANDRA
    Sofia, where’s Alexis?

Pause.

    ALEXANDRA (CONT’D)
    Sofia, where’s...

    SOFIA
    (interrupting)
    I don’t know! He was here, he must have gone home.

    ALEXANDRA
    Oh Sofia, you were supposed to watch him.

    FIDELIA
    I thought he was supposed to watch her.

    ALEXANDRA
    Quiet.
    (Yelling)
    Alexis!

Alexandra walks off, yelling his name.

    ALEXANDRA (CONT’D)
    (yelling)
    Alexis!

    FIDELIA
    Papa’s coming back, grandma! Everyone’s excited.

Teresa enters, eating a small carrot.

    TERESA
    Fidelia, don’t tell lies.
Fidelia turns to Teresa.

FIDELIA
I’m not lying. The new captain, he said the men are coming home.

TERESA
He said maybe. If we behave.

Katherina enters, sewing a button onto a pair of pants.

KATHERINA
If we behave.

Yanina follows Katherina, holding a baby in her arms.

YANINA
But we behave already. All we do is behave.

TERESA
Sofia doesn’t.

KATHERINA
Sitting by the river all day.

TERESA
She doesn’t behave.

YANINA
(To FIDELIA)
Take the baby, my arms are tired.

Fidelia takes the baby from Yanina.

ALEXANDRA
(O.S.)
Alexis!

YANINA
You should have come, Sofia. The new captain met with us. He spoke to us. He said...

TERESA
Forget the past. Bury the past.

ROSA
Let go the dead.

KATHERINA
He didn’t say that. He never mentioned the dead.

YANINA
He promised us, Sofia. If we cooperate, he said. Maybe we can’t trust him.

(MORE)
If you'd been there, you could tell us, if you'd seen him.

SOFIA
(interrupting)
I say him.

ROSA
Listen to her, she lies worse than her granddaughter.

SOFIA
Mind your business.

ROSA
It is my business, he said behave.

SOFIA
He said fertilizer plant. I know what he said.

YANINA
But you were here the whole time. How did you know?

SOFIA
Go home, Yanina. It’s almost dusk. Put the nets on the baskets or the grasshoppers will crawl out of the ground and eat the grain.

YANINA
I did that already.

FIDELIA
I helped her grandma.

SOFIA
You probably did it wrong. You put the nets on all anyhow and the grasshoppers still slip through.

KATHERINA

TERESA
Sitting there.

ROSA
Like some river rock.
KATHERINA
Stubborn, bitter. A tombstone.

ROSA
Reproachful.

TERESA
As if to say that we’ve forgotten the...

ROSA
Sssshhh!

TERESA
That’s why you can’t brood. You’ll lose your mind, you’ll turn to stone.

ALEXANDRA
(O.S.)
Alexis!

ROSA
When they took the land away from us, and we had to watch the fences, go up again and, smile. You whispered to me, like a promise. Sofia, life goes on, like the earth no matter what. Now get up.

SOFIA
I can’t. I’m carrying the weight of my four men. I have a father, husband. Two sons. Where. Each one is heavy. Each time I think of him, is he hungry, does he need water, is he cold, he gets heavier. I am a stone. Where are they? Where are my men? I remember the missing so sharply I’ve forgotten everything else, how to bake or plant or walk or even stand. I can’t move. I’m waiting here because...

Alexandra walks over to them, holding Alexis’ hand, dragging him behind her.

FIDELIA
Grandma? Because?

SOFIA
I’m waiting. Because I can’t bear waiting anymore.
ALEXANDRA
I’m tired of this. We’re going home.

FIDELIA
Grandma.

ALEXANDRA
Leave her. On the ground there like an animal.
(To Sofia)
They’re watching and you know it. You call attention to yourself. To all of us.

Alexandra begins to walk away with Fidelia. Alexis tries to say behind.

ALEXIS
(To Sofia)
I had to run. Mama told me not to let...

Alexandra pulls Alexis away. They leave with Yanina and Fidelia. Sofia sits alone. All the women walk away except Teresa.

SOFIA
Don’t you feel something?

TERESA
Feel what?

SOFIA
Something is coming.

TERESA
No.

SOFIA
Something is.

Pause.

TERESA
When my husband comes back, he’d better find me tending the fields and feeding the children and selling the crops at market. I wait too, but not like this, Sofia. Not like this.

Teresa walks away. Sofia leans forward and dips her hand into the water.
SOFIA
Something is. It’s almost here.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER – GREEN PART

Cecilia and Emmanuel lay on the ground, holding each other near the river, further up the river than where the woman wash their clothes. The ground is green, and overlooking the river is a hill is the distance. Emmanuel starts to kiss Cecilia.

CECILIA
Not here.

EMMANUEL
I love this place. Green.

CECILIA
I hate green.

EMMANUEL
Even before I knew you, this place reminded me of you. I knew someday I’d be here with you.

CECILIA
I used to come here with...

She stops.

EMMANUEL
Say who.

CECILIA
Let’s go.

EMMANUEL
Theo. (Taunting her)
Hey, Theo!

CECILIA
Stop it. He’s coming back. Everybody says so.

EMMANUEL
Stupid bitches.

CECILIA
The Captain told them. I heard him.

EMMANUEL
He never said that.
CECILIA
All the women. They’re getting
their beds ready.

EMMANUEL
Then there are going to be a lot
of disappointed women in cold
beds around here. Except for one
little sweet woman I know. She’s
luckier.

Emmanuel steps forward, reaching out to grope her. She
pulls away.

CECILIA
Those witches. They hate me
because we’re in love. They’ll
tell Theo.

EMMANUEL
You’re protected.

Emmanuel pats the front of his uniform.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)
You know what this is?

Emmanuel places his hand on his gun, resting in the
holster.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)
You know what this is?

Cecilia looks away.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)
What’s your husband got? Even if
he did come back. He won’t, but
say he did.

Cecilia says nothing. Emmanuel points at a large group of
fruit trees in the distance.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)
See those trees?

CECILIA
Yes.

EMMANUEL
I love those trees. Try to touch
the fruit on those trees, and
someone you don’t even see will
shoot your hand off. Green
Kastoria land. When I was a kid
I’d come here. I’d walk six
hours, and watch for birds.
CECILIA
Did you climb over and steal fruit?

EMMANUEL
Not me. I watched for the birds. If they tried to land in the fruit trees, I threw pebbles at them and scared them off. I knew even then I was supposed to protect his property. That that was what I was born for. Mr Kastoria didn’t know I was alive and if I’d climbed over the fence, they would’ve shot me just like anyone else. But I was proud to be protecting what was his. My father used to beat me. He knew where I’d been, and when I got back he’d beat the shit out of me.

CECILIA
Poor baby.

EMMANUEL
Do you know what a war is?

CECILIA
(Sharply)
Yes. I know what a war is.

EMMANUEL
You take sides and if you lose, you’re fucked. They stole the land from our people. That’s what he’d say when he beat me with his belt. They drove us into the mountains he said, and he’d belt me. Now we have to come and pick their fruit, and he would keep hitting and hitting. He was right to beat me. My father knew I was his enemy. One day I just didn’t come back. Mr Kastoria rode out of the gate on a big white horse and asked me if I wanted to work for him. Know what he said?

CECILIA
No.

EMMANUEL
He said “You’ve got to shoot the birds that eat the fruit. That way they won’t come back”. And he handed me a gun.

(MORE)
EMMANUEL (CONT'D)
My father must have waited for me all day, with his belt in his hands, watching the horizon. I never went home again.

CECILIA
Times are changing Emmanuel. Maybe we could go see your family. Make it up with your father.

EMMANUEL
He... He’s a loser. It doesn’t matter anyway.

CECILIA
Why not? It matters to me.

EMMANUEL
They took him. Disappeared. Like your Theo. And he’s never coming back.

In the distance on the top of the hill The Captain stands, looking over the horizon. Standing next to him is

THE LIEUTENANT
A tall bulky man with black hair and brown eyes.

LIEUTENANT
You know what I love about this country Captain? Its quality of timelessness. One man is born a peasant over there in the dust, and his sone will be, and his grandson will be. And if you allow it, there’s a deep satisfaction, a calm that comes from that. And on this side, the green fertile side, the transfer of property through the generations. My father and his father and his father. The Fourteen Families. For four hundred years we have cultivated a loving relationship to the land, gentle and subtle, making it produce for all. There is a deep, an inevitable structure in the world. A Holy Structure, if you will.

(MORE)
So it’s also inevitable that the people of the dust will always covet the green, if they get ideas, feel encouraged to lay hold of the green, everything, everything decent and beautiful and civilized gets covered in dust. As we have seen in the last eight years.

CAPTAIN
Why are you telling me this?

LIEUTENANT
Back in town with the women yesterday. I don’t mean any disrespect Captain, but that was a very nice speech you made. Democracy. Fertilizers.

CAPTAIN
I’m getting into the habit of making speeches. I’m good at it.

LIEUTENANT
It was a very nice speech. Of course, not the speech I would’ve made if I was Captain. But I’m not.

CAPTAIN
I suppose if you were, you’d have spoken of dust.

LIEUTENANT
In a way. I’d’ve said “Congratulations. You’re alive. Want to stay that way? We can’t give the impression that we’re weak Captain.

Pause.

CAPTAIN
Lieutenant, back in Chipote a few years ago, I ordered my battalion to fire on a crown in the village square. I stood and watched that. When it was dark, I took my flashlight and I searched among the bodies littered in the square. There was so much blood it seeped into my boots. There was a nine year old girl. So young. Her arm was gone. Just gone. I stood there and watched her die. It took an hour. My boots dried while I watched her.

(MORE)
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
And then the flashlight burnt out. Weak men die from nights like that. I’m not a weak man. But I am tired. The war is over.

LIEUTENANT
Over? You see down there by that bend in the river?

The Lieutenant points into the distance.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Looks like a flyspeck but it’s an old woman.

CAPTAIN
Old Mrs Fuentes.

LIEUTENANT
You think it’s over for her. Go on, tell her that. Just be sure you’re carrying a gun. It’s taken us eight years to restore order here. And it’s our duty to ensure that we never have to restore order again. So you never have to watch a little girl die like that ever again. So I never have to watch the things I’ve watched.

CAPTAIN
No order without progress. If you want to keep order, you have to pull them out of their poverty, their dust. We have to move forward.

LIEUTENANT
And you will wind up right back here again. Looking at the green, at the dust, at that old woman. Timelessness. The past awaits you Captain.

CAPTAIN
Perhaps.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Let’s go. I’m getting hungry.

The Captain and The Lieutenant walk back to their jeep.

CUT TO:
EXT. RIVER BED

Sofia sits on her perch. Fidelia and Alexis sit below her.

SOFIA
Here, where the river thinks of
going one way and then goes
another. This is where they died.

ALEXIS
Who killed them?

SOFIA
You know this story.

FIDELIA
Tell us again, Grandma.

ALEXIS
Please.

SOFIA
The Spanish. My great-great-great
grandfather and his wife. She was
fierce. The Spanish believed she
ate the eyeballs of her enemies.

FIDELIA
Did she?

SOFIA
I hope so. I light these candles
for their little souls. This
water saw them die. The water
watches everything, it flows
everywhere and when I am lost, or
when I’ve lost something, I know
the water will help me find it.
You have to know how to ask it.

Sofia strikes a match, and starts lighting candles.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
Now these little souls will watch
over me, and you go home to bed.
Go my babies. If your mother
wakes up and finds you missing...

Sofia looks up and sees a lit candle. It appears to be
floating. Alexis and Fidelia see the candle as well.

ALEXIS
Grandma?

SOFIA
Quiet. Who is that? Who’s there.
The river becomes louder. Teresa walks up to them, holding the candle.

TERESA
I can’t sleep at nights with you here. All I do is watch you.

SOFIA
You live miles from here.

TERESA
From the window by my door. I heard the floor-boards creak and it was Antonio. I, I thought it was Antonio. It’s the same dream, every night since you started sitting here. It’s my husband, but he won’t talk to me. It’s you, Sofia! You’re disturbing him, wherever they’ve got him. Go home, let me rest. Please.

Katherina walks up to them from the distance.

KATHERINA
I heard my Roberto calling out to me, and I ran out the door to greet him. But the yard was empty and I saw the candles. I want to sleep Sofia. Without dreaming. Leave the night alone.

