

SANTOS & SANTOS

A play in three acts

By

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Act 1

(A darkened room. A long polished conference table. TOMAS enters.)

TOMAS

Mi padre. Don Miguel Santos Carrillo. From the town of Concordia in the State of Sinaloa, Mexico. Known for its finely crafted furniture. A craft he smuggled across hundreds of miles to El Paso. Santos Furniture Emporium.

(An old man appears, polishing the table with a rag.)

DON MIGUEL

The grain of the wood pulses toward the north.

TOMAS

His old tattoo of a heart torn at the valves glistens on his sweaty arm.

DON MIGUEL

Mijo...

Coming back. My home. In this man, all the needs of earth.

DON MIGUEL

Use only one thing, from this moment on and forever till the stars cave in and the rivers dry and the land refuses any seed. Use only this and nothing else, *mijo*.

TOMAS

¿Que, papa?

DON MIGUEL

Lemon pledge.

(MIKE and FERNIE crash through the darkness and thrust TOMAS on the table as DON MIGUEL fades.)

MIKE

Grab his legs! Grab him!

FERNIE

FERNIE
(showing the retractable blade)

Relajate, hombre. It's a toy knife.

MIKE

Welcome to the firm, Tommy.

FERNIE

Check it out! Santos & Santos!

TOMAS

What was that you made me drink?

FERNIE

The worm.

MIKE

Mescal was his idea.

TOMAS

Ugghhh! I'm gonna be sick.

FERNIE

Hey, Tomas, a Santos ain't a Santos till he chomp on the worm. One of the bylaws, man, in the charter of our firm, I shit you not!

TOMAS

Damn, you *vatos* never change. You been keeping your edge.

MIKE

Just for you, bro. YOU the biggest priority in this firm.

FERNIE

That's right, *carnal*, we gonna show you the works!

TOMAS

[And they do. Papa, every inch of the premises, proud and corporate, clean and professional and dripping with efficiency]

MIKE

My office.

FERNIE

My *pinchi* office.

MIKE

Yours over here.

FERNIE

Conference room.

MIKE
John.

FERNIE
Copier, toner on that shelf.

MIKE
Fax machine.

(PAM enters, file in hand.)

PAM
Sign, Mike.

FERNIE
Orale! Pam! Tomas, his is the lady I was telling you about.

TOMAS
Hi, My name's Tommy. I'm the new blood here.

PAM
Don't go spilling it on me, junior.

FERNIE
Listen up. Pamela types 80 words a minute, knows Wordperfect 6-1, does filework something fierce. Great voice on the phone, great public manner, great fucking legs. She's really good.

PAM
Your brother's a slime.

TOMAS
I know.

FERNIE
She used to work the tables in Vegas. Card shooter from the Sands.

TOMAS
So why'd you wanna come work for these losers?

PAM
I needed to get away from that shit for awhile.

FERNIE
She's a pro, Tommy. You'll like her.

TOMAS
Those 80 words a minute are gonna double once I get started. Time and a half gonna be your middle name.

PAM

I think it's time we talked raise, Mike.

(PAM goes.)

FERNIE

I'm gonna bone that babe!

MIKE

Let's hit the road!

TOMAS

Is this your Lexus?

FERNIE

Hop in!

TOMAS

[and to the town of my birth, the sun city, pass of the north]

MIKE

Your pueblo, bro!

FERNIE

El Chuco!

TOMAS

Things haven't changed a bit!

MIKE

These are your people!

FERNIE

Your lowrider babes!

TOMAS

Man, I been missing this bad!

MIKE

They been missin' you!

TOMAS

HEY! HAVE YOU BEEN INJURED AT WORK OR IN AN AOUTO ACCIDENT? WERE YOU HURT IN AN ON-THE-JOB MISHAP? YOU'RE ENTITLED TO COMPENSATION! NO RECOVERY NO FEE! CALL NOW!

FERNIE

GOOD CREDIT, BAD CREDIT, NO CREDIT! *SE HABLA ESPANOL!*

MIKE

Gird your loins for the Big Time!

TOMAS

El Paso County Courthouse!

FERNIE

Now we do business!

TOMAS

Let's boogie.

(MIKE and FERNIE split off to separate areas.)

MIKE

On behalf of my client I am requesting that the charges be reduced to a single charge of fiduciary irresponsibility considering the reparations which my client has already initiated to the plaintiff.

FERNIE

As these diagrams indicate, the bullet's point of entry was in the upper abdomen, but the exit wound was above the left nipple which deems it impossible for my client to have fired the alleged shots.

TOMAS

[*Santos y Santos. Los Carnales de Criminal Defense. Hustling for the raza, taking a stand for the community.*]

MIKE

At what time was this warrant obtained? Did you not present this warrant 6 hours after the search and seizure of Mr. Saucedo's property? Did the magistrate know the search was being illegally conducted?

FERNIE

These depositions contradict the witness' prior testimony, which not only proves that the City Attorney is not above using perjured testimony but also clears Sr. Garza of any wrongdoing in the case.

TOMAS

[This was it. The vision that drew me back. No more Thomas B. Santos esq., the prodigal son in Son Diego, at the District Attorney's desk, prosecuting my race according to an alien penal code. Now it was Tomas Santos, the People's Defender, the new blood.]

MIKE/FERNIE

We believe our clients are guilty of no crime but the crime of Mexican descent, and that, your honor, ain't no crime at all.

TOMAS

God, I love watching you guys in action.

MIKE

I gotta meeting.

(He goes.)

FERNIE

Here. Potential clients. Meet Pam at the Law Library. 11 sharp.

(FERNIE goes as PAM enters.)

PAM

Glad you could make it. You look up those cases, I'll take these. Hurry, you gotta be back at the court by one for Mike's wife.

TOMAS

Nena?

(PAM goes as NENA enters.)

NENA

Hey, pretty boy! Good to see your ass! Everyone was asking about you at Papa Santos' funeral. Toma, my man forgot these depos in the *pinchi* day care. Make sure he gets them.

TOMAS

You look fabulous!

NENA

I know.

(NENA goes as FERNIE and MIKE return.)

MIKE

Two o'clock. We gotta date, fellas. In the car.

TOMAS

[And drive, past the same storefronts, the same car lots, the same squalor, to El Paso Evergreen Cemetery.]

(They halt. TOMAS slowly comes to his knees as his brothers regard him.)

[Santo, santo, santo, *padre todopodrigo*, dead, buried, boxed in Concordia wood, put to rest on American soil, next to my mother, two slabs who begot me, two slabs inscribed with names, dates, recriminations. How do you ask the dead for peace?]

FERNIE

Mike, let's call it a day and head back to the office.

MIKE

We're there, bro.

(They are. Conference table.)

TOMAS

I felt him, Mike. I asked him to forgive me all my sins against my people, and I felt his mercy. This is what the courts are missing. That's why none of us really believes we can get a fair trial. But if we could just apply the truth of the people to the people, then, *vatos*, we got it made!

MIKE

Oh fuck. Are you talking about doing Pro Bono work?

(CAMACHO comes in, carrying a gym bag.)

CAMACHO

Yo. Mike.

MIKE

Come on in, C. Tomas, you remember Camacho, don't you?

TOMAS

Camacho. I thought you were dead.

CAMACHO

Hey.

FERNIE

C helps us with deliveries, courier shit. He bends over backwards, this guy.

CAMACHO

Naw.

FERNIE

He does. The only one left from the old days. Brass knuckles and pop guns, right, ese?

CAMACHO

Damn.

TOMAS

Are you still a man of few words, C?

CAMACHO

Naw.

MIKE

Oye, we just got the news. *Este chignon* is joining our firm.

CAMACHO

Great. Party.

TOMAS

What you got in the gym bag, C?

