

Widows
by
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Based on Widows, the play by Ariel Dorfman

FADE IN:

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)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

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 it's 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 out 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 and end.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER

Sofia sits a 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)

YANINA (CONT'D)

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

Full of advice, criticizing everyone. But she hasn't worked in a month. Give some advice Sofia. Act your age.

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 tires 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 in 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 son 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)

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

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 crowd 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 thread, 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)

ROSA (CONT'D)

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)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

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)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
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.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
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 subjects
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 it's 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 is 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)

SOFIA (CONT'D)

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 kneels 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)

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

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)

SOFIA (CONT'D)

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 faraway 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 grace.

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

Husband. Brother. Husband.
Father. Son. Nephew. Son. Son.
Lover. Husband. Husband. Uncle.
Husband. So which woman's claim is...

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)

TERESA (CONT'D)

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 do 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 indifferently 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)

See? Nothing. It's river trash.
See? Scared the shit out of me.
Stupid woman.

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

Walks into the room.

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

Yani. Alonso's tired. Feed him.
Put him to bed.

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)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

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.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

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.

The Narrator picks up his jacket from the chair, and starts to put it on.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

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.

The Narrator rubs his eyes, tired.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

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 ours. 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. Co-
operate or he'll go off into the
darkest corner of the most god
forsaken 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