SOFIA
I have dreams too. I can see my hand, and in my hand there’s a needle and a threat, and I’m sewing something. I look down to see, and it’s a mouth I’m sewing. I’m sewing it shut, and it’s eyelids I’m sewing and human ears, all familiar somehow, and there’s no blood on the needle and no blood on the thread and on my fingers it’s... and I’ve sewed him into a bundle, a tight white bundle, he’s calling to me. I hear him. I fear he may be dead but oh God, please let him be alive.

Rosa walks up to them.

ROSA
What’s wrong with the water? What’s wrong with the river? Why is it making such a terrible noise? What have you done, Sofia?

(MORE)
What are you doing to the water in the river? You're clouding the river, the clothes won't come clean. Leave the river alone.

FIDELIA
Grandma, what is it? What’s the matter with the river?

Teresa points into the water.

TERESA
There’s something in the water. Look. There’s something in the water. Get a line, get a hook, quick!

ROSA
The children, get the children away.

SOFIA
Alexis. Fidelia, get away from the river.

The women start to wade into the river. The sound of the current grows louder. The women whisper to each other.

TERESA
Careful, careful. Don’t slip.

ROSA
Grab the sleeve. Grab it.

SOFIA
On the rocks, he’s caught on the rocks. Pull, pull.

TERESA
Pull, pull.

SOFIA
Now lift. Gently.

The women, now soaking wet, pull the body from the river. The body is skinny with the skin pressed hard against the ribs. The face is a bloody mess. There are scars all over the body. The women lay the body down, and stare at it.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
I knew it.

The rest of The women join the group, staring at the body.

KATHERINA
Oh god. Oh god.
TERESA
It doesn’t look like anyone.

SOFIA
I knew. I knew.

ROSA
Children, don’t look. Sofia, it’s not. It hasn’t got a face.

Pause.

SOFIA
Fidelia, go get the priest. And bring a shovel.

ALEXIS
Who is it, Grandma?

SOFIA
It’s my father.

TERESA
It’s not. It isn’t, Sofia.

SOFIA
It it.

TERESA
You can’t bury that.

SOFIA
Not here. He has a place, by my mother. In the cemetery on the hill.

ROSA
You need permission.

SOFIA
Not for this.

TERESA
The Captain said behave.

KATHERINA
For God’s sake Sofia, you know you need permission.

TERESA
We can’t make trouble now.

ROSA
They have our men.

FIDELIA
Grandma, if Papa were... if my Papa...
Pause

SOFIA
No trouble. Yes. Permission. It is my father.

Sofia starts to walk away.

ALEXIS
Wait. I’ll go with you.

Sofia looks Alexis up and down.

SOFIA
Aren’t you afraid?

ALEXIS
No.

SOFIA
You should be. Come.

ROSA
You can’t take the boy. What’s wrong with you?

FIDELIA
Grandma, mama will be angry if...

SOFIA
This is how it should be. His father would accompany me. Emiliano. If he was here. This is how the Fuentes bury their dead.

KATHERINA
The Fuentes should protect their children.

SOFIA
No one can protect him anymore. No one touches this body. You understand?

FIDELIA
Yes, Grandma.

SOFIA
Alexis, come. Nothing to fear. This Captain is different. Right?

TERESA
You’d better hope so.

SOFIA
You hope. I’m going to bury my father.
Sofia and Alexis walk away. The women who remain look at the body. Yanina walks up to them.

YANINA
I woke up. I couldn’t sleep. I...

Yanina sees the body.

YANINA (CONT’D)
Oh. Oh. Oh God.

Yanina looks at The women.

YANINA (CONT’D)
Who?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The Narrator is pacing back and forth, talking.

NARRATOR
Exile is like death. Among the Guarani Indians of Paraguay, when someone is banished from the community, they say he has died. And when he returns, if he returns that is, they say he has come back from the dead. They celebrate the return of the exile as if he had been resurrected.

Pause.

NARRATOR (CONT’D)
If he is resurrected. If he hasn’t faded from peoples lives, from the eyes of his son, from the lips of his daughter. People speak of him in hushed voices, in the past tense. If they speak of him at all. But that’s not what I wanted to tell you.

The Narrator sits down.

NARRATOR (CONT’D)
I wanted to tell you that today I met a woman publisher from my country. She was passing through this foreign city where I now live, passing on her way back from a Book Fair or something, it’s not important.

(MORE)
We had been lovers, ten, maybe fifteen years ago. And she was as ravishing as ever.

The Narrator coughs.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Over lunch, she asked me what I was doing. I told her I was thinking about a story. I didn’t tell her I was haunted by it, that I couldn’t get it out of my head, that it was like a mother rescuing me from certain madness. I just told her what it was about. And added, about when dessert was served, that maybe she could help me get the story to our country, publish it under a pseudonym, I said to her. I could tell she thought I was crazy. I could see it in her eyes. I saw what she say. Her books burnt, the soldiers breaking down the door, her interrogation. I saw it deep inside her. The fear for her own children. She tried her hardest to mask it, but she couldn’t hide it from me. But what if I made things easy for you? What if I disguised this story, set it in Greece, under the Nazi occupation, or in Nigeria or Guatemala or Iraq. You pick the country I said to her, we’ll set it there, and then we’ll make up a foreign author, we’ll attribute the story to him, to her, nobody will know that this was thought up by somebody like me. Nobody will know that it refers to our country.

The Narrator stands back up.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
If she hadn’t said yes immediately, that she would do it, I might have some hope. But I know when a woman is lying. She said yes too quickly. A way of getting rid of me. Of, I’ll send it to her when it’s done, when I’ve figured out how all this ends. I’ll write it under a false name.

(MORE)
I’ll set it in East Timor, or South Africa or Romania or anywhere else that she wants, but it won’t be of any use.

Pause.

The bitch didn’t even invite me back to her hotel room. For her, it’s as if I had already died.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BED

It’s early morning. The sun is peaking over the hill.

The Doctor

A heavy-set man, kneels next to the river, a cigarette in his mouth.

The women

Stand in a cluster, near the body.

The Lieutenant walks up, with four soldiers behind him.

LIEUTENANT

Full of surprises, this river. I don’t suppose anyone’s moved the body, right?

No answer.

LIEUTENANT (CONT’D)

Yes or no?

The women shake their head.

LIEUTENANT (CONT’D)

And which one of you found it.

The women gesture their hands among themselves, indicating they all found it.

DOCTOR

He’s dead, no doubt about it.

LIEUTENANT

I was hoping you could provide us with more specific information Doctor.

The Doctor beckons a soldier over. The Doctor gestures to the body. The Soldier turns the corpse over.
LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
(To Teresa)
You found the body?

Pause.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Answer me! Did you find it?

TERESA
Yes sir. Along with the others, sir.

LIEUTENANT
Recognize it?

Teresa doesn’t answer. She looks at the body. The Lieutenant turns to Katherina.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Did you look at his face.

Katherina shakes her head, and takes a few steps back.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
I asked you a question. Jesus Christ, were you people born deaf?
(To Doctor)
Take the pants off.

DOCTOR
This is only a preliminary...

LIEUTENANT
It’ll help to identify him.

KATHERINA
We didn’t want to.

LIEUTENANT
You didn’t want to see his face?

KATHERINA
No sir.

LIEUTENANT
(To Doctor)
Take off the god damn pants, now.

Pause. The Soldiers take off the corpse’s pants.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
(To Doctor)
So?
DOCTOR
Burns, contusions, broken bones, a disaster. It looks to me like he was given a good beating before they dumped him in. He was hungry too. Look at these ribs.

LIEUTENANT
I think the river is responsible.

DOCTOR
For the burns?

LIEUTENANT
I don’t see burns. Look closer.

DOCTOR
I already told you what I think. But if you think differently.

LIEUTENANT
Any clues about the subject’s identity? Age?

DOCTOR
I can’t tell the age. He seems to have been away from the sun for months, years perhaps. A Peasant. Look at those hands. Of course they’re broken now. The... river, I suppose.

LIEUTENANT
And in the pockets?

DOCTOR
Nothing.

LIEUTENANT
(To Women)
You women. I want you to pass by this body, one by one, and take a good look at the face. A formal identification process. Everything nice and proper for the new citizens of the new land.

One by one, in single file, the women walk past the body, looking at it. Only Fidelia stands still.

KATHERINA
It could be my brother, sir. They took him away four years ago.

LIEUTENANT
Your brother? Are you sure?

Pause.
KATHERINA
How could I be sure. How could I want this to be my brother?

LIEUTENANT
I wouldn’t want it to be mine. Good. The people have spoken, or rather, not spoken.

He gestures to the Soldiers to cart the body away. The Soldiers move towards it. Fidelia goes right to the body, kneeling down next to it.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Well well. Re-enforcements.

FIDELIA
It’s my great grandfather.

The Lieutenant looks at her, with a slight smile on his face.

TERESA
Ignore her sir, she’s a little strange.

LIEUTENANT
Your great grandfather. Oh my. And what’s your pretty name?

FIDELIA
Fidelia Fuentes.

LIEUTENANT
Emiliano’s daughter?

FIDELIA
Yes. This is my great grandfather. Carlos Mendez.

LIEUTENANT
And you identified him just like that, from a distance?

FIDELIA
My grandma, Sofia identified him, sir.

LIEUTENANT
Strange she’s not here. We didn’t think Grandma could move. We thought she was screwed to the spot. And where might she be now. Would you happen to know that?

Fidelia shuffles forward towards the corpse, taking one of its hands in her own.
FIDELIA
She went to the captain, sir. To ask permission to bury her father.

LIEUTENANT
She’s wasting her time.

Pause.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Now get away from that body.

Fidelia doesn’t move.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Don’t fuck with me girl.

The Lieutenant and the soldiers all stare at Fidelia, who doesn’t move, doesn’t even look up. The women stand at a short distance, watching.

TERESA
Leave her be, sir. I told you she’s strange.

YANINA
Fidelia, come.

LIEUTENANT
(To Yanina)
You’re the wife of Alonso, right?
I’m good at remembering names.

YANINA
Fidelia!

FIDELIA
My Grandma never wastes time, sir. She doesn’t believe in that.

The Lieutenant goes to Fidelia, grabs her by the shoulders and stands her up. He pushes her against the rocks, and moves his hand to between her legs. Fidelia is disgusted. The Lieutenant removes his hands, and sniffs his fingers. He screws his nose up at the smell. He then gestures to the soldiers. The soldiers pick up the body, and carry it away.

DOCTOR
I need a drink.

LIEUTENANT
There’s the river. Don’t fall in.

The Lieutenant follows the Soldiers. The women don’t move, staring at the ground as he passes them.

CUT TO:
INT. CAPTAIN’S OFFICE

The Captain stands at the window, looking out. Emmanuel stands at the front of the desk.

Sofia and Alexis

Stand side by side in front of the desk.

CAPTAIN
You’re sure about this?

SOFIA
Yes.

CAPTAIN
This drowned man is your father.
You’re sure?

SOFIA
Yes.

CAPTAIN
Why would an old man like that have gotten mixed up with politics?

SOFIA
He didn’t.

CAPTAIN
Well, you said he was arrested. For what?

SOFIA
For nothing.

CAPTAIN
Mrs Fuentes, people don’t get arrested for nothing.

The Captain looks at Emmanuel.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Did you know this man? Mendez?

EMMANUEL
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN
Well?

Pause. Sofia stares at Emmanuel, who shifts his balance, uncomfortable.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(impatiently)
Orderly?
EMMANUEL
Mendes, her father, went around
to houses and churches and places
where the men would drink and,
talked about land. Mr Kastoria’s
land. He was angry when we moved
them off the land. Her husband,
Fuentes was as well. First and
mostly her father. The files say
he is no longer in custody.

CAPTAIN
(To Sofia)
Perhaps you’re confused.

SOFIA
No.

CAPTAIN
Perhaps your father ran way,
or...

SOFIA
No.

CAPTAIN
He might have had an accident,
or, well sometimes men run away
for...

SOFIA
(Cutting him off)
He could barely walk.

CAPTAIN
Women make men do strange things.

SOFIA
He was eighty years old.

CAPTAIN
Or sometimes terrorists have
business to settle amongst
themselves...

SOFIA
(Interrupting)
No, he wasn’t a violent man. He
wasn’t.