In here?
CAMACHO

In there?
FERNIE

What's in the bag, C?
TOMAS

Nothin'.
CAMACHO

Nada, Bro.
FERNIE

I asked you to quit this shit for me. You told me you would.
TOMAS

It's not that easy, Tommy.
FERNIE

I locked up and extradited to Mexico hundreds of men, some of them hardly men at all, for dealing in this kinda shit. It sickens me. I can't deal with it anymore.
TOMAS

Okay. C, open it.
MIKE

(CAMACHO places the gym bag on the table, gingerly unwrapping a small bundle.)

Sweet bread.
CAMACHO

Mrs. Herrera. Shot got a boy, only 16. Busted for drunk driving. Gave the cop attitude. Was gonna go from Juvee to jail. Only Mike and Fernie cut a deal, sent him home sober. Old lady got no money, but she makes her own bread.

Okay. So I was wrong. Sorry, C.
TOMAS

This is your homecoming, Tommy. We don't want to mess it up.
MIKE

What's the deal anyway? A little coke, a little weed, among friends, this is America, for crying out loud.
FERNIE

TOMAS

[That's right, Papa. Crying out loud. America crying out loud in my head, bouncing off the prison walls, *se habla español, se habla tattoo*, at the top of their lungs, crying for vindication, they want something pure, just, good, sweet, like sweet bread, the Modern Mexican is not a Mexican at all, he's an American, for crying out loud.]

(PAM comes in with the same painting as before.)

PAM

Here you go, new boy.

TOMAS

What's this?

FERNIE

Your present! Straight from Vegas! Flight babe almost broke it on the way. *Ten*, carnal, with all our bitchen love.

MIKE

May you win many judgments.

(A velvet painting of Zapata on his white horse.)

TOMAS

Nice. I guess.

FERNIE

It's supposed to be Zapata, man, but don't you think he looks more like me?

TOMAS

He sure don't look like Zapata.

FERNIE

Calmantos montes, bro. You're missing the horse, ese. Zapata's famous horse.

(FERNIE smears a wet finger on the horse. Tastes it.)

Party.

TOMAS

Cocaine?

PAM

No, baking soda.

CAMACHO

Cool.

FERNIE

This artist pal in Taos ships it round the world like this! He used to get high with Dennis Hopper. Ride this pony, *cabrones!*.

TOMAS

I thought you said- -

FERNIE

It's just a bag gift, *ese!* ¡*Andale! Nomas una linea.*

MIKE

We gotta be straight for the LULAC presentation, Negro.

FERNIE

You are such pussies!

MIKE

Pam. Go through the book and find a shop that'll fit this man with an Armani by seven o'clock this evening.

PAM

Right away.

(She goes.)

Ouch! You see the ass on that babe? Aww, I'm gonna bone her, you watch! She's been fighting me off too long. Time I boned her.

MIKE

Case you haven't heard, Fernie fucks all the secretaries.

TOMAS

What does Vicky think of this?

FERNIE

You watch. I'll bone her, I swear to you, the chick is mine!

CAMACHO

Cut it out, Fernie. *Pasiguate.*

FERNIE

Hey, C, you just keep an eye on Vicky and everything'll be cool.

MIKE

Enough of this. Party's waitin'.

TOMAS

Mike, I have to tell you guys about this idea- -

FERNIE

Just a fucking minute! We got Toltec cocainatl here bearing the seal of the Santos Family for our new partner. Is this gesture going to be ignored and thereby dissed?

MIKE

Tomas?

TOMAS

(Slowly approaching the line)

[A thin white scar on the table, my father's table, his memory, the sentence of all my suspects, powdered like sweet bread, symbols in search of symbols on the fine grain of the wood facing north, where all good things are, the best homes, the best clothes, the best laws, the best jails, the best kind of death, plunging downward, downward, falling toward heaven, oh what the hell, just once, just for them, my brothers, my family, *mi raza*.]

(TOMAS snorts up the line.)

TOMAS

Let's go buy me a Lexus!

FERNIE

Damn straight!

CAMACHO

Fuckin' A!

MIKE

You are blood!

(They begin undressing him as PAM comes on carrying a new Suit. JUDGE BENTON enters as they dress TOMAS, orating at the banquet.)

JUDGE

These boys, these boys, these incorrigible boys. Proud first generation American scions of an immigrant cabinet maker, an importer of furniture, the brothers of the Law Firm of Santos & Santos
blah blah blah blah

blah

blah

blah blood stewing on my tongue for lying for Miguel and Fernando stinkos, two of

the most

invidious,

corrupt,

treacherous,

racketeering

by god the finest attorneys in this state's legal fandangos. In a few short years they have made their firm among the most honored blah blah

blah

blah

blasphemy that's what this is but for politics' sake the show must go on but whoa whoa doggie, this boy, this new one, I know from san diego, good son, good skin, good eyes, indeed a santo to behold, but my tribute diarrhears its ugly head again

again

again I say these turks have won many admirable and deserving judgments at the highest level of the Texas court, and even in my docket, they have a spectacular reputation for success blah

blah

blah

black eyes black hair this Thomas has a whorson look to him, abandonment, a look which judges me, by what right, no right, i'm a good man, i love my wife and daughter, i stand by the immutable laws of this land, i'm a populist, i voted for lbj, i'm an intellectual, i voted for Nixon, but this young man has a mission but

but

but it's in the community that they have distinguished themselves, providing scholarships to high school students blah blah blah

blah

blandly how he looks at me, like all Mexicans look, with dull opaque eyes into my heart, where a fear is beshat and a deep anathema, sing the national anathema, jose can you see, from the halls of Montezuma, we will fight and be free

free

free free law clinics at the community college, substantial in-kind services to needy groups blah

blah

blah

set an example for all people in the Sun City blah blah

blah blah

blah

latino constituents blah blah blah

blast this golden litigator who cannot transcend the political reality which is to suck up to this mob for the cameras which is to testify on behalf of these scalawags which is to sit upon my bench till the president appoints me to the supremes, where I will shimmy to the constitution shakedown, political reality is neither political nor real, but this santos runt, this beautiful boy, he pierces my soul with a message deep dark and

bla-

blah

blah

blah

My great privilege to present this plaque to Miguel and Fernando

Santos, Attorneys at Law, on behalf of the El Paso LULAC Council. For exemplary service to the community.

(Applause. MIKE and FERNIE receive the plaque. TOMAS, now in his suit, watches with interest.)

MIKE

Thank you, sir. I count that tribute our greatest victory.

FERNIE

Hustle, Mike. Chimichanga's getting cold

MIKE

Let me announce that our law firm is presenting a charitable contribution to the LULAC Council in the amount of \$20,000.00

(Applause. MIKE gives the check to the JUDGE, who receives it with a smile.)

JUDGE

Then by God, LET'S EAT.

(MUSIC. Lights change. On another area, TOMAS stands in the parking lot. FERNIE dashes over to him.)

FERNIE

Que paso, bro. My wife here yet?

TOMAS

I've seen three Beemers, none hers. Where's Nena?

FERNIE

Bathroom. She's not feeling good. *Alomejor* es un *pinchi* flu.

TOMAS

Negro, what the hell is Benton doing here? You guys are supposed to be mortal enemies.

FERNIE

Times are changing, bro. The word is this overfed country club judge is heading for the Big Court.

TOMAS

No way. Benton? Supreme Court? He's too far to the right for it.

FERNIE

Not anymore. He's sending his valentines to all minority PACs in the state. He wants to shine in the Congressional Record. What the fuck, it's putting us in the Bar Journal. Yo, here they come. Listen. Tomorrow we're all going to Vegas to celebrate your recruitment, and I'm gonna bring Pam along. If Vicky asks, we're just us three going, okay?

(CAMACHO and VICKY enter.)