CAPTAIN
(Agitated)
Well he must have been doing
something. Stop interrupting me.

The Captain reaches into a desk in his desk, and he pulls
out a piece of paper.
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
This is the new amnesty decree.
Do you know what amnesty is?
No answer.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(Emphasizing each syllable.)
Amnesty?
No answer.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
If your father or your husband...

SOFIA
Or my sons.

CAPTAIN
Or whoever. Has been in trouble with the government, now they can surrender themselves. Without inconvenience. So maybe they'll come back to you from wherever they're hiding. What would your father think if he came back and found you burying him? Hmmm?

Sofia picks up the paper, and examines both sides of it. She looks at it like it's a strange foreign object. She places it back down on the desk.

SOFIA
I've come for permission to bury my father.

CAPTAIN
(Angry)
Yes. Yes we established that, we know that, you've said that already, have you heard a single word I...

SOFIA
(Interrupting)
He came to me, from the land of the dead. His body. Because he wants me to bury him. When all the dead of our family are buried. In the cemetery on the hill. He came back to his daughter for that. Please. Give me permission.

There's a knock at the door. The Lieutenant enters.
CAPTAIN
Of course. Lieutenant, you know Mrs Fuentes? And this is her grandson.

The Captain struggles to remember Alexis’ name.

LIEUTENANT
Alexis.

CAPTAIN
Alexis. Right.
(To Sofia)
Mrs Fuentes. I’m a reasonable man. Pending the results of the official inquest, this body, if it can be established that it really is your father.

SOFIA
Carlos Mendez.

CAPTAIN
If it is Carlos Mendez, then you will naturally be allowed to bury him. The army is the servant of the people.

SOFIA
I’ll wait.

CAPTAIN
It may take some time.

SOFIA
I’ll wait.

Sofia takes Alexis by the hand, and exits the office. The Captain snaps his fingers at Emmanuel, who follows them out. The Captain watches them go.

CAPTAIN
She never blinks. Crazy old bitch. Makes me nervous.

The Captain turns his attention to the Lieutenant.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
After the inquest...

LIEUTENANT
(Interrupting)
Inquest?

CAPTAIN
Give her the body. It’s the quickest way for us to get rid of her.
LIEUTENANT
You’re joking? Inquest? Give her the... You’re joking.

CAPTAIN
I don’t think I am.

LIEUTENANT
And what do we do after the funeral. When she wants to know who killed him.

Pause.

LIEUTENANT (CONT’D)
No evidence.

CAPTAIN
What do you mean?

LIEUTENANT
No evidence.

CAPTAIN
Where’s the body, Lieutenant?

The Lieutenant walks over to the desk and picks up a small amount of ash from the ashtray. The Lieutenant holds it up, then blows it into the air.

LIEUTENANT
Gone.

CAPTAIN
You...

LIEUTENANT
Burned it. Sorry.

CAPTAIN
(yelling)
You burned the body? How dare you, how fucking dare you? I gave you orders to bring that corpse back here. You burned it? That is a flagrant violation of my orders, of proper military procedure you insubordinate little shit!

LIEUTENANT
What are you talking about? Excuse me sir, but what are you... proper military...

Pause.
LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Listen to yourself. Somewhere right now somewhere else in this country, maybe your last command, someone is losing a piece of paper, erasing a signature, burning a body to cover your ass. And you should cover mine. That’s how the army’s going to survive in your new democratic paradise. I cover you, you cover me.

CAPTAIN
You killed him? Her father?

LIEUTENANT
I arrested him.

CAPTAIN
And you...

LIEUTENANT
Let him go the next day. What happened after that, is not for us to speculate.

CAPTAIN
Mother of God. You burned it. What do I tell her? That old bitch out there with that stupid kid. For Christ sake, what do I say to her?

LIEUTENANT
Say there’s no body. Say there never was a body. Say ‘Fuck off, you old bitch’.

The Captain goes to the office door. He opens it, and sees Sofia sitting outside. He closes the door.

CAPTAIN
She’s waiting out there.

LIEUTENANT
Don’t tell her anything.

CAPTAIN
Well I can’t just let her wait. She’ll wait forever.

LIEUTENANT
Not forever. She’s an old woman. You’ll probably outlive her.
The Lieutenant turns, and walks out the door. Sofia stares at him as he walks past her, but he doesn’t glance at her once. The Captain watches him go, then his focus drifts to Sofia. Sofia looks at the Captain, and he shuts his door.

CUT TO:

EXT. YARD

Alexandra and Yanina stand at a table, pounding grain. Fidelia is pouring it into sacks.

ALEXANDRA
Pour it slower, you spill half on the ground.

FIDELIA
I’m not spilling anything.

ALEXANDRA
Don’t talk back to me.

YANINA
You’re spilling, Alexandra, you’re pounding too hard. Half of it’s coming over the sides.

ALEXANDRA
I can’t believe she took Alexis.
(To Fidelia)
I can’t believe she left you to guard that thing. I can’t believe you touched it. You’re so dumb, it’s unclean. Did you wash your hands? Did you wash your mouth?

FIDELIA
You asked me already. I said I did. Stop yelling at me.

ALEXANDRA
I can still smell it. I don’t think you washed enough. You’ll get that death in the grain.

YANINA
You’ll wake the baby. Please stop.

Sofia and Alexis walk in the yard and over to the table. Alexandra starts pounding her bowl of grain harder. Alexis heads for the house.

ALEXANDRA
(to Alexis)
You. Stay.
Pause.

SOFIA
(To Alexandra)
You’re pounding too hard.

Alexandra pounds even harder.

SOFIA (CONT’D)
(Angry)
You’ll crack the bowl. Stop pounding so hard.

ALEXANDRA
Don’t you talk to me.

SOFIA
That bowl you are breaking is mine, and I won’t let you...

ALEXANDRA
(Interrupting)
Nothing here is yours! It’s yours if you work it and you haven’t done any work in a month. Now it isn’t yours anymore, it’s mine. My bowl, my house, my goat and chickens and grain and my children and you. Why don’t you go back to the river and leave me and what’s mine, all the things you don’t care for anymore.

SOFIA
(Quietly)
There were four goats when I left a month ago and now there are only three. How much did you get for Cholito?

ALEXANDRA
You know what I can’t forgive? It’s not disgracing your father’s name by giving it to a rotting corpse, it’s not being a crazy old woman who can’t help herself because crazy old women can’t help the way they are, what I cannot forgive, ever is that you...

SOFIA
(Interrupting)
I asked you a question.

ALEXANDRA
(Quiet rage)
What?
SOFIA
How much money did you get for the goat?

ALEXANDRA
(Quietly)
You put my daughter and my son in danger. I thought the one thing I could depend on was that you cared about my children. Your grandchildren. That you would protect them. You care about nothing but death.

FIDELIA
No mama, that’s not true.

SOFIA
Fidelia. What did I tell you when I left you at the river?

FIDELIA
Grandma.

SOFIA
I entrusted you with the body of my father. And you let those godless men take my father’s body and they burned it. Burned it, like common trash. And it was you who let them do it.

ALEXANDRA
Don’t talk to my daughter like that.

SOFIA
She should have died before she let them take his body away! Forgive? I don’t forgive any of you for that!

(To Alexandra)
You have no Mendez blood in your veins. No Fuentes blood, you don’t understand, but you.

Sofia turns to Fidelia.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
I thought you were Emiliano’s daughter, but you understand nothing! None of you. I come back and you’re going to market. My father’s body, he built this house, black smoke and ash, and you’re going to market.

(MORE)
You’ll sell the living, you’ll sell the dead, nothing’s horrible enough to stop your selling, and your pounding. Any of you, any of you in this whole valley. You bitches, you whores, you sell the lives and the memories of your men, you should all be down like stones by the river, you should all be tearing your clothes by the river, the sun and the moon and the wind should stop until you bury the dead. I will. I’ll find where they burned the corpse of my father and I’ll gather his ashes and the earth that they scorches and I’ll carry it to his grave on the hill. You’ll see that I will. Every ash, every splinter. You’ll see that I will, and then maybe you’ll stop and then you’ll see. This was my father, and where is Miguel, and this was my father, and where’s Emiliano. Tell me, tell me. Where is your husband and my father and where is Alonso, Antonio, Theo. Where’s Luis, Raul, Pablo, Hernando, Claudio, Joaquin, where are they? Juan, Enrique, Luis, Rafael, Pable, Armando, Benito, Felipe, Sebastian, Theo, Joaquin, Miguel, Emiliano, Alonso, Diego, Flaco. Where are you? Fererico, Ricardo, Eduardo, Saul, Andres, Carlos, Lorenzo, Gabriel, Cristian, where’s Segundo, David, Julio, where’s Felipe, Angel, Miguel, Roberto Mario, Ernesto, Salvador, Ernesto.

All the other women except for Alexandra gather in a small group, chanting the names over and over and over. Alexandra rushes around, gathering her things while yelling.

ALEXANDRA
Get the grain, get the grain, we’re going to the market. Fidelia, get the sack. Alexis, the cart. Yani, get the baby and close up the pen. Don’t listen, don’t listen, just get the sack and the cart.

Alexandra turns to the women.
ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)

(Yelling)
You crazy old witch! You give them names. You go to them and you tell them names. Fuentes, Fuentes, Mendez. You gave them our names. You call attention and you'll kill them all, you'll kill them all, don't you understand? They've got our men. They've got out men. My husband is not dead. Emiliano is not dead. No!

Fidelia is picking up the sacks during this. The seam on one of the sacks gives and the grain spills all over the ground.

The women stop chanting. They get on their knees and start to pick up the grain. They work in silence, placing the spilt grain into another sack. Sofia watches them, and the knees down to help.

Teresa

Begins to cry. None of the women acknowledge this.

Sofia

Stands slowly. She lets the handful of grain she’s gathered fall to the ground. She walks to Teresa, and puts her hands on her head. Teresa’s crying softens. Sofia leaves. The women continue to pick up the grain. All that can be heard is the river.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BED

It’s dark. Only vague silhouettes can be seen.

A FIGURE

In the darkness, struggling with something. The figure drags something from the river, and then sits heavily, holding it tightly to her.

A match

Is lit from behind the figure.

Fidelia

Holding the match and a candle. She lights the candle and approaches the figure on the ground.

Sofia
Sitting, soaking wet, holding a different body. Fidelia kneels beside her. She blows out the candle.

Headlights

From a jeep illuminate the darkness. The sound of the engine is heard, then stops as it’s turned off. The headlights stop on SOFIA, clutching the body.

LIEUTENANT
(O.S.)
There! There! Who the fuck, who the fuck is...

Pause.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
(O.S.)
Go around the side, that side. Cover the right, Go!

The Lieutenant runs up behind Sofia and Fidelia. Behind him are two soldiers. Sofia holds the body closer.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Nobody move, nobody move.
(To Sofia)
Get away from that.

Alexandra runs up to them from the opposite side.

ALEXANDRA
Fidelia, Fidelia, come here. Come here quickly.

A second set of headlights pull in from behind Alexandra. The tyres screech, coming to a halt. The Captain runs in, brushing past Alexandra. Behind him is Emmanuel.

CAPTAIN
What the... What us going on here?

LIEUTENANT
Get away from that, you old cunt.

CAPTAIN
What’s she got, Mrs Fuentes, what are you...

The Captain sees the body.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Oh my god.

LIEUTENANT
I said get away from that, you disgusting old cunt.
The Lieutenant draws his gun from the holster and points it at Sofia. Sofia doesn’t move.

CAPTAIN
Lieutenant. Lieutenant, put that away. Now!

The Lieutenant doesn’t move. He cocks the gun. Alexandra steps in between the Lieutenant and Sofia. Other women run up, but keep their distance.

YANINA
Don’t shoot her, don’t.

ALEXANDRA
She’s just an old woman. There are witnesses. Please.

CAPTAIN
Lieutenant, put that gun down and get back in your jeep.

The Captain pushes Alexandra aside and stands between the Lieutenant and Sofia.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
I am giving you an order. Get back in the jeep.

The Lieutenant hesitates, but lowers his gun. He stares at Sofia. Sofia doesn’t take her eyes off the body. The Lieutenant turns and leaves.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(addressing the women)
Go home. There’s nothing here. Go home.

Nobody moves. The Captain turns to Sofia.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Mrs. Fuentes. Mrs. Fuentes. Get away from the body.

She doesn’t move.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Mrs Fuentes, will you please put that down so we can take a look and see if...

SOFIA
(not looking up)
Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA
What, Sofia?
SOFIA
Miguel.

CAPTAIN
What did she say?

ALEXANDRA
She thinks it’s her husband. She thinks...

SOFIA
Miguel.

CAPTAIN
(To Alexandra)
Listen. We’ll take the body and...

SOFIA
No.

CAPTAIN
I will personally take responsibility for this body. There will be an official... we are a concerned about this as you are.

SOFIA
You. Listen to me. You will have to kill me. Do you understand. You’ll have to kill me first.

The Captain looks around at the women, then back at Sofia.

CAPTAIN
I understand. Do you, do you want help?

SOFIA
No. No help.

ALEXANDRA
We’ll carry him. Sofia. Sofia, come.

The women approach the body. Together, they all pick up the body, heavy with water. They carry it past the soldiers, and towards the town.

CAPTAIN
Two fucking bodies! Two! Someone is setting me up. Tell the Lieutenant to get over here. Now.

Emmanuel leaves. The Captain turns and looks at the river.
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(To himself)
Stink hole. Fucking stink hole.
We should plug this fucking river up.

The Lieutenant walks over, followed by Emmanuel. The Lieutenant and the CAPTAIN stare at each other.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Leave.

Emmanuel walks away.

LIEUTENANT
Where do you think these bodies are coming from?

CAPTAIN
Where do you think they’re coming from?

LIEUTENANT
I asked you first.

CAPTAIN
I’m your superior.

LIEUTENANT
Then you must be smarter than me.

CAPTAIN
I am.

LIEUTENANT
Then answer my question.

Pause.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Sir.

CAPTAIN
I think someone wants to make trouble for me.

LIEUTENANT
I think someone wants to make trouble for me.

CAPTAIN
Who? Why would anyone want to do this? You’re such a charming young man.

LIEUTENANT
But some people are immune to my charms. The Communists.

(MORE)
LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
The Terrorists. The Subversives. That old woman. She’s doing it. They’re tossing these bodies in, using you to get rid of people like me, people who are effective. If Fuentes is buried, then she’ll ask who killed him, and then they ask who arrested him, and then they trace a trail back to me.

CAPTAIN
(Yelling)
Paranoid bullshit. You’re doing it! You and your effective friends. You throw these bodies in the river so she can find them and she gets wild and I’m expected to abandon my programme and start shooting!

LIEUTENANT
Oh, shooting! You’re so delicate. This reform, this delicate, it will end with me on trial. And you on trial too, for what you did somewhere else. Can’t you see that?

CAPTAIN
There’ll be no trials. Trials come when bodies float downstream. So in case you happen to know who’s throwing them in.

LIEUTENANT
(Interrupting and Yelling)
I don’t know who!

CAPTAIN
Tell them to be smart. Ask themselves what their best interests really are. Because at this moment, it’s in my best interest to point my guns not at these women, but at anyone I see getting in my way.

Pause.

LIEUTENANT
I thank you for your friendly, middle-class advice. But you forget. Everything we do here is being watched. By important people. The true defenders of the motherland.

(MORE)
So if the funeral happens, an hour later you’ll get a phone call, announcing your demotion. And a day or two later you’ll find yourself back in the capital where the streets are crowded and cars speed by and one speeding past you one morning has a man inside with a gun and a bullet.

CAPTAIN
Save your threats.

LIEUTENANT
And back here in the valley of hell, the guns will be pointed at our enemies again. You betrayed me. You sided with that cow. All of the women saw that.

CAPTAIN
Lieutenant...

LIEUTENANT
I mean it Captain. Don’t let her bury that body.

The Lieutenant turns and walks away. The Captain watches him go. As he’s watching, he sees Emmanuel, standing next to a tree, listening.

CAPTAIN
You were listening the whole time?

Emmanuel walks away from the tree and walks up to the Captain.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
My shadow. I wish you wouldn’t do that. I think I may have gone too far.

EMMANUEL
The Lieutenant seemed upset.

CAPTAIN (Sarcastic)
How observant.

EMMANUEL
May I make a suggestion?

CAPTAIN
Oh please do. You’re so thoroughly informed.
EMMANUEL
You didn’t know Miguel Fuentes. Maybe you made a mistake.

CAPTAIN
A mistake?

EMMANUEL
If someone else claimed the body, a competing claim. Maybe it was someone else’s husband. Someone whose husband died accidentally. There are men missing the Lieutenant didn’t arrest, whose funerals won’t be of any worry to him.

CAPTAIN
Got anyone specific in mind.

Pause.

EMMANUEL
Theo Sanjines.

CAPTAIN
Someone you knew?

EMMANUEL
I know his wife. Cecilia Sanjines. My girlfriend, now.

CAPTAIN
Urqueta was right. You’re a credit to your kind. You eavesdrop on my conversations. You probably open my mail. Whose ears are you. Who do you listen for? Kastoria?

EMMANUEL
With your permission, Captain, but I want to leave this place, sometime soon. So does Cecilia. And Phillip Kastoria doesn’t seem to think that’s such a good idea. I don’t know who whether he’s thinking about my best interests, or his.

CAPTAIN
Does Kastoria know about the bodies?

EMMANUEL
Mr Kastoria used to say ‘Not a leaf falls on my land without me knowing about it’.
CAPTAIN
The Kastorias must be close to the Lieutenant.

EMMANUEL
There are luncheons every now and then. The Lieutenant is invited.

CAPTAIN
Uh huh. If you happen to find yourself upriver again, it would be in your best interests to give Mr Kastoria the impression that I am in control, that I am in charge. Because if I succeed here, I will be very grateful to those who help me. Do you understand me?

Emmanuel nods.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Now, I think our cooperative widow, Mrs. Sanjines, should be informed that her husband has drowned. A most unpleasant task. I'm sure you'll find a way of comforting her.

EMMANUEL
Yes sir. And what about the old woman, sir?

The Captain steps up to the small rock formation where Sofia normally sits and watches the river.

CAPTAIN
Do you think if I sit like her, will a body come for me?

The Captain stares down the river, watching the water.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Where, where in the hell are these bodies coming from?

Pause. The Captain turns back to Emmanuel.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
The old woman’s grandson. How old?

EMMANUEL
Thirteen. Fourteen maybe. Why?

CAPTAIN
A little detour through the shit. To the future. God willing.
The Captain steps down, and with Emmanuel, they walk back towards the jeep.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - GREEN PART

Cecilia and Emmanuel are back at their spot at the river from before, with the green hills surrounding.

EMMANUEL
You want him to come back?

CECILIA
I want you.

EMMANUEL
Then bury him.

CECILIA
But that’s not him.

EMMANUEL
It is if you say so.

CECILIA
No. It’s someone else. Theo will come back to me.

EMMANUEL
Bury him and he won’t.

CECILIA
I wish it was that simple.

EMMANUEL
It is. Listen to what I’m saying. Bury him and he’ll never come back. You do this for the Captain and the Captain will make certain that Theo will never show up again.

Pause.

CECILIA
I can’t do that and you know it.

EMMANUEL
Choose. Him or me.

Pause. Cecilia kisses Emmanuel lightly.

CECILIA
Promise me. When we get to the city, we’ll have thousands of children.
EMMANUEL
Millions. Not thousands.
Millions.

CECILIA
And every one of them with your eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME

It’s a fairly bland room. The unnamed body lays in a wooden box. Alexandra stands with Yanina and Fidelia. Sofia is kneeling in front of the body. There are candles around the small room, lighting the dull room a shade of red.

SOFIA
When I was just a girl, my sisters and I went to town, dressed in bright dresses our grandma made for the festival of the planting. You could see the torches in the square from far off, all the way up the mountain. We rode down in a cart. It was so late when we got to the square, and my sisters, may they rest in peace, they vanished right away into the crowd, leaving me alone surrounded by all the tall farmers. There was music, and then I felt his hand on my shoulders behind me. He said ‘don’t turn around’, and he took my red scarf and covered my eyes, and tied it behind me, so all I could see when I opened my eyes was bright red. And he led me blind to the dance.

FIDELIA
Then what?

SOFIA
I’ve told so often what happened next. We danced. I couldn’t see him, but I felt him. His body close to mine. He was only a boy, but I was only a girl. The band started playing something, a song with a strange rhythm I didn’t know. I said to him ‘take off this scarf, you idiot. I can’t see and I don’t know how to this dance’. He said ‘leave it on and I’ll teach you’.

(MORE)
I said ‘why should you see when I can’t’? And he said he couldn’t see either, his eyes were closed. And I thought that was funny, so I let him dance with me, even though I thought he was crazy. My Miguel. After the dance was over, he took off the scarf and looked at me and said ‘you’re beautiful. So beautiful’.

FIDELIA
Were you?

SOFIA
No. I was ugly. But that’s what he said. I could always recognize him, from that night on, even with my eyes closed. Even blind, in the dark. I could always recognize my Miguel.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH BACK ROOM

Father Gabriel stands at the fireplace. The Captain is seated across the room.

CAPTAIN
I’m troubled. You’ve heard about the body in the river. The new one, anyway. It can’t be properly identified. But a widow claims it as the body of her man. So I’ve taken a risk. It seemed, well...

The Captain struggles for the word.

FATHER GABRIEL
Compassionate.

CAPTAIN
Yes. To let her have the body to bury. Have I sinned in allowing her this funeral, even though I have serious doubts that the corpse is hers to claim?

FATHER GABRIEL
I’ve asked myself the same question, Captain. After all, I have to perform the rites, and...

CAPTAIN
Since you aren’t certain.
FATHER GABRIEL
I’ve seen the body. I have my
doubts as well.

CAPTAIN
But?

FATHER GABRIEL
These are troubled times. These
women need an end to the
uncertainty, this not know
they’re suffering. It’s
intolerable. A peculiar form of
Hell. If a burial can bring
peace, then in the name of a
greater good I would perform the
funeral.

CAPTAIN
And trust that the Heavenly
Father will understand, and
forgive us for it.

FATHER GABRIEL
Since we act in the name of
peace, yes.

CAPTAIN
I can’t tell you how much this
relieves me.

FATHER GABRIEL
And it will relieve the torment
of Sofia Fuentes.

CAPTAIN
Sofia Fuentes? So you haven’t
heard.

Father Gabriel looks puzzled.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
That was a mistake. Mrs Fuentes
was mistaken. The body has been
claimed by Cecilia Sanjines.

FATHER GABRIEL
Cecilia?

CAPTAIN
Her husband, Theo Sanjines.
Missing for several months.
Apparently a heavy drinker. He
used to beat his wife. A lot of
these men did. It’s odd she
hasn’t contacted you about the
service. No doubt she’s still in
shock.
Pause.

FATHER GABRIEL
Captain, I can’t. You gave that body to Sofia Fuentes.

CAPTAIN
But you yourself said it didn’t look like...

FATHER GABRIEL
It was unrecognizable. Why is one woman’s claim better than another’s?

CAPTAIN
In this affair I have had to play Solomon. I can’t cut the corpse in two, can I? So the widow whose claim seems most probable gets the body.

Pause.

FATHER GABRIEL
I won’t do it. I can’t. Miguel Fuentes was my friend. He sat in the chair you’re sitting in now. Many nights, he would sit right there and we would talk.

CAPTAIN
Then you’ll want to help his family.

FATHER GABRIEL
They won’t consider it a help.

CAPTAIN
But they will. You see, in exchange for your pastoral assistance in the funeral of Theo Sanjines, and in exchange for the good natured cooperation of the Fuentes family, I would be prepared to release a prisoner, a relative of theirs.

FATHER GABRIEL
Emiliano? Alonso?

CAPTAIN
No. I think his name is Alexis.

FATHER GABRIEL
No, Alexis is the boy.
CAPTAIN
That’s right. Him.

FATHER GABRIEL
He isn’t...

CAPTAIN
(Interrupting)
We arrested him this afternoon.

FATHER GABRIEL
Please, please don’t hurt the boy.

CAPTAIN
I will tell Mrs Sanjines to expect your call. Be careful with her, she’s very upset.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Hurt the boy? I know what you think of me, Father.

FATHER GABRIEL
I don’t think you do.