Hey, buttheads, you're too late. It's over. Food's cold.

CAMACHO

Sorry, Fern.

FERNIE

No problem, it's only a dinner in my fucking honor.

VICKY

Don't yell at me, Negro. It's been a bad day.

FERNIE

Whoa. Pardon me, Princess. What's the excuse this time?

VICKY

I was on the phone.

FERNIE

Who with, one of your boyfriends?

VICKY

No, one of your girlfriends, Fernando. She called because she wants to know how serious we are about each other.

FERNIE

You're out of your mind.

VICKY

I told her we made vows before God and the priest and everybody, but they're negotiable. Everything's negotiable, baby.

CAMACHO

Sorry, Fernie.

FERNIE

I can't believe you listen to those pendejas. You poison yourself with their shit.

VICKY

Makes you think, though, don't it?

FERNIE

Great attitude. Great. Here. Say hello to my brother.

TOMAS

How you doing, Vicky?

VICKY

Tommy. How was your flight down?

TOMAS

A little bumpy. You still in charge of the furniture store?

VICKY

My ball and chain. Sorry I'm all...

TOMAS

I understand.

CAMACHO

Sorry, Fernie.

FERNIE

(as NENA enters, looking a bit queasy)

Will you quit saying you're sorry, goddammit. This is a happy occasion. Here comes Nena! NENA! Hey, *cuñada*, nauseous from the nachos?

NENA

¡Oye, oye, oye! Mira este. I'm fine. Something in the food just took a detour.

FERNIE

They don't put enough *chile* in it. Bland motherfucking shit.

CAMACHO

Hi, Nena.

NENA

Macho Camacho. Glad you made it, Vicky. We wondered about you.

VICKY

I don't like schmoozing. Looks like I missed it, anyway.

NENA

Pero ahora sigue el pisto. You get to drink with those old *pelados* who look down your blouse. Take my advice, just smile, nod, ask them about their wives every now and then *y diles* to vote Democrat. *Ven con nosotros adentro.*

FERNIE

Hey, before I forget, ladies, we're off to Las Vegas tomorrow morning, Mike bought the tickets, we gonna hang for a couple.

NENA

¿Otra vez?

TOMAS

I just found out myself.

VICKYT

Can I come?

FERNIE

He only got three tickets. It's a brother thing. We're gonna show this guy a good time. C here'll take care of you.

VICKY

Yeah. The sprayhead.

FERNIE

Hey! Watch your mouth!--

TOMAS

YA! (Silence.) You know where our father comes from? Concordia. Concord. Agreement. Getting along, let's get along, let's have some beer and let's agree.

NENA

Let 'em go, Vicky. It'll be good to get the testosterone out of the house. *Nomas dile a Miguel* to bring back something nice for the girls. Some dolls and shit.

FERNIE

C'mon. (to VICKY) You learn some respect.

(NENA and FERNIE go.)

CAMACHO

You want me to bring you a plate?

VICKY

No, listen, why don't you go and help yourself? I'm not so hungry. Go on.

(CAMACHO goes. VICKY opens her purse and produces a vial. She sniffs a tiny spoonful.)

Fucking Negro. Like I don't know what he's up to. Like I'm some idiot. You want a hit?

TOMAS

I'll pass.

VICKY

Who's he taking with him?

TOMAS

Nobody.

VICKY

Fine, don't tell me. God forbid I should make you rat on your brothers. I got my ways of dealing with him.

TOMAS

Are you going to stay out here?

(VICKY nods and turns away.)

VICKY

[linger

TOMAS

we linger

VICKY

longing

TOMAS

to want her back

VICKY

my back to him I feel

TOMAS

I feel I hurt I misgive

VICKY

misgive the memory gone so cold]

TOMAS

Vicky, about the past—

VICKY

I got no past. All I got is Santos Furniture Emporium and (showing him the vial) this.

TOMAS

You don't remember us?

VICKY

[no recall no goodbye something
kissed something bland
halfhearted something halfsaid
an older brother's comfort
his fire his ring his wife]

TOMAS

[purely her even now]

VICKY

Why'd you come back, Tommy? Now, out of the clear blue...

TOMAS

I couldn't bear San Diego. The cases I kept getting. Luna, Franco, Ramirez, Pedrazo, they just kept coming at me like flyweight boxers. Swollen Indian faces fulla guilt.

VICKY

[We're all guilty, *concordia* to *discordia*, our faces, riven wide, eyes full of whatever happens happens]

(The JUDGE enters and watches, unseen by them.)

TOMAS

The day Dad passed away, I was cross-examining an old guy, an illegal. He was crying because his son had died in a chase for both of them at the border. They'd come across at night and when *La Migra* chased them, the son ran off a cliff, all the way down, plunging like the peso, to the lad of his salvation. The old guy blamed himself...I couldn't help thinking of Papa, dying without me at his side.

VICKY

Well, he's gone and you're here. What do you think you can accomplish now?

TOMAS

Something inside, Vicky, there's a seed of something...right.

VICKY

What is it?

TOMAS

It's wild. I can't even say.

JUDGE

Try.

Who's there?
TOMAS

(He comes forward.)

Try to say.
JUDGE

Let's go inside, Tommy.
VICKY

I'd like to have a word with you, son.
JUDGE

We're not interested.
VICKY

Please stay.
JUDGE

Go on, Vicky. Save me a plate.
TOMAS

(VICKY goes. TOMAS and the JUDGE regard each other.)

I am William Louis Benton.
JUDGE

I know who you are, sir. Why aren't you inside eating?
TOMAS

I don't like Mexican. It corrupts my digestion. Tomas Santos, you have something to tell me.
JUDGE

Do I?
TOMAS

I felt the cataclysm in you, during my speech. Tell it to me, son.
JUDGE

Nothing to tell.
TOMAS

(The JUDGE turns his gaze out toward the horizon.)

That's Ciudad Juarez over there, isn't it? That country puts the fear of God in me. They have a whole different concept of the Law. I went there once, to La Mariscal. A dingy little street lined up with painted prostitutes.
JUDGE

TOMAS

I know it.

JUDGE

I met the only whore I ever knew that night. Paloma. A pretty young thing, blessed with what I call the eyes of mercy. I saw her on several occasions until one day I looked into her and I saw a fire burst through her eyes. She told me we were conceiving my child. A boy. That's when I stopped going to La Mariscal.

TOMAS

What's that got to do with me?

JUDGE

Nothing, maybe. But you and me are of one heart. I know your terror. Your vision.

TOMAS

You do?

JUDGE

I've felt it, like in Paloma. Tell me your cataclysm.

TOMAS

I'm not sure...

JUDGE

I believe in you.

TOMAS

Don't get me wrong. I love my people.