CAPTAIN
I can imagine. Don’t judge me. It sickens me. I hate pain and terror, but at times I’m forced to act. We have to follow our hearts to the greater good. There are forces at work here, who intend nothing good for this country. I intend peace. I want that as much as you. But sometimes the road to peace is, as you know, fraught with difficult choices. You shouldn’t judge me too hastily.

FATHER GABRIEL
I don’t Captain. The dead will judge the dead.

The Captain stands to his feet, and kneels down, lowering his head to look at the floor.

CAPTAIN
Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

Father Gabriel looks at the Captain for a moment, then walks over and places a hand on the Captain’s shoulder.

CUT TO:
INT. HOTEL ROOM

The Narrator sits in a chair, rubbing his hands together nervously.

NARRATOR
As for me, I am not so different from the interpreters in their glass booths at the endless international conferences on torture, not so different from them with their monochrome voices, their dictionaries, their notes, their culture, their going back home in Geneva, in New York, in the Hague, an intermediary. Not even a bridge, simultaneous translation for good pay, a specialist in language rather than the suffering they're talking about. They listen, they jot down, they find the right adjective. Like them, I must watch from afar what I cannot remedy. Like them, I cannot speak to those whom I translate. I cannot offer advice. I cannot even tell those I am hearing to be careful, to watch out. And like the interpreters, I am not in any sort of danger. It is true that if I had stayed in my country, it would be my words that someone far away would be struggling to put into a foreign language, struggling to bury in another language. But now that the years of exile pass and pass, now that I cannot remember the color of the eyes of my children, I am becoming more and more like the interpreters.

Pause.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
With this difference. Unlike them, I cannot switch off the voices. Unlike them, I am haunted by those voices. Unlike them, I cannot stop listening. As much as I might want to, I simply cannot stop.

CUT TO:
EXT. PITCH BLACK

Darkness. A small candle is light by Fidelia. Her face is illuminated, but nothing else. Surrounding her are all the other women, holding a candle of their own.

FIDELIA
Are you in pain? Are you in pain?
Can I do something to help you?
Are you in pain?

THE WOMEN
(In unison)
Yes, he is in pain. Yes Fidelia, he is.

The light spreads to reveal a man, with a hood over his head. He’s completely naked except for this hood. He is very skinny, with his skin pressing against his ribs. He breathes heavily.

FIDELIA
What can I do for him? How can I help him? Can I go to where he is?

THE WOMEN
No Fidelia, you can’t do that, the door is locked, it’s too far.

FIDELIA
Can I give him water, is he thirsty? Medicine, is he hurt?
What can I do?

THE WOMEN
Talk to him, girl, he can hear you. Talk to him, tell him a story.

FIDELIA
A story? A story? What kind of story, a story about what?

THE WOMEN
About this Fidelia. The story of what happened.

FIDELIA
Not that, that will hurt him. I don’t want to tell him that. I can’t. I can’t.

THE WOMEN
The truth Fidelia, the story of what happened.
FIDELIA
(Yelling)
I don’t know how!

Fidelia falls, her candle landing on the ground close to her. She is close to tears. The other women watch on.

FIDELIA (CONT’D)
I saw a bird, a dead bird on it’s back, it’s throat was pulled back, it’s beak was open. It was trying to fly. No, it was trying to drink, it was drinking in light, it was trying to do that. No, that’s not right.

Pause.

FIDELIA (CONT’D)
The door. They kicked in the door, the splintered the door. Mama screamed, she screamed about the bird. No. She screamed something. It was ‘Take me’, she said, I think. But then, but then, but they knew, he was down in the corn, down in the corn. He was his in the corn, but they knew, who told them, and she screamed, and she screamed, but they went through the fields like fire. So fast. They trampled the corn to the ground, and they picked him like a plant, they tore at the roots, they picked him out from the corn, and she kept on screaming, but making no sounds. And where was I when they took him? Where was I standing? I was standing by mama. No, I was not. I was out in the corn. I was up in the air. I was flying above it and, no. I was dead. I was lying on my back trying, trying to drink in the light. I don’t know how to tell you this story papa. I don’t know what story I’m trying to tell.

Pause.

FIDELIA (CONT’D)
Papa. Papa, are you there? They took him, papa. They took Alexis away.

CUT TO:
EXT. CEMETARY

The cemetery sits on the hill. Cecilia, Emmanuel, the Captain, the Lieutenant and two soldiers stand by a freshly dug grave. They stand, waiting.

Father Gabriel

Stands a few feet away.

Alexandra, Yanina and Sofia arrive, carrying a cart holding the body. They place the cart down, but Sofia holds the right hand of the body in her hands.

ALEXANDRA
Where’s my son?

The Captain turns to the Lieutenant.

CAPTAIN
The boy.

The Lieutenant turns and walks away.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(To the FUENTES women)
I assume you know Mrs. Sanjines?

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Mrs. Sanjines, you know...

CECILIA
(interrupting)
Yes.

Pause.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Alexandra, I’m sorry.

ALEXANDRA
Theo will kill you.

Alexandra turns, facing away from Cecilia. Cecilia looks shocked by this.

CAPTAIN
Ladies, please.

The Lieutenant walks over with Alexis.

Alexis

Is unsteady on his feet. His shirt has been torn and has obviously been re-patched. He stares at the ground and keeps one eye closed.
Fidelia
Is watching from behind a row of trees.
The Captain
Is slightly thrown by Alexis’ appearance.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
Um, good. Good, now we can...

Alexandra walks to the Lieutenant and Alexis. Alexandra
takes Alexis by the arm. Alexis cries out and pulls away.

ALEXANDRA
(To the Captain)
What did you do? What did you do
to him?

LIEUTENANT
He’s alive. Be thankful. Next
time, save us the trouble.

The Lieutenant turns to the Captain.

LIEUTENANT (CONT’D)
Captain, your prisoner.

The Lieutenant turns and walks away.

CAPTAIN
(to Sofia)
Mrs. Fuentes. Thank you for
returning the body of Mr
Sanjines. We apologize for the
grotesque mistake. Now take your
grandson and go home.

Sofia doesn’t answer, and looks at the ground.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
Mrs. Fuentes? Mrs. Fuentes?

Sofia does nothing. The CAPTAIN steps towards Alexis,
grabbing his arm. Alexis cries out.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
Woman, you haven’t even begun to
see the trouble I can cause.

ALEXANDRA
Sofia.

Sofia strengthens her grip on the body. Nobody moves. Then,
Sofia lets go, the hand of the body dropping on the ground.
Sofia walks to Alexis, puts her arm around his shoulder
slowly. She leads him away from the Captain.
The Captain

Points to the soldiers, then the body. The soldiers move to the cart. They pick up the body and carry it to the empty grave. They slowly place it in the pit while everyone watches.

CAPTAIN

Mrs. Sanjines.

Emmanuel nudges Cecilia, who stumbles a little, and then she walks to the grave. Not looking in, she throws a flower in and turns and starts to walk away. Emmanuel stands in her way. Cecilia turns back around, facing the grave.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Father.

FATHER GABRIEL

Father in Heaven, here is one of your children. We...

CAPTAIN

(Interrupting)

Name.

FATHER GABRIEL

Theo Sanjines. Father, show mercy for my friend Theo. Wherever his soul may be. Ashes to ashes, earth to earth, dust you were and dust you are and to dust you shall return. Amen.

Pause.

CAPTAIN

Thank you. Mrs Sanjines, my condolences.

Cecilia walks away. Emmanuel follows her. The Captain turns to Alexandra.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

The army will reimburse you for the cost of the shroud. Good day.

The Captain turns and walks away, not looking back. The two soldiers start filling in the shallow grave.

Father Gabriel

Walks up to Sofia, who watches the soldiers filling in the grace.
FATHER GABRIEL
Sofia. God works in strange ways. Maybe this is a sign that he, that Miguel is still alive. You should never give up hope.

Pause.

FATHER GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Please forgive me. All of you.

The Fuentes women don’t answer. Father Gabriel walks past the women and down the hill.

The soldiers hammer a small, flimsy wooden cross into the earth at the head of the grave, and walk away.

ALEXANDRA
Sofia. Thank you.

SOFIA
Miguel is so ashamed of me.

Sofia storms off.

ALEXANDRA
Alexis.

Alexis doesn’t move. Alexandra walks up to Alexis, and leads him in the same direction Sofia went, and Yanina follows.

Fidelia
At the trees with the baby, walks up to the grave and stares at the cross, then at the baby.

FIDELIA
(To baby)
Say something. Say mama. Every baby your age can say mama. Maybe you won’t ever say anything. Maybe you’ll just be quiet. Never tell a story to anybody until the day you die.

Fidelia stares at the baby, who stares back at her.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETARY - MORNING
The graveyard is lit with the first signs of dawn.

Sofia
Walks up to the graveyard. Her hair is unkempt, and she looks tired. In her hands, she carries a small loaf of bread. She walks up to the fresh grave and places it at the head, right in front of the cross. She kneels down, and takes clumps of the earth in her hands, and examines them closely, as if they hold the answer to the problem. She opens her fingers and the dirt falls out, leaving small bits of dust on her palms. She rubs her hands through her hair. She picks up the bread and tears it in half. She drops one half, and takes a bite from the other half.

The women

All walk up in a small group, each one of them carrying bread as well. They do the same as Sofia, tearing it in half, dropping one half to the ground until there is a mound of bread on top of the grave.

Yanina

Walks to Sofia, and kneels beside her. The other women, except Alexandra sit around the grave, silently eating the bread they hold. Alexandra sits a few feet away from the grave.

KATHERINA
I knew when I saw the first body come out of the river. The minute I laid hands on him, I knew it was my brother. I should have insisted. I was afraid.

TERESA
It wasn’t your brother. It was my nephew. I recognized him. I was too afraid to speak. When you said to the Lieutenant that you thought you recognized your brother, I thought to myself “she’s crazy, she’s wrong, but at least she has the courage to speak’.

ROSA
The first body, I can’t be absolutely certain, but the hands, even broken. I think it was Luisa’s oldest son. I am absolutely sure that was the second body, though, was...

TERESA
(Interrupting)
That was my husband. No doubt about that.
ROSA
My father. I baked all night.
This is my father in this grave.
I baked bread for his grave.

KATHERINA
Everyone baked. All night. The
whole valley smelled of yeast rising.

KATHERINA (CONT'D)
Maybe it isn’t anyone’s. Maybe
everyone’s wrong.

YANINA
Maybe everyone’s right.

TERESA
Impossible. It can’t belong to all of us. It’s only one body.

KATHERINA
Yes. And it’s my son, Eduardo.

TERESA
It’s Antonio. It’s my husband. He was that thin.

ROSA
It’s my father. I’d stake my life on it.

KATHERINA
It didn’t look a thing like your father. He wasn’t nearly so tall.

TERESA
But it’s only one body. And everybody wants to bury it. What are we going to do about that?

SOFIA
You know what to do. You told me how to do it. Go get permission. And then bury your men.

TERESA
But it’s just this one poor...

SOFIA
(Interrupting)
That’s not our problem. You identify? Then you must bury. Ask permission. Let the Captain figure it out.
The women start to stand. A bird overhead cries out. The light on the cemetart starts to change, getting darker. The sound of the river is heard, getting louder.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN’S OFFICE

The Captain stands at his desk, looking at a large stack of papers.

Emmanuel stands next to the chair on the other side off the office.

Teresa

Sits in the chair, watching the Captain as he talks.

CAPTAIN

Thirty six widows. What the fuck am I supposed to do with thirty six widows? Widows, mothers, aunts, grandmas. The only women in this miserable fucking valley who isn’t demanding that corpse as her own is the one woman we gave it to. And where the fuck is she, orderly?

EMMANUEL

I can’t find her sir. I don’t know where she is.

CAPTAIN

You seem to know a whole fuck of a lot less than I thought you did. This whole mess, I’d almost say it was all your fault if you were important enough to matter. But you don’t. You’re just my little peasant orderly who tried too hard to be helpful and I let myself forget. No progress without order. But now I’m taking control. Your girlfriend’s the official widow in this hideous mess and if you want me to transfer you out of here, you’d better find her. Now.

Emmanuel salutes, turns and walks out of the office.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)

(To Teresa)
Someone’s set me up. Someone’s making a joke of me. The press will here about this and then...
Pauses, then continues.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
We don’t do well in sports or beauty contests. Finally we have a record to be proud of. More widows per corpse than any other country in the world.