JUDGE

By god, I love them too

TOMAS

It is not our fault

JUDGE

no way

TOMAS

It's a cycle

We've bread ourselves to live

JUDGE

Vicious cycle

TOMAS

American cycle: birth, arrest,

arraignment, hearing, conviction, death

JUDGE

sauce

Lubricated by tears and pace picante

TOMAS

the bill of rights stays on the right

JUDGE

and the constitution ain't bilingual

TOMAS

three-headed freaks of nature We're bastards of the Law, your honor, illegitimate

JUDGE

full of you

jails and jokes are

TOMAS

but on his arm, my father had a tattoo emblazoned like a sign

JUDGE

that's right, boy, a sign

TOMAS

sign, a symbol, we respond to symbols, they invigorate us, they purge and guide us, they give us hope and meaning that's what we need, a

JUDGE

this country was built on abstractions, on concepts you and me can't see, touch, taste, fuck, or light candles to

TOMAS

justice, not this nameless lady with the blind and scales we need a symbol for

JUDGE

Impeach her, by god

TOMAS

put a brilliant corona around her give her a name, paint her in bright red and green, give her terra cotta skin, and

JUDGE

a whole six-pack of coronas

TOMAS

Tear the blind off so we can see her gleaming eyes

JUDGE

one blue one brown and make the book she holds a bowl of cornmeal

TOMAS

Because corn is universal and you can't eat a fucking book

JUDGE

A new vision of justice

TOMAS

LA VIRGEN DE JUSTICIA

JUDGE

Appointed by the people for a drug-free America

TOMAS

our sierra madre oriental

JUDGE

lactating blood for the masses

TOMAS

La leche de human blindness

JUDGE

boundless to all races

TOMAS

ROPA PARA TODA LA FAMILIA

JUDGE

MOLE WITH YOUR METHADONE

TOMAS

DUTY-FREE GOODS

JUDGE

FREE-TRADE AGREEMENTS

TOMAS

AND ALL THE REHAB PROGRAMS, THE CITIZEN PATROLS, THE INTERDICTION AND STIFF SENTENCING, THE DEATH PENALTIES WILL BE OBSOLETE

JUDGE

DRUG-TURF CRIME WILL VANISH ACROSS THE COUNTRY

TOMAS

AND THE RACE OF MONTEZUMA WILL AT LAST ACHIEVE FULL CITIZENSHIP

JUDGE

YES YES YESSSSSS

TOMAS

DON'T GET ME WRONG I LOVE MY PEOPLE

JUDGE

IT SHOWS IN EVERY FIBER OF YOUR BEING

(Pause. They catch their breath.)

JUDGE

Come work for me.

TOMAS

I'm with Santos & Santos.

JUDGE

You can't mean what you say and still be with your brothers. Not the way they live.

TOMAS

My brothers are good.

JUDGE

You're the only good son, Tomas. Those two are working cheek-by-jowl with known traffickers, horse-tradin' them back to the streets where they can spread their gospel. You want your symbol defiled like that?

(He starts to leave.)

Paloma is my symbol. And you, boy, you have her eyes.

(He goes.)

TOMAS

[He knows my cataclysm, Papa.]

(Inside the firm. PAM enters with a sheaf of papers.)

PAM

These are for your Federal Income Tax form, these are Bar membership, and these are for your health insurance. Press down hard. There are four copies.

(TOMAS takes them. MIKE and FERNIE, already dressed for Vegas, ferret through the documents.)

Sign these depositions, Mike. They're proofed, copied, and ready to go.

MIKE

Thanks, Pam.

PAM

You got a call from the Natural Gas Company re that pipeline agreement. And Mrs. Herrera is sending over some more bread. Fernando, the DA's been calling for you all morning.

FERNIE

Oh, yeah. Frank. We had a golf date.

PAM

The Vegas tickets. You're on American 662 at 2:35. First class.

FERNIE

Hey, Pamela, you wanna come with?

PAM

Sorry. Got loads to do here.

MIKE

Did you have a good time last night, *carnal*?

TOMAS

Great.

FERNIE

What a blowout, man. Really took off once we lost those fat city council fucks. (laughs)

PAM

Was that the mayor who kept coming on to me?

MIKE

He was drunk out of his skull. Tommy, Vicky said you and Benton had a talk last night.

TOMAS

We shot the shit.

MIKE

What did you have to say to each other?

TOMAS

Academic stuff, mainly. They guy was required reading at Stanford.

(CAMACHO enters, with the gym bag.)

MIKE

Watch yourself around him. He doesn't appreciate the work we do.

FERNIE

He's a fucking racist!

MIKE

Before his immaculate conversion, he was for tightening up the border between here and Baja Tejas. He wanted radar balloons and armed surveillance of the *rio*.

CAMACHO

¿El juez?

MIKE

Yeah. Got the bread?

CAMACHO

Right here.

MIKE

Then let's go roll the bones.

(They start to go.)

TOMAS

Hermanos. (They stop.) I want us to be honest with each other.

FERNIE

What are you talking about?

TOMAS

Are we still dealing? If we are, I wanna know.

FERNIE

Negro, shut the fuck up. C?

CAMACHO opens the gym bag and carefully extracts a stack of bills and a small bag of coke.)

CAMACHO

Sweet bread.

FERNIE

Mother of God!

CAMACHO

Plane landed last night. Presidio. Totally legit. Stashed in the horse trailer for pick-up tomorrow.

MIKE

And the bread?

CAMACHO

Very fresh.

FERNIE

Fuckin' A!

PAM

Winner's circle, boys. Two and a half mil.

FERNIE

600 pounds. Wall to wall unprocessed Colombian purity!

MIKE

You see, Tomas, these wops from Vegas want some shit but they think they're too good to mess with the cartels and vice versa.--

PAM

They're all cut from the same cloth—

MIKE

So we negotiate the deal from them. The Colombians ship the goods, the wise guys bring the cash, and no one has to face no-one but us. We make the link-up.

FERNIE

Shit, we're the only ones fluent in both languages.

TOMAS

I don't get it. How in the world did we get mixed up in this shit? You guys are icons. You don't need this.

MIKE

This is how the world works, brother. It's what we do for the good of our bloods and our business. Sure it sucks, but it makes our charity work fly, it's enabled the education of our brothers and sisters, and reinforced our image as positive role models.

FERNIE

We can rise on this crop, *ese*, if the profits are used right. Imagine what harm this could do in the hands of real criminals.

PAM

Most of it gets intercepted by the DEA down the pipeline, anyway.

MIKE

Tomas, this has given us power. Power to help our community. To give them the kind of justice they deserve.

CAMACHO

Sweet bread, Tomas.

FERNIE

Fuck this! C'mon, celebrate! Pam, you and me, Vegas!

PAM

You never give up, do you?

FERNIE

I got a big suite reserved with a round bed.

PAM

Take no for an answer, Fernie.

FERNIE

I'm your type, girl. *Puro indio*. I be yo' bullfighter.

PAM

You might not believe this, but I got better things to do than hang with you in a city I have no heart for.

FERNIE

What's the matter? Don't you like boys?

PAM

As a matter of fact, no. I don't. Have a nice trip.

(She goes. MIKE and CAMACHO laugh.)

FERNIE

Did you hear that? Oh my god! I got a dyke working here! I brought an actual dyke!

CAMACHO

Serves your ass right, Fernie.

MIKE

Sign those papers, Tommy, and let's move.

FERNIE

I don't believe it! She's got a body like that and she's a lesbian! This is terrible! Fire her ass, Mikey!

MIKE

Uh-uh. She stays.

FERNIE

But she's a lesbian, man. You heard her!

MIKE

I'm not losing the only top-shelf secretary we ever had.

CAMACHO

I think that shit's illegal anyway.

FERNIE

All right, keep her. But I say I'm still gonna bone her first chance she gives me. Dyke or no dyke.

MIKE

That's another thing. You are not harassing her while she sits behind that desk. I don't give a shit how hard up you are, you don't say anything, do anything, whatever, that will jeopardize her position in this firm. You try your shit on her, and I'll go to Vicky.

FERNIE

Just a goddamn minute!--

MIKE

I'm not finished, Fernando. Now, I don't like to butt in on your personal life, it's your business and I respect that, but his fucking shit that you're pulling is driving everyone crazy. It's affecting the family and that's no good, man. Go bone whoever you want and hurt your wife in the heart, fine, but keep your paws off my secretary. *¿Me entiendes?*

FERNIE

My wife is my business.

MIKE

And Pamela is my business. *Dejala en paz.* Tommy, mark off Monday next week. You're meeting with the legal staff at EP Savings.

(He passes some documents to FERNIE.)

Here, give these to Pam to send off. They were due yesterday.

FERNIE

Fuck her.

MIKE

What's your problem, Fernie? This is an attitude I detect, then you better let me know. I won't put up with your bullshit.