TERESA
My name is Teresa Salas. I am 53 years old. My husband, Antonio Salas, he would have been 59 years old last March. He was mayor of Camacho. He was elected when we last had an election. When we stopped having elections, he was arrested for trying to reclaim the land. He was taken away on February 20th eight years ago. And I never saw him again. Until two days ago, when his body washed up in the river. And now I want to bury him. In the cemetery by his parents graves.

The Captain starts flipping through the large pile of paper.

CAPTAIN

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
I mean, it can’t belong to all of you. It’s only one body.

TERESA
My husband’s.

CAPTAIN
So the other women are wrong. Right? One of you is right and the other thirty six have to be mistaken. Right?

TERESA
It’s not my job to explain. I know what I know. They know what they know. I know it is my husband.
CAPTAIN
You don’t know. You don’t know, that’s the point. None of you know anything. You’re all mentally underdeveloped emotionally overdeveloped superstitious mindless peasants and this preposterous little scandal you’ve cooked up is a mockery of both me and my power. You have no idea the trouble this is causing. You have no idea what you’re spoiling here with this demented, backwards...

Teresa pulls the locket which hangs around her neck out, and opens it up to show a picture inside.

TERESA
(Interrupting)
Backwards? Is it backwards to want to bury your dead? Don’t you want your wife to do it for you? This is my husband who I lived with for thirty two years.

The Captain looks at the ground.

TERESA (CONT'D)
No, don’t look away.

The Captain looks up, staring at the picture in the locket. Teresa pulls the locket off her neck, and slams it down on the desk.

TERESA (CONT'D)
This is my husband I slept with every night for thirty two years. What do you mean how do I know? What do you mean backwards? I know.

The Captain picks up the locket.

CAPTAIN
Enough, Mrs Salas.

TERESA
They shot my sixteen year old son in the back of his head. I saw that. They did that.

CAPTAIN
I said that’s enough.

TERESA
If this is not my husband, then where is he?

(MORE)
If this is not his body, then give him to me alive. If you won’t do that, then let me bury him.

Pause.

CAPTAIN
You want to bury this body that you say is your husband. But what if your husband walked through that door now?

The Captain puts the locket back onto the desk.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
What if I clap my hands?

The Captain claps his hands together, loudly.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
And he walked through that door.

The door opens. Teresa turns around sharply towards it.

The Lieutenant walks in, shutting the door behind him. Teresa stares at him, then looks away.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
What would you do if your husband came through that door?

TERESA
I would thank you, Captain. If he came back to me alive. What else could I do?

CAPTAIN
Yes. That’s all, Mrs Salas.

Teresa stares at him.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
I said that’s all. Tell the next widow I’m going to lunch.

Teresa picks her locket up off the desk, and exits the room, shutting the door quietly behind her.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
I didn’t call for you.

LIEUTENANT
I wanted to gloat.
CAPTAIN
Gloat somewhere else. In case you missed it, I’m busy here. There are seventeen other women out there.

LIEUTENANT
This is more fun than a circus. The Captain and his amazing multiplying widows. What’s your next trick?

CAPTAIN
A surprise.

LIEUTENANT
Take control here. That’s surprise everyone.

The Captain is thrown by this.

CAPTAIN
Let me tell you something. My father had a dog, and he used to beat it everyday.

LIEUTENANT
Captain, I really don’t want to...

CAPTAIN
(Interrupting)
Sit down and shut the fuck and listen to my story, Lieutenant. That’s an order.

The Lieutenant sits down, not breaking eye contact with the Captain.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
My father had this dog.

LIEUTENANT
And he beat it every day.

CAPTAIN
Right. Then one day, without warning, it bit him. Locked onto him. I was alone with him in the house. He sent me for his pistol. He was a Colonel at the time. He told me how to load it, all this with the dog chewing away at his arm. Screaming at me, my father. And when it was fully loaded, I shot the dog. And it still wouldn’t let go.

(MORE)
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
It had finally gotten what it wanted after all those years of beatings and even after death it wasn’t going to let go. So I had to go get his hunting knife, and begin to work on its teeth. I was seven years old.

LIEUTENANT
That’s illuminating. A parable. You shot the dog.

CAPTAIN
Had to.

LIEUTENANT
Will you shoot here?

CAPTAIN
You miss the parable’s point. You’re too easily distracted by guns.

LIEUTENANT
So what’s the point.

CAPTAIN
The point is, when you back people against the wall, they may surrender. Or they may put up a fight that will leave you crippled. With scars that will stay with you until you die. My father was never able to use that arm again in his life. People get hurt. That’s the point.

LIEUTENANT
These people are used to being beaten. The point here is, make sure they don’t forget who’s holding the leash. If you are holding the leash. At least you’ve got me to command. You’re my captain, Captain. Bow wow.

CAPTAIN
I’ll tell you something. There’s a part of me that would love to shoot one or two of these women, just to make a point. There’s a part of me that would love to shoot you. But any thug can use a gun.

(MORE)
CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
They can make trouble and you can
make threats, but we have to move
ahead, and we’ll drag the rest of
you kicking and screaming into
the twentieth century, whether
you like it or not.

LIEUTENANT
The twentieth century? We’re
already there.

CAPTAIN
Not in this country, we’re not.

LIEUTENANT
On the contrary. What would the
twentieth century be without
countries like ours? So what bone
will you throw them?

CAPTAIN
Now that’s the real surprise.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The Narrator stands still. He runs his hands through his
hair.

NARRATOR
I like to tell myself that this
is my revenge. I like to tell
myself that if I had not been
expelled from my country, this
story would not have been told.
After all, I made it up. Word for
word, character by character. All
invented while I watched from
afar as my country resisted, and
then being raped. The legs of
each object of my country being
forced down, the arms of each
object in my country being pinned
down so the legs could be forced
open. Every last thing in my
country eroded and made
unfamiliar, filled with the wrong
seed. I wrote it all down night
after night after night because
there was nothing else I could
with myself, no other way to keep
hope alive.

The Narrator takes a small drink from a glass of water.
NARRATOR (CONT'D)
And yet, I am beginning to suspect that rather than the creator of this story, I am becoming it’s parasite. A tourist of horror. The voyeur of a struggle I could not join. Possessed by peasant women I know nothing about. Lives I had barely glances at from a passing car. People I had no right to speak for. I feel more and more that I am the mirror of a mirror and that they are the ones who invented me. Whispered life to me in the dark, imagined someone like me to carry their story, so I could tell it to those remote people who spend their lives indifferentily switching indifferent channels, those supposedly safe people who need to know even if they are not aware of their need.

The Narrator turns his head to the right, as if he heard a noise. He turns back.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Who is to say that I am not the invention of those women? Are you sure, as you sit there like me, watching them, that you have more, let me say the word, more reality than they do? Are you sure that someone has not invented you, for their own purpose? Who are we to say that this story did not happen, that it is not happening somewhere at this very moment.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - GREEN PART
Emmanuel and Cecilia at the river. Cecilia holds a suitcase in her hand. She looks dishevelled, walking along the riverbank with Emmanuel in pursuit.

EMMANUEL
You’re fucking everything up.
Please. You have to...

CECILIA
(Interrupting)
I have to get away from here.
(MORE)
CECILIA (CONT'D)
You lied. You said he wasn’t coming back, but he is. He’ll see the grave, they’ll tell him what I did.

EMMANUEL
He’s dead. Theo is dead.

CECILIA
He’s not.

EMMANUEL
I killed him.

CECILIA
You’re a liar.

EMMANUEL
You don’t want him dead. You don’t love me.

CECILIA
Take me to the city. Now. Then I’ll be better. Then I can forget. I can’t here, but there I have a chance. We have to go now.

Cecilia stops walking, and spots something at the river.

CECILIA (CONT'D)
Oh no. Oh no.

EMMANUEL
What? What is it?

Cecilia runs away from the river in a terrible panic. She struggles to run with the suitcase. Emmanuel pulls his gun out, looking where she looked. He sees nothing. He runs after her, and grabs her arm.

CECILIA
(Yelling)
Let me go. Let me go.

EMMANUEL
What wrong? What’s the matter with you? There’s nothing there.

CECILIA
It’s him. It’s him. In the river.

EMMANUEL
There’s nothing in the river.

CECILIA
Theo’s in the river. I saw him.

Cecilia breaks away and starts to run towards the river.
EMMANUEL
Stop. Cecilia, I said stop.

Emmanuel fires his gun into the air. Cecilia stops suddenly, but doesn’t turn around.

CECILIA
Don’t. Please don’t kill me.

Emmanuel walks past her to the river.

CECILIA (CONT’D)
God forgive me. Please, God forgive me.

EMMANUEL
Shut up. Shut the fuck up.

Emmanuel wades into the river, up to his knees. He grabs something from the water, and walks back onto the land, angry. He holds a wet tattered piece of black cloth.

EMMANUEL (CONT’D)

Emmanuel forces his hands under Cecilia’s nose.

EMMANUEL (CONT’D)
See?

CECILIA
Put the gun away. Please.

Emmanuel notices he’s still holding the gun. He puts it away.

EMMANUEL
Did you really think it was him?

CECILIA
It was. I thought it was. Yes.

EMMANUEL
But it wasn’t.

They look at each other in silence.

EMMANUEL (CONT’D)
It wasn’t. Say it wasn’t Theo.

CECILIA
It wasn’t him.

EMMANUEL
Say ‘Theo’s never coming back’.
Pause.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)

Say it.

Silence.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)

I’m leaving.

Emmanuel drops the cloth at Cecilia’s feet, and starts to walk away. He turns back to Cecilia.

EMMANUEL (CONT'D)

You can stay. By the river. With him. Just don’t... Don’t come near me again.

CECILIA

I can’t be alone.

Emmanuel turns and starts to walk away.

CECILIA (CONT'D)

I’ll kill myself.

Emmanuel stops, and turns around.

EMMANUEL

I’m going to the city. That’s where I belong. I’ll find a woman there without dirty hands. A woman who’s never washed in a river. Filthy fucking peasant.

Emmanuel turns, and walks away.

CECILIA

I’ll kill myself.

EMMANUEL

(WITHOUT TURNING)

I hope you all do. It’s deep enough here. Do it.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN

The Captain stands on the box, delivering a speech to the town.

Fidelia stands away from the crowd of women. She holds the baby in her arms. Alexis Stands next to her.
CAPTAIN
When I arrived here in Camacho, I believed we had a bargain. That I would exercise my authority with reason and restraint, and you would learn to look forward to what life could become. Well, I’ve lived up to my side of the bargain. But you haven’t live up to yours. You have made yourselves a spectacle, with this half witted conspiracy to mock me. But we a stuck with one another. And I intend to show you that you can forgive your adversaries and even do them a service. In the name of that future live. I am pleased to release the first prisoner under the terms of the amnesty decree.

The Captain claps his hands. Two soldiers walk in, escorting a man who walks stopped and stiff. They stand him in front of the women, but he never raises his head.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
You see. Whoever it is dumping dead bodies in the river can only give you dead bodies. I can give you living men.

The Captain clears his throat.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Sofia Fuentes. This afternoon. Alonso Fuentes. Your son.

CUT TO:

INT. FUENTES HOME

The home is very simple, with a table in the middle.

Alexandra, Fidelia, Yanina and Alexis

All stand in the room, talking amongst themselves. Yanina holds the baby.

YANINA
He’s coming back. My heavy little man. I promised you he would. He’s tall, your papa. Like a tree. But don’t be scared of him.

ALEXANDRA
We have to hurry. He’ll be here soon.
Alexandra takes the baby from Yanina and gives him to Alexis. Alexis exits the room.

Sofia

Walks in, carrying a bowl filled with water, and a damp cloth. She walks past Alexis and places it on the table. Yanina drops her clothes onto the ground, and the women wash her.

SOFIA
Don’t catch cold.

Sofia takes a blanket and wraps Yanina in it. They walk out of the room together.

Alexandra and Fidelia

Stand across from each other.

FIDELIA
Why did they let Alonso go, and not papa?

Alexandra struggles for an answer.

FIDELIA (CONT'D)
Are you happy for Yani, mama?

Alexandra forces a smile.

ALEXANDRA
Oh Fidelia. Why do you always ask such hard questions? Your father too. He asks hard questions. You’re both pains in my ass. When the women were claiming they recognized... For a moment I almost wanted it to be him. It would almost be a relief. Do you understand?

FIDELIA
Yes mama.

ALEXANDRA
You’re a smart girl. I can’t tell you how much I hurt.

Yanina

Stands at the doorway, wearing a bright green dress. Alexandra turns to look at her.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)
Where? Where did you get it?
YANINA
Alonso. When I got pregnant, he went into town and bought it for me. He said so he’d remember, when I got big with the baby, what I’d look like after the baby was born. I never wore it, since he went away before.

Pause.

YANINA (CONT'D)
Do I look OK?

ALEXANDRA
You look like a fancy lady.

YANINA
Fancy?

ALEXANDRA
Yes. Almost ten pesos an hour.

They laugh between themselves. Fidelia looks confused by the joke.

YANINA
Oh Alex. Alex, I’m so sorry.

ALEXANDRA
Shut up.

YANINA
Do I smell OK?

Alexandra inhales.

ALEXANDRA
Like pine sap. I like it.

YANINA
Like on my wedding night.

ALEXANDRA
On your wedding night, you smelled like cheap wine.

Alexis enters the room, carrying the baby.

YANINA
Oh, I got so drunk.

They laugh.

ALONSO
The man presented to the women before, walks slowly into the room. He stands unsteadily on his feet.
The women don’t see him. Alexis spots him. He stares at Alonso for a moment.

ALEXIS
Mama? Mama, he’s here.

Yanina and Alexandra turn to see him. They stare at him for a second, then Yanina runs up to Alonso and hugs him. She fights back tears as she holds him in her arms.

SOFIA
We’ve made some soup. It will...

Sofia and Alonso stare at each other. Behind Alonso, the other women walk into the room, scattering out.

YANINA
Sofia? Sofia, come here. It’s your son. Look how thin he is. He’s so thin and pale. You can almost see through him. Sofia?

SOFIA
It’s not him.

YANINA
What are you talking about? Of course it is.

SOFIA
It’s his body, but it’s not him.

YANINA
Oh, she’s lost her mind completely. Alexandra, tell her to...

SOFIA
(Interrupting)
Where’s his soul. What have they done with his soul? Ask him that. His soul’s with the others. Ask him where they are. Ask him what he did to make them let his body go. What did you do, my baby? Who did you have to betray.

YANINA
Oh God. Sofia, stop. This is Alonso, this is your son. He never had anything to do with that, with politics. What could he have done? Betray? He didn’t know anything. Alonso, tell her.

(MORE)
YANINA (CONT'D)
Tell her you don’t know what she’s talking about.

Yanina walks to Alexis and takes the baby. Yanina then walks towards Alonso.

YANINA (CONT'D)
Look, this is your son. This is your boy.

ALONSO
(Struggling with words)
I... Yes... I.

YANINA
Come inside. Come inside, don’t you want to...

Alonso kneels slowly, lowering his head.

ALONSO
(Almost whispering)
They keep you blindfolded in a room. You know where they’re taking you by how many steps it takes to get there. Thirty one steps is the bathroom. Forty hour is exercise. If you go over sixty steps and down a staircase, there’s no other place they can be taking you. Every day. And they’d say ‘just one name’, over and over until they were screaming it. So I gave them one. And they wanted more names. So I gave them every name. Every name I knew.

Alonso looks up at Yanina.

ALONSO (CONT'D)
Your name.

YANINA
Whatever you had to do to live. I don’t care. Whatever you had to do.

ALEXANDRA
Is... Where’s Emiliano? Do you know?

Alonso stands slowly. He looks at all the women staring at him.

ALONSO
I haven’t seen him. I haven’t seen anyone.

(MORE)
ALONSO (CONT'D)
Since the day they took us. They split us up and I haven’t seen anyone since. They split us up, and I haven’t seen any of them since.

Sofia walks to him, takes his hand and kisses it. She looks in his eyes for a brief second, then drops his hand and turns away.

SOFIA

Sofia exits the house, walking past Alonso. Yanina turns to the women, watching Alonso.

YANINA
Whatever he had to do.

Sofia walks in, holding a chair.

ALEXANDRA
That’s Emiliano’s chair. Where are you going with my husband’s chair?

SOFIA
To the river?

ALEXANDRA
Why?

SOFIA
You know why. Poor Alexandra. So good and strong. They send me back my men. The first two by the river, and the third by the road. All dead. Now I go back to the river to wait for the last.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The Narrator stares out the window from his chair.

NARRATOR
These are my last words. If I continue to speak, I’m worried I’ll start to talk about myself. So I’m going. Where am I going? Does it really matter? Is it at all important? Maybe I’m disappearing into the story.

(MORE)
Or maybe I am returning home under a false name, crossing the frontier and hoping I won't be recognized. Entering the room where my children are trying to sleep. My son, who looks just like me. My daughter, born after I went into exile, and whom I have never even touched. You see? I'm already talking about myself. But this is not my story.

The Narrator stands up, and stretches while talking.

I do not want to be the one figure in this story that other people will be able to identify with. That they'll find familiar, like a journalist who comes in and comfortably determines who is good and who is evil. And in his superiority, tells the outside world about the atrocities he’s witnessed. I do not want to become that figure. It cannot be that the only way to make people care about this perverse fairy tale is to give them a personal hook.

What is known about me is already too much, more than enough. This was how I brought myself back to life, my words going where my body could not go. My eyes witnessing what people back home did not dare to even whisper, and what people out here did not care about. The world is full of stories about people with broken marriages, children who grow up without their father, men who dream of women who are true, journalists who explore and explain the mysteries of a world they do not belong to.

This is not about me. This is not my story.
The Narrator turns, and exits the hotel room.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER

Sofia sits at the river, the chair resting next to her. A lit candle sits next to her.

Teresa

Walks up, awkwardly dragging a chair behind her. Sofia hears her, and turns to look at her.

SOFIA

What are you doing here?

TERESA

I came to wait with you.

SOFIA

Whose chair?

TERESA

My brother. Fernando’s.

SOFIA

It’s bitter tonight. You’ll catch a cold.

TERESA

I’m just as tough as you.

SOFIA

Start a fire. We’re both old.

TERESA

There’s no wood.

Sofia looks around, then focuses on her chair. She throws it to the ground, the wood crashing into a pile. Teresa does the same with hers. Sofia steps down, and holds the candle underneath the pile. A few seconds pass, and the wood starts to slowly burn. They watch as the chairs catch on fire.

TERESA (CONT’D)

Good fire. It makes me angry.

SOFIA

Two chairs. It’s not much heat.

TERESA

Not yet. But others will come.

CUT TO:
INT. KASTORIA HOUSE

Emmanuel

Stands in the living room at the Kastoria house. The room is filled with furniture, leather chairs, a lit fireplace. There is smoke curling up towards the ceiling.

PHILLIP KASTORIA

An man in his sixties, sits with a cigar in his hand. He has grey hair and is clean shaven. He wears a suit. In the other chair is

KASTORIA’S BROTHER

Who is never seen.

BEATRICE KASTORIA

A plump woman stands of to the side of the room, watching.

KASTORIA

You can tell your captain that I am not reassured in the least.

EMMANUEL

Yes Mr. Kastoria.

KASTORIA

Two bodies, and now this multitude of widows? How much longer is this going to go on? And this business of letting politicians go. I mean, what is that? Whose idea of restoring order is that? You’re sure we can’t get you something to drink?

EMMANUEL

No, thank you very much Mr. Kastoria.

BEATRICE

Are they feeding you Emmanuel? You look so thin.

KASTORIA

Boy’s always been thin, Beatrice.

BEATRICE

I’ve never forgiven Mr. Kastoria for giving you over to the army.

EMMANUEL

Thank you, Mrs. Kastoria.
BEATRICE
The people we have now are
strange to us. I don’t like them.
Why don’t you come back?

KASTORIA
He’s useful to me. The others are
dribbling idiots.

EMMANUEL
Thank you, Mr. Kastoria.

Kastoria stands from his chair.

KASTORIA
I think your Captain is making a
god awful mess of this situation.
My brother agrees. I’d like you
to tell your Captain that.

EMMANUEL
I thing, Mr. Kastoria, that he’s
only trying to...

KASTORIA’S BROTHER
(interrupting)
Lax.

EMMANUEL
Excuse me, please, I’m sorry but
I...

KASTORIA’S BROTHER
(interrupting)
Phillip. Tell him to tell his
Captain that he’s being lax.
Eight years of our hard work will
come undone overnight. Before you
know it they’ll be climbing the
fence, like before. Digging their
twisted little fingers into our
land again. Kill a few more if
they haven’t learned the lesson
yet. God help us when the lower
echelon military starts to think.
Squeamish? Replace him. Demote
him. Give his job to the boy
here. Someone who’ll cut it dead.
This has been going on for weeks.
End it. End it now. Tell him
that, Phillip.

KASTORIA
Yes, well...
KASTORIA’S BROTHER
What, the foreign press? Buried
on page fifty of the afternoon
edition. They don’t want to read
this garbage. They want to read
about a little American girl
trapped in a well in Texas.

Kastoria’s Brother laughs.

KASTORIA’S BROTHER (CONT’D)
Texas.

BEATRICE
I admire the Captain.

KASTORIA’S BROTHER
Phillip, please do something.
She’s starting again.

BEATRICE
What do these women want? The
bodies of their dead husbands.

KASTORIA
Beatrice, please.

BEATRICE
Just give them what they ask for.
It’s the Christian thing.

KASTORIA
Mrs. Kastoria has been nervous,
Emmanuel.

BEATRICE
Why do you always say I’m nervous
when I disagree with you? I’m not
nervous, I’m afraid. You know
what I overheard the cooks in our
kitchen saying, Emmanuel?

KASTORIA
Oh, not this again!

BEATRICE
They were talking about the women
at the river. They were saying
that they’d heard that bodies
were turning up everywhere. Even
here, on our property, in the
private fields, in the orchards.

KASTORIA
Some would say it’s the work of
ghosts.
BEATRICE  
(to Kastoria)  
Shut up, Phillip.  
(To Emmanuel)  
They were whispering, but I could hear them. They said that these corpses, they were decomposing and faceless.

KASTORIA  
Beatrice, please. That’s very unpleasant.

BEATRICE  
And at night, they said they’d seen them walking around, dirty, and nothing could stop them because nothing can stop the dead.

Kastoria’s Brother laughs loudly.

BEATRICE (CONT’D)  
That’s what they said. ‘Nothing can stop the dead’. And two nights ago I woke up from a bad dream and I went downstairs. And they’d left all the doors and windows open. The servants had left everything open so that the dead could come in.

KASTORIA  
You see Emmanuel. This is why women wouldn’t make good soldiers. This is why this situation has come to an end. It’s gotten to be intolerable. I want you tell your commanding officer that.

EMMANUEL  
Certainly, sir.

KASTORIA  
Or I’ll have to use my own men. Understand?

EMMANUEL  
Yes sir. I understand. I’ll make sure the Captain understands too.

The Lieutenant walks into the room.

LIEUTENANT  
I think the Captain is starting to understand all sorts of things, Emmanuel.
KASTORIA’S BROTHER
Our saviour! I was on the phone to your father this morning.

Beatrice is staring out the window. There is billowing smoke coming from within the valley.

BEATRICE
Look, Phillip, in the valley.
Smoke.

LIEUTENANT
The women. All thirty six widows. Building a bonfire. Actually one isn’t there. She drowned herself this morning.

The Lieutenant turns to Emmanuel, with a slight grin on his face.

LIEUTENANT (CONT’D)
I think it was someone you know.

Emmanuel’s face hardens at this news. He stares at the Lieutenant.

KASTORIA
What in hell is going on?

LIEUTENANT
The whole village. Burning chairs.

KASTORIA’S BROTHER
Once they get their hands on fire, that’s it!

KASTORIA
That does it. I’m taking this situation into my own hands.

LIEUTENANT
That won’t be necessary. I know this Captain. All he needed was time.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN’S OFFICE

The Captain paces behind his desk. The Lieutenant stands still.

LIEUTENANT
It’s an impressive blaze. It can be seen for miles.

(MORE)
LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Everyone who sees it will think to themselves, who is in command of Camacho?

CAPTAIN
What do they want? I gave them back a... I showed them. How to get some of their men back. But it's like they're in love with death, just begging me to pull the trigger.

LIEUTENANT
They want all their men back. Not just one, not just some. All.