TOMAS

(Bullshit, pounding in my head, buy into, baby, live in the real, know what is known, deal with, Papa, this table, this firm, this town all boned bought and paid for.)

(PAM enters.)

PAM

Mike, wives are here.

NENA

Okay, *babosos*, this is a raid! The chicks are here to bust up your boy's club.

VICKY

¡Mira nomas! Suitcases! Plane tickets!

NENA

Oye, no-one leaves this pueblo without the *viejas'* permission!

VICKY

Think we're gonna let you guys leave without sayin' goodbye?

NENA

Fuck that shit. It's the money I want. *Orale*, gimme that skin. *¡La cartera!*

MIKE

(handing over his wallet)

We weren't going to forget your ladies.

VICKY

(to FERNIE)

What are you so quiet about?

NENA

Honey, is this all you have in here? Get with the program. It's White Flower Day at Macy's, man!

(FERNIE kisses VICKY fiercely.)

VICKY

Damn, Negro.

FERNIE

I love my wife. I don't give a shit. I love my wife.

VICKY

(kissing him back)

I love you too, babe.

NENA

¿Que paso? Did Fernie lose the house playing poker?

MIKE

Nah. It's a long story. Leave it.

NENA

¿Y porque tiene la cara larga este guey?

MIKE

He's bummed about our sweet bread.

NENA

¡Chale, Tomas! This ain't no pussy California. This is El Chuco. Here *en El Paso*, you get by any way you can. Even when you got *the pinchi* morning sickness.

MIKE

What?

NENA

You might as well know, *Viejo*, I'm pregnant.

¡Putá madre!

FERNIE

A baby?

TOMAS

That's great!

VICKY

How far?

MIKE

Six weeks.

NENA

(He approaches her and sinks to his knees before her.)

MIKE

Six weeks. *Hijo mano*. Little brown shitkicker must be at least the size of my thumbnail by now.

PAM

Maybe this time it'll be a boy, Mike.

FERNIE

We'll be laying odds on that in Vegas.

NENA

Ten cuidado...porque sabes muy bien que te adoro.

MIKE

Administrative fiat. You are coming to Vegas.

NENA

I can't. Who's going to take care of the girls?

VICKY

I don't mind watching them, Nena.

TOMAS

And you might as well use my ticket.

FERNIE

No way!

TOMAS

C'mon. She's going o have a baby. Besides, man, you're gonna be late for the plane. Here. *Mi regalo para ti, cunada.*

NENA

I didn't mean to bitch on you like that. You're good.

MIKE

Brother, you make us shine.

NENA

¡Pues a Las Fuckin' Vegas!

(She rushes out with MIKE, FERNIE, and PAM amid a chorus of congratulations.)

VICKY

(to TOMAS)

It looks like it's just you and me.

CAMACHO

An' me.

VICKY

Yeah.

(VICKY goes. CAMACHO starts after her.)

TOMAS

C.

CAMACHO

Yo.

TOMAS

You sure the trailer's secure at...

CAMACHO

Gila Stables. Yeah, tight as a bud.

(As CAMACHO goes, the JUDGE in his robes strolls on.)

JUDGE

[Cataclysms, boy. Catechisms.

TOMAS

La sangre crying crying legal or loyal, swelling in my head the old man crying for his son falling over falling into America

JUDGE

Our symbol for a browner justice pimped on La Mariscal the law shoved up her constitution.

TOMAS

Burning, my fucking race burning me, your honor, I'm burning

JUDGE

Hot plate! Hot plate! No touch! No touch!

TOMAS

I feel the breach in me

JUDGE

The pang of your convictions, 20 to life, 30 to life, life everlasting

TOMAS

No puedo no puedo

JUDGE

You're the good son sanctify the sign stop the bleeding make it real pick up the phone

TOMAS

Don't get me wrong I love my people

JUDGE

Sure you do.]

(TOMAS picks up the phone. FERNIE's anguished cry from off. Crossfade to the casino. FERNIE charges in, his cry leading him in.)

FERNIE

(rolling a paid of dice)

YYYYYYAAAHHHHHHH!

Awright awright awright! How much! Okay! Go double! Right there! Put it there! Here we go!

(MIKE comes in with NENA on his arm.)

MIKE

C'mon, Fernie. That table don't like you.

FERNIE

You kidding? It loves me! It wants to suck my dick! I'm making some money here!

NENA

You better be. *Esos son mis* chips you're betting with, Negro.

FERNIE

I dedicate this holly roll to the fortunes of the next Santos kid! May he be a son and may he wear steel-toe boots! (He rolls.)

MIKE

Snake-eyes!

FERNIE

FUCK!

NENA

I know! *Vamonos al jacuzzi* and let's order martinis.

FERNIE

No jacuzzi. I don't want her barfin' in there. One more.

(PEGGY enters.)

PEGGY

Michael!

MIKE

Peggy, how's it going? Haven't seen you in a coon's age.

FERNIE

Yo, Peg.

PEGGY

Furnace, how you doin', boy

NENA

You know this woman?

MIKE

Hell, we've known Peg for years!

PEGGY

He was my lawyer. You got me a suspended sentence on that weapons charge!

MIKE

Peg, this is my wife. Magdalena.

PEGGY

Mucho gusto. ¿Como esta?

NENA

Fine. How the hell are you?

PEGGY

Well, guess what, Mike, I'm married now! Willis is my new name, and we're spending our honeymoon in our old stompin' ground and now all of a sudden BOOM here ya're too!

MIKE

You're a sight!

FERNIE

Yeah, you look great, babe!

NENA

Vamos, Miguel.

(WILLIS and FELECIA enter.)

WILLIS

Darlin'.

PEGGY

Oh! Lemme introduce my husband and my girl. This is Casper.

WILLIS

Casper T. Willis. Howdy.

(WILLIS frisks MIKE. Tears the buttons from his cuff.)

PEGGY

He don't like his voice on tape.

MIKE

Miguel Santos.

PEGGY

And this is the flower of my life, Felicia Lee.

FELICIA

Y'all got any pot?

PEGGY

Keep a civil tongue in your head, young lady. You don't know who these people are.

FERNIE

Watch it, little girl. We're lawyers.

MIKE

What's with the buttons?

WILLIS

If truth be told, Mr. Santos, I've just come out of Leavenworth.

FERNIE

Maximum security. What were you in for?

WILLIS

Thisnthat. Braggin', mainly.

PEGGY

A wire took years off my baby's life, but he is still a experienced handler of people.

FELICIA

Who looks older, me or her?

Shush, you. PEGGY

I want to go to the Jacuzzi, Miguel. NENA

I'm not cheap, sir, but I'm reliable. WILLIS

And conventional! We live in Texas, too! Beaumont! You know what they say, if you can scratch your balls, you can make the calls...to Beaumont! (Laughs.) PEGGY

Miguel... NENA

Mr. Willis. Pleasure meeting you. MIKE

Anytime. My card. WILLIS

(WILLIS gives his card and the buttons as they leave.)

¿Quien es esa mujer? ¿De donde la conoces? NENA

Why, you don't like her? MIKE

Peg's cool. She was parole officer till she started falling for her cons. Her old man, though, you see his eyes? Like a set of bulletholes. FERNIE

Andale, quiero ponerme ese swimsuit while it still fits. NENA

Be right up. I'll get the martinis.

(MIKE and NENA leave. FERNIE produces another stack of chips. FELECIA appears.)

So do you? FELECIA

Do I what? FERNIE

You know. Pot. FELECIA

FERNIE

Yeah. I got some. Up in my room.

FELECIA

I can't go to your room.

FERNIE

Oh, I didn't know you were a minor.

FELECIA

I'm older than I look. I'm almost eighteen.

FERNIE

Then what are we waiting for?