CAPTAIN
All? That's impossible.

LIEUTENANT
Impossible? No more.

CAPTAIN
What?

LIEUTENANT
No more. That's all they'll say.

CAPTAIN
No more what?

LIEUTENANT
Ask them.

CAPTAIN
You must be happy with yourself.

LIEUTENANT
Happy?

CAPTAIN
Well, you were right. Now you'll get what you want. My resignation to start. Then targets. Maybe hundreds. Vindication, recreation.

LIEUTENANT
Recreation? That's unfair. You think I enjoy this? That boy the other day? You really think I enjoyed that?

CAPTAIN
Did you?
LIEUTENANT
I have a brother his age. You’ve tried to make things better for them, and predictable they’ll have to suffer for your good intentions.

CAPTAIN
And you despise me.

LIEUTENANT
Captain. We are wearing the same uniform.

CAPTAIN
All that means is that you’re ready to step into my boots.

LIEUTENANT
No. It means we share the same mother. It means that, like brothers, we stand by each other when mistakes are made. I am yours to command.

Pause. The Captain is thrown by this.

CAPTAIN
Perhaps I have misjudged you.

The Captain stares out the window, at the smoke.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Arrest the old Fuentes woman.

LIEUTENANT
I think a direct approach would be better suited.

CAPTAIN
Arrest her. The leader. More surgical.

LIEUTENANT
Just remember that fires spread. There are lots of empty chairs, all over this valley, all over this country, ready for kindling. A lot of people are watching.

CAPTAIN
Watching me.

LIEUTENANT
Watching us.

Pause.
CAPTAIN
Thank you. Perhaps at some point in the future, you and I can spend a social evening together. In the city. Find some attractive women. The women around here are remarkable ugly.

LIEUTENANT
And remarkably stubborn.

The Lieutenant laughs at his own joke. The Captain smiles.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
Finally, there’s no reasoning with them. That crazy old woman.

CAPTAIN
Oh, I’ll reason with her. I will show her how irresistibly persuasive reason can be. I’ll break her fucking back.

LIEUTENANT
I’ll go and get her.

The Lieutenant turns and starts to talk out of the office.

CAPTAIN
And pick up her grandson while you’re at it.

The Lieutenant looks at the Captain, slightly confused.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
If you’d rather not do the boy, I can send Emmanuel.

LIEUTENANT
That’s considerate of you, Captain.

CAPTAIN
It’s nothing. My mother was a special type of woman. She taught me to always be my brothers keeper.

LIEUTENANT
So did mine.

The Captain nods, and the Lieutenant turns and walks away. The Captain turns to the window and watches the smoke fill the air.

CUT TO:
EXT. FUENTES HOME - YARD

The yard is strewn with the family’s belongings. Clothes, furniture. Fidelia sits amongst the rubble. Alonso sits on the steps of the house, holding the baby.

Yanina

Stands from her squatting position. She walks to Alonso, and takes the baby gently. Alonso begins to cry quietly. Yanina walks with the baby to the middle of the yard.

Alexandra

Stumbles in, breathing heavily. Her hair is wild, and her face is bloody and bruised. Her clothes are ripped. She sits down.

    ALEXANDRA
    I’ll never see him again.

    YANINA
    Don’t say that. He’s too smart for them.

Yanina turns to Fidelia

    YANINA (CONT’D)
    Fidelia?

Fidelia doesn’t move.

    ALEXANDRA
    Fidelia. Yani’s talking to you.

    YANINA
    Take your uncle inside Fidelia. He needs to go inside.

Fidelia stands up. She exchanges a look with Alexandra. She walks to Alonso, takes his hand and leads him inside the house.

    YANINA (CONT’D)
    You’re a mess

    ALEXANDRA
    Is the baby alright?

    YANINA
    Smiling. You’ll get him back. We’ll cooperate. They’ll bring him back. They wouldn’t hurt him, he’s just a boy.

Alonso walks back outside.
ALONSO
Yanina?

Yanina walks to Alonso, and takes his hand. She turns to Alexandra.

YANINA
All night he thrashes and he cries. His beautiful back is just scars now. Who are the men who did this to you? Do you see their faces in your dreams? When will they pay for your scarring? I want to go into your dreams and drag those men out from the dark into the daylight. I feel nothing but rage anymore. I think it will kill me.

Fidelia walks in, standing in the door frame.

ALEXANDRA
When they took Emiliano away, I thought if I keep quiet and still they won’t hurt him and he’ll come back. Someday, safely. They made me dance their steps every day ever since. Quiet and still, we all thought that. But there’s always someone else they can take from us. I want my boy back safe. We have to say an end to this. Finally. Finally an end. They have to give us what’s outs. Living, dead, give us the men back. And if the men are murdered then give us their murderers. It’s justice. It’s what we deserve.

YANINA
Alonso, I’m going down to be with the women at the river.

ALONSO
Yani.

YANINA
If there was time, I could heal this. But there’s no time now.
(To FIDELIA)
Take the baby.

Yanina walks up to Fidelia, and hands her the baby. Yanina walks to a chair in the yard, picks it up, and begins to walk away.
FIDELIA
Mama?

ALEXANDRA
I’m going too.

FIDELIA
I want to go with you.

ALEXANDRA
Someone has the watch the baby.

FIDELIA
Alonso can do that.

ALEXANDRA
No. I don’t think Alonso can.

FIDELIA
It’s not my baby. I don’t know what to do with him. What if he gets upset?

ALEXANDRA
Feed him.

FIDELIA
If there’s no food?

ALEXANDRA
Talk to him. Tell him stories.

FIDELIA
Mama, please don’t go.

ALEXANDRA
Carry me with you. Be a home for me.

Alexandra picks up the last chair.

ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)
I am your mother.

Alexandra and Yanina put their arms on each others shoulders and walk towards the river. Fidelia watches them leave.

CUT TO:

INT. CELL

The cell is dark, except for a spot of moonlight.

The Captain
Stands in the moonlight, the left side of his face lit up by the moonlight.

Emmanuel

Stands by the door, barely visible.

Sofia

Is standing still, in front of the CAPTAIN. She’s wearing handcuffs on her feet, and they’re chained to the floor. She stares at the wall.

CAPTAIN
Talk. Talk, you old savage. You think this is heroic? You think anyone even knows this is happening? I’ll load your body and their bodies onto the back of a wagon and dump you deep into a pit somewhere, and after the quicklime and the dirt, that’s all, that’s it, that’s all that it will be. Just nothing. End it. You can. End it, or I’ll end it.

The Captain turns to Emmanuel.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Lights, god damn it. Do you think I’m a fucking bat?

Emmanuel turns the light on. The Captain and Emmanuel blink, adjusting their eyes to it.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(to EMMANUEL)
Bring in the boy.

Sofia turns to look at the Captain.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Ahh, she moves.

Emmanuel exits the cell, then walks back in, dragging Alexis. His hands are tied behind him. He has a stained hood over his head. His shirt is ripped and bloody. His right shoulder is stained with blood. His pants are stained with urine.

SOFIA
He’s a boy.

CAPTAIN
He’s a man. This is as big as he gets.
The Captain clamps his hand on Alexis’ right shoulder. Alexis almost screams.

SOFIA
He can’t help you.

CAPTAIN
But he’s already got you talking. He’s almost a miracle, this boy.

Pause.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
Send the women to their homes. Cooperate or he’ll go off into the darkest corner of the most godforsaken hell hole prison. Sure as there’s a God in heaven he will. You hear me? You will never see this boy again. You hear me? We will hurt him.

ALEXIS
Grandma?

SOFIA
Captain, do you have children? Captain? A favour, in the name of your children. I need a few minutes with him alone. To say goodbye.

Pause.

CAPTAIN
Jesus. You’re insane. This boy’s alive and you can keep him alive. Just feel.

The Captain grabs Sofia’s hand, forcing it to Alexis’ chest, over his heart.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
He’s alive. Feel his heart?

Sofia keeps her hand on his heart. The Captain slaps her hand away.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
What do I have to do to get you to go to the river?

SOFIA
We want the men to come home. All of them. You took them living, we want them back living. If they’re dead, we want to bury them.
CAPTAIN
But I offered you that.

SOFIA
And after that, we want the killers punished. This is what we all want. All of us. By the river.

Pause.

CAPTAIN
You know what the tragedy of this country is? That it doesn’t have to be dry and barren. It’s waiting to blossom, it wants to be green. But no one understands that you move forward in steps, not all at once. If you ask for too much, you wind up with nothing but dust. This boy could learn to read. He could vote, he could become something good for his country. He could do that. His pain, his ugly death is your dream for him, not mine.

The Captain unholsters his gun, and points it at the back of Alexis’ head. He presses the barrel against his head.

CAPTAIN (CONT’D)
Ask her to save your life. Ask her. Now!

The Captain rips off the hood. Alexis closes his eyes.

ALEXIS
Grandma.

SOFIA
A few minutes. Please.

CAPTAIN
What do I get if I give you that?

SOFIA
Maybe some peace. You’ll need it. Later. Peace.

CAPTAIN
I’m not granting any more requests. You have nothing to say to him anyway.

The Captain cocks the trigger, the sound echoes through the hallway.
SOFIA
Can I touch him?

CAPTAIN
What for?

SOFIA
Please?

Pause.

CAPTAIN
You tire me, woman.

The Captain nods his head. Sofia shuffles towards Alexis, touching his heart again. The Captain steps back, and watches them talking from the back of the cell.

SOFIA
Can you hear me?

ALEXIS
Yes.

SOFIA
They can’t hear us, my little man. I can’t protect you, my baby.
Do you understand why?

ALEXIS
No.

SOFIA
Do you forgive me?

ALEXIS
Yes.

SOFIA
I have something to tell you. There are villages of the living and villages of the dead, surrounding us always. Press up against the wall. Behind you. There’s a hand in the stone. Reach for it, hold it.

ALEXIS
I’m scared.

SOFIA
Yes, yes, the hand is there. Do you feel it?

ALEXIS
I don’t feel anything.
SOFIA
It’s your father. You know his hand.

ALEXIS
Yes.

SOFIA
It’s a strong hand. It’s so gentle for you. So you can be brave. For the one who comes after you, for the ones who come after. People like us don’t die. We will be there in the stones of the wall. You and I and many others. We will be there together. My little man, my baby. Until the walls come crashing down.

The Captain steps forward, taking her hand from Alexis’ chest. He looks at SOFIA.

CAPTAIN
God forgive you. God forgive us all.

The light bulb blinks out, covering the room in darkness. Two gunshots ring out. Bodies are heard hitting the floor. Someone exhales loudly.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER

The women all stand in a group at the river. Fidelia watches the scene from afar. She holds the baby.

FIDELIA
You must learn how to talk. You’ll need to talk. There are things you’ll have to tell. But if you decide never to speak, your stories will get told anyway. There are stories that cry out to be told and if the words aren’t there, they will seep through the skin. The wind carries them, the smoke does, the river does, the words of the story will find their way. From the farthest, loneliest places, to places where there are people willing to hear. I can wait. I can wait for you to speak. I’m patient. I can wait a long time.
The soldiers gather by the river, led by the Lieutenant. They all carry rifles. The Captain and Emmanuel arrive.

CAPTAIN
(to the Lieutenant)
This country’s hopeless. They’ll have to depopulate it, the whole country and bring in other people, people from outside. People with some other kind of mind.

The Captain turns to the women.

LIEUTENANT
Perhaps you’d rather I gave the order, sir?

CAPTAIN
I can do that.

The soldiers grab their rifles, and aim them at the group of women.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Women, this is your last chance. Go back to your homes. Obey, or I will signal my men to move you. They will use as much force as is necessary.

The women stand firm. The Captain looks at them. He doesn’t break his gaze.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Men, I want the riverbank cleared.

From the sky, a loud cry from a bird is heard overhead. Everyone raises their heads to the sky. Then back down, as the river becomes more and more audible.

CUT TO:

BLACK

The sound of rifle gunshots rings out, then bodies falling.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER

The soldiers stand around, talking to each other. Emmanuel and the Lieutenant are sharing a drink. The Captain stares at the bodies. They’re piled up on top of each other. The wind starts to blow.
Teresa

Her lifeless eyes stare out. Her hair is blown over her face, hanging there, blowing softly in the wind. Blood slowly runs down the hair, and drops onto the ground.

FADE OUT.

CREDITS