FELECIA

I don't know you that well yet.

FERNIE

My friends call me Fernie. Some people call me Negro but I'll cut anyone outside the family who calls me that.

FELECIA

My name begins with an F too.

FERNIE

Felicia Lee Willis.

FELECIA

Tomlinson. Casper's just my stepdaddy.

FERNIE

He's big guy, huh?

FELECIA

Oh, he's terrific. He's like what, you know, when you think of the Texas Rangers, you think of him. Big. Bold. Frontier.

FERNIE

Uh-hu. Big badass motherfucking white sheriff-type of asshole.

FELECIA

That's not very nice.

FERNIE

Neither is your father.

FELECIA

What floor you on?

(WILLIS comes in.)

WILLIS

Lesha doll. Didn't I ask you to accompany your mother to the cashier booth?

FELECIA

Yeah, but--

WILLIS

No buts about it. I told you and you defied me, girl.

FERNIE

I'll send it to your room.

WILLIS

You'll send nothing of the kind, Mr. Santos. I'd appreciate your keepin' your hands off my girl from now on.

FERNIE

I didn't touch her.

FELECIA

We were only talking--

WILLIS

I don't know about Nevada, but in my perimeter, there's a statutory age-limit to what a man can stick his pecker to.

FERNIE

Well, in my mind, Casper--

WILLIS

It's not your mind I'm concerned about, mister.

FERNIE

WHY IS EVERYBODY TELLIN' ME WHO TO FUCK!

FELECIA

Please, honey, he wasn't trying anything--!

FERNIE

(producing his blade from underneath his coat)

AWRIGHT COWBOY! LET'S TALK!

FELECIA

Oh lord! No! Stop this! Momma! Somebody! Help!

WILLIS

Sonny, put thy knife away.

FERNIE

Wanna dance? C'mon, I'll cut a little rug in your two-step, Casper!

WILLIS

Don't make me do this. I just done my time.

FERNIE

Your ass is grass, Hopalong! You fuckin' with the stereotype now!

(MIKE and NENA enter. PEGGY comes from the other side.)

PEGGY

What the heck's going on here?

FELECIA

Momma, make them stop this! Somebody's gonna get hurt.

NENA

Fernando! ¡Ya calmate! Aqui no hay para que te pelees.

PEGGY

Casper, back off. Both of you.

MIKE

Put it away, Negro.

FERNIE

You got no idea who you fuckin' with, asshole! I go back to the Aztecs. I got the blood in my veins, goddammit, I got the face, the features, and I got the disposition of my dyin' race all over me. I'm a spic, man. Beans and tortillas. Through and through.

WILLIS

Honorable ancestry, I'm told.

FERNIE

Damn right.

WILLIS

Goodnight, folks.

(The WILLISES leave.)

NENA

¿Estas loco o que? Es un ex-con and you with a toy knife!

FERNIE

Well, I'm horny!

MIKE

You're real slick.

FERNIE

Sorry, bro. The girl came up, man, I don't know.

MIKE

Fernie, C called. The Feds nailed our horse trailer.

FERNIE

No way!

NENA

The whole shipment.

FERNIE

But how did they...

MIKE

They were tipped off. Someone shit on us, Fernie.

FERNIE

Was there anything tying us to the shit?

MIKE

I don't think so.

FERNIE

Who the fuck told?

NENA

Somebody from the inside, I bet.

MIKE

I can't think about that right now. We're packing for home. I gotta let Tommy know. Negro, I suggest before this night is over, you call your wife.

(A phone rings in the darkness. VICKY and TOMAS enter her house. She regards the phone.)

VICKY

There he goes. Checking up on me.

TOMAS

How do you know it's him?

VICKY

By the way it rings. Shrill and whiny.

TOMAS

Maybe you should answer.

(The phone stops ringing.)

VICKY

Coors or Corona?

TOMAS

Coors.

(as Vicky goes off)

[Victoria. As I've always known her. *Victoria mi novia mi nova* my ex. Just as we lost lands, wars, lives, dignity, I lost Victoria. Not Vicky as Fernie wants his wife to be, but Victoria.]

VICKY

(returning with two beers)

I hope you'll let me chip in half for the movie.--

TOMAS

My treat, Vick. I don't often get to spend time with Lila and Rose. Hey, this sofa look familiar?

VICKY

It should. It's from the store. Like everything else I got. All our houses look the same inside. Your Dad's way of living on.

TOMAS

(raising his beer)

To the flower of the Santos Family.

VICKY

You're a trip.

(They drink. VICKY takes our her vial of coke.)

TOMAS

(as she takes a bump)

[Pollen on the flower, a pinky-nailful of moondust, and my brothers are with us]

VICKY

What I said earlier about not remembering I remember

It took a little effort but you
Know those were crazy times we
Were so caught up in this I don't
know this truly I don't know

like at the levee that night drinking beer and playing tapes and
making out while the wetbacks wade across the river and then
you say something like

TOMAS

Victoria any one of them could have been us

VICKY

And it cracks me up 'cause it's true and
I lean on the horn by mistake and all of a sudden everything
freezes

the water the reeds the gravel the moonlight the wets all
become one

big eye

aimed right at us, you see I do remember 'cause right after that
you said

TOMAS

This night is a part of us

VICKY

what did we know man
one night does not a life make,
sure we're practically related now,
only not the way we
hey hey hey Tomas don't
I mean hey I I I I

I want to ask you
has Fernie said anything about us having kids

'cause uh uh we're not
we're not we're not
I'm staying on the pill
till he starts acting like a
married man, for all we know
there might already be some
Fernie Jrs running around
oh yeah I've seen his
nacho-cheese-flavored condoms
it's a drag

D R A G

DRAG try and run the business by yourself, it wears
me out, I get no support, Nena's too busy with her kids
and Mike and Negro are always limmigrating

TOMAS

Litigating

VICKY

yea which as you know
all by myself me I have to do it
I need a break from it see this
My little pick-me-up-and-throw-me-across-the-room

you see what good is memory
it only makes you want to forget.

Am I rambling?

TOMAS

No.

VICKY

You're not saying much. You're keeping something from me. What?

TOMAS

Vick, those people we saw crossing the river: they're our moms and dads and they drank dirty water for us. They died for us. We're the dross of dreams, Victoria, the dreams of good people who try who still wish who still believe that all this is still theirs. We owe them our honesty our courage our love

VICKY

What is it, Tomas?

TOMAS

I I still feel the same for you only more so.

(They resist and impulse to kiss.)

TOMAS

[All night we sit up and talk

VICKY

Inventing histories between us

TOMAS

Possibilities in the past and present

VICKY

Talking

TOMAS

on a sofa you made Papa, pulsing toward the north, my Mexican descent, thinking of my brothers, but Vicky says--]

VICKY

Stay as long as you want. They need you, they'll ask for you.

(The office. MIKE, FERNIE, CAMACHO and PAM.)

MIKE

Where is he?

CAMACHO

Looked everywhere.

FERNIE

Did you try his place again?

CAMACHO

Nothing.

MIKE

Pam?

PAM

I called all his buddies. No sign of him.

MIKE

Shit. He missed that appointment with the Savings bunch.

PAM

I'll reschedule.

FERNIE

What the fuck's happened, C?

CAMACHO

Just the seizure. No-one busted.

FERNIE

Maybe one of them narked.

CAMACHO

I know those vatos. No way.

MIKE

Was there anything tying us to the shit?

CAMACHO

Not a thing.

MIKE

You sure?

CAMACHO

Sure.

FERNIE

You sure?

CAMACHO

I'm sure.

PAM
The Bureau thinks they have something.

MIKE
How do you know?

PAM
It made CNN, Mike. Everyone knows.

FERNIE
Shit.

MIKE
What is this “something?”

PAM
They didn’t say.

FERNIE
They’re bluffing.

CAMACHO
There wasn’t a hair in the place, Mike.

MIKE
Nothing?

CAMACHO
Absolutely nothing.

PAM
You got a lot of calls on the machine.

MIKE
You got the tape?

PAM
Right here.

(MIKE smashes it.)

FERNIE
We’re in deep shit.

MIKE
You spent the weekend away and you didn’t come in until tomorrow.

PAM
Right.

MIKE

C, go to Vicky's and get her ass over here.

FERNIE

I'll call her.

MIKE

No more phone calls. (To CAMACHO)Go.

(CAMACHO goes. He steps into VICKY'S living room and finds them sleeping fully clothed on the sofa.)

CAMACHO

Vicky! Hey! -- (seeing them and turning away.) Oh shit. Sorry, man.

VICKY

C! Dammit, don't you know how to knock!

CAMACHO

The door was open.

VICKY

Well, come in since you're in.

CAMACHO

Mike wants to see you right away at the office.

VICKY

The office? I thought he was in Vegas!

CAMACHO

They had to come back.

VICKY

What's going on?

CAMACHO

Just hurry. We got some problems.

VICKY

C, what happened?

CAMACHO

Vicky, c'mon.

VICKY

What the hell happened?

CAMACHO

The feds. I can't say anymore.

The Feds?
VICKY

I can't say anymore.
CAMACHO

(As VICKY goes off to get her purse, MIKE, FERNIE, and PAM feed documents into a paper shredder.)

You want these in there too?
PAM

I'm talking no chances.
MIKE

This is the Land Grant Commission file.
PAM

Put it in.
MIKE

Man, this bites.
FERNIE

Do me a favor, Pam, bring the other files for me.
MIKE

(She goes.)

Fernando, I think I know who narked on us.

Who?
FERNIE

Think about it. We go to Vegas, he stays behind, no-one to supervise him, no-one to know.
MIKE

Aw...man. Son of a bitch.
FERNIE

CAMACHO
(as PAM returns with the files)

Hey, Tomas.

(TOMAS keeps still.)

Mike and Fernie. Worried about you. Tried to call you all night. Nena's girls, ese, they thought something happened to you.

TOMAS

I guess I should see them.

CAMACHO

You should see Mike first.

(VICKY enters.)

VICKY

Camacho, I want you to know Tommy and me were only--

CAMACHO

You don't gotta explain nothing. I'm just the fuckin' sprayhead.

(They cross into the office.)

PAM

Well, look who's here.

MIKE

We've been trying to reach you for hours.

VICKY

The answering machine was off. And I overslept.

FERNIE

I'll bet.

MIKE

¿Y tu?

CAMACHO

I found him passed out in his car.

FERNIE

You're kidding.

TOMAS

I..uh..pulled a bender.

PAM

Buncha sound sleepers in this burg.

VICKY

C said something about Feds.

MIKE

Well, have you heard? We've been shat upon.

VICKY

What?

FERNIE

Somebody tipped off the fuckin' cops and blew our load. *¡Pero cuando lo agarre, le voy a mochar los pinchi huevos!*

PAM

Would somebody translate that for me, please?

VICKY

He said whoever did this is gonna get his balls cut off.

PAM

Assuming his person has balls.

MIKE

That's what we're gonna find out. Vicky, I want you to go to my home and stay with the girls till we call. Pam, close the office down and get someone to change the locks on the door. The rest of you guys meet me at the City Dump at 10:30 tonight. I have to make a few calls. *Vamonos, cabrones.*

(PAM, FERNIE, and CAMACHO go. MIKE turns to TOMAS.)

Tommy, you better show. We know who did this.

(MIKE goes.)

VICKY

Is this your handiwork?

TOMAS

I had to do it.

VICKY

Is this what you mean by the dross of dreams? An anonymous tip? Tommy, that's our cash cow!

TOMAS

Well, I just slaughtered it.

VICKY

Jesus Christ, you turned your brothers in to the cops!

TOMAS

Look, it's just their stash.

VICKY

God, you really messed things up. I don't believe you.

TOMAS

Vicky, listen, here's where we remake the past. We can make ourselves new. You remember, like last night when we--

VICKY

Last night meant nothing. All we did was sleep, that's all. Remember. You're my husband's brother. This is your family. Do you have any idea what this is leading to?

TOMAS

Yeah. City dump.

Lights change. A pair of piercing headlights. VICKY and the scenery vanish. TOMAS remains. Music plays: ZZ TOP's "Tush". Cries off. FERNIE pushed CAMACHO on, tied with bungie cord. MIKE follows with a can of gasoline.)

FERNIE

(dancing wildly around C)

YYYAOOW, MAAAANN! BAATTLE STAAATIOONS! WE GONNA PARTY TONIGHT!

CAMACHO

Fernie...ese...

FERNIE

Shut your ass, motherfucker! You ain't been called on yet!

TOMAS

Mike, what's going on?

MIKE

Yo, C. How ya doin' man?

CAMACHO

Lookit...

MIKE

I know how you feel, bro. It's a bad scene for sure.

(MIKE douses him with gasoline.)

TOMAS

What are you doing, Mikey? This is C, man.

MIKE

I know, Tommy. That's what really hurts.

FERNIE

(reeling him around like a roped steer)

SUMBITCH! YOU RATTED ON THE WRONG PEOPLE, ESE!

CAMACHO

What you talkin' about? I didn't rat!

TOMAS

You got the wrong guy. Camacho would never do a thing like that.

CAMACHO

Never. Never. I love you guys.

MIKE

C, you're a Judas, man. A fuckin' Judas.

FERNIE

After all we did.

CAMACHO

I didn't do shit, Mike. That's the truth.

TOMAS

I believe him.

MIKE

We'll see about that.

FERNIE

(Poised with a match)

Awright. Why'd you fink?

CAMACHO

I didn't.

(FERNIE flicks a lit match at CAMACHO.)

NO, MAN!

TOMAS

Hey, c'mon! the guy didn't do it. Fernie, stop it!

FERNIE

You gonna burn motherfucker! Now, how much you get for ratting?

CAMACHO

Nothing!

(FERNIE flicks another match.)

C'mon, Fernie! Jesus Christ, man!

TOMAS

You're gonna kill him. Let him go!

MIKE

Tommy, you're a man with a heart. That's why I asked you to come.

FERNIE

Are you fucking my wife, C? Are you balling her when I'm gone!

CAMACHO

NO WAY! I wouldn't--

(FERNIE flicks another match.)

Damn, ese! Watch it!

TOMAS

That's enough! Let him go.

CAMACHO

Tell him, Tomas. Tell him I didn't do none a that shit. Tell him!

FERNIE

Shut your fucking ass! I'm talking to you. If you're not fucking my wife, if you're not snitching on us, then who is?

CAMACHO

I dunno!

TOMAS

It was me. I did it! I'm the one who made the call.

FERNIE

Nice try, bro.

MIKE

We know who's responsible.

TOMAS

I'm the one who snitched. C had nothing to do with it.

FERNIE

Don't be covering for this sack of shit, Tommy!

TOMAS

I'm telling you the truth! Let him go!

MIKE

I've known this vato longer than anyone, Tomas. My father brought him in as a brother. But this brother is the only one who knew the horse trailer was at Gila Stables!

CAMACHO

Please! Mike!

(WILLIS strolls on, carrying a small hand-held propane torch.)

WILLIS

Evenin' boys. Cold moon comin' out.

FERNIE

What are you doing here?

MIKE

I called him.

TOMAS

Who is this guy?

WILLIS

Casper T. Willis. You must be the kid.

(He gives him a cursory frisk with his free hand, snapping a few buttons off.)

FERNIE

What the fuck are you doing here?

WILLIS

(lighting the torch)

I heard we were lightin' a bonfire.

MIKE

He's going to take care of things.

CAMACHO

Hey, don't come near me with that!

WILLIS

And you must be the bonfire.

CAMACHO

Stay back! Tomas!

TOMAS

Get rid of him! This is between the family!

WILLIS

I sure hope you're paid up on your fire insurance.

CAMACHO

No no...you keep away....Tomas, this guy....no NO!

(CAMACHO staggers off. WILLIS follows calmly behind.)

FERNIE
HEY!

TOMAS
Miguel, you better stop that fuck!

MIKE
Stay where you are!

(The agonized cries of CAMACHO being immolated.)

FERNIE
MOTHER OF GOD. OH JESUS!

MIKE
GET BACK HERE! GET BACK HERE! ETC.

FERNIE
CAMACHO! THAT'S OUR BRO!

(TOMAS is spellbound with horror.)

MIKE
Let's go, Tomas!

(The office. TOMAS and MIKE are still. FERNIE paces anxiously. A long silence.)

FERNIE
Unbelievable.

MIKE
Sit down.

FERNIE
This is evil. Burning a man alive. Mi camarada. Camachito.

MIKE
Sit down.

FERNIE
The matches were wet. We were only gonna scare the guy

MIKE
Sit down, Negro.

TOMAS
Where did you find the goon? Since when did we start doing business with that element?

MIKE
That element is our business.

TOMAS
Oh, just another day at the office, huh?

MIKE

Don't start on me. Camacho was my bud. His blood rain in my veins.

(PAM comes in and gives MIKE a paper.)

What's this?

PAM

I'm sorry, Mike. I'm leaving.

MIKE

Bad timing, girl.

FERNIE

C'mon, esa, you gotta stick it out.

TOMAS

Let her go if she wants to.

PAM

I'm not going to jail for anyone.

MIKE

Go with my blessing, Pam. Just leave the number of your next of kin with us, okay?

(PAM tears the resignation. NENA and VICKY enter. VICKY sits in a state of shock as NENA opens the gym bag.)

NENA

Que paso, cabrones. (No reply) I know. Puta suerte. Vicky and me, when Mike told us, we cried all night. We're gonna miss Camachito. I hope he really likes Burma.

TOMAS

What are you talking about?

NENA

I looked in the books last night *y encontré un* \$25,000 deficit. I went up to his apartmento esta mañana to ask him about it and found this. Receipt from the sale of his bike. Here's the receipt from his plane ticket he bought. Also I found me a big old stash of coke *y una bolsa* he musta forgot with \$5,000 at least. He musta knew the heat was coming down *y se arranco a la carrera.*

TOMAS

Your framed him.

NENA

Looks to me like we're victims of embezzlement, honey.

MIKE

Son of a bitch better not spend it all on whores.

FERNIE

Nena, you tricky fucking devil woman.

TOMAS

The guy is dead and you framed him.

NENA

Cuñado, I got two girls at home. My two pieces of American pie. You see what I'm saying?

PAM

Mike.

(WILLIS enters. He opens a handkerchief over an ashtray and a cascade of teeth dribble into it.)

WILLIS

My calling card.

MIKE

What the fuck.

NENA

Those are teeth.

WILLIS

He'll be difficult to identify without 'em.

TOMAS

(as FERNIE rushes out in revulsion)

Jesus.

MIKE

This is going too far.

WILLIS

I'm doing you a favor. He won't be around if and when a grand jury convenes over this bust.

(as he goes from person to person, plucking buttons off.)

You know, the Bay Breasted Warbler is a lil' thing about this big, dark-looking with a chestnut throat, upper breast. It as a pretty lil' call which goes like "tees teesi teesi". The Cape May Warbler, though, comes in yellow and sounds higher and thinner like "seet seet seet seet". My favorite is the common yellowthroat which has a black mask like the Lone Ranger and a bright rapid chant that goes "witchy-witchy-witchy witch. Witchy- witchy-witchy witch." I love birds, you see. I go to all parts to find them. But one bird I do not like is the pigeon. It has no grace, it has no beauty, it has no song but the song of betrayal.

PAM

(as WILLIS approaches her)

Don't even thing about it.

WILLIS
(turning to MIKE)

Cash is what we discussed.

NENA
Here it is. The 20 grand Camacho's blowin' in Burma.

WILLIS
Count it.

NENA
I have

WILLIS
Again.

NENA
I have.

WILLIS
Mr. Santos, you have some pig-headed women on your team. That's good. *Hasta luego.*

(WILLIS leaves with the gym bag.)

NENA
Asshole.

PAM
I second that.

TOMAS
What ungodly jam are we in now, Mike?

MIKE
It's over.

TOMAS
We gotta get rid of those teeth.

(MIKE dumps them into TOMAS's pocket. FERNIE returns.)

FERNIE
Is he gone?

MIKE
Yeah, freak.

FERNIE

I'll kill him next time, Mike. I swear it.

NENA

Won't be no next time.

PAM

Mike, I think after all this crap, you owe us a pizza.

MIKE

Best idea yet. I'm starved. Let's go.

NENA

Fernie's treat!

FERNIE

No way! Your turn! I paid for the gasoline!

(They exit. VICKY and TOMAS remain. Silence.)

TOMAS

They...killed him.

VICKY

They?

TOMAS

He was....sss..set...on fire....

VICKY

Tommy...don't you dare...

TOMAS

I...have his...teeth...

VICKY

(lunging at him with her fists.)

DON'T YOU DARE CRY, YOU CICKEN SHIT! YOU FUCK! YOU GOT NO RIGHT TO CRY!
YOU COULD HAVE SAVED HIM! YOU COULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING!

TOMAS

I did! I told them!

VICKY

(falling to her knees in sobs)

YOU LET HIM DIE! FUCK YOU, TOMMY! FUCK YOU! YOU BURNED HIM!

TOMAS

[I did it for us, for our people's sake, I saw Camacho flare like a sun, Papa, like an emanation of *EL Corazón*, I saw him blazing with justice AND IT WAS GLORIOUS!]

(Tableau. Screaming sirens. Blackout. End of ACT 1.)

SANTOS & SANTOS

ACT 2.

(TOMAS enters amid smoke and darkness, searching. CAMACHO emerges from the shadows.)

TOMAS
[CAMACHO! CAMACHO!.... C? C, is that you?

CAMACHO
Vato. What brings you to this dump?

TOMAS
I came to bury you, man.

CAMACHO
Not a chance, ese. Ain't nothin' left to bury.

TOMAS
Shit. I'm really sorry, C.

CAMACHO
Don't cry. The Santos brothers are men of honor. What's up?

TOMAS
Mike got busted at the Pizza Parlor. He's to be formally charged. Fernie got so worked up, he copped a feel from Pam. She stuck him with a ballpoint.

CAMACHO
I warned that dude.

TOMAS
C, I don't get it. I don't understand what killed you, my brothers' law or the law of the land.

CAMACHO
(revealing a tape measurer)
What's the point? They both kill.

TOMAS
What's that for?

(From off, the voice of DON MIGUEL.)

DON MIGUEL
Camacho!

CAMACHO

Aqui!

(DON MIGUEL appears.)

TOMAS

Papa.

DON MIGUEL

¿Listo? Los dimensions got to be perfect.

(CAMACHO measures out an oblong space on the floor.)

It's gonna be special piece. Me and this lumber *venimos de Concordia*.

TOMAS

Mi padre, mi padre, mi patria.

DON MIGUEL

I miss the old town. I was a *chavo* of 17 when I left. Nothing to it but a plaza, a church, and some open pavilions filled with woodwork. But it was home to me.

TOMAS

Forgive us our chicanismo, our only begotten sin.

DON MIGUEL

All my life I have wanted to go back. But no: my family is here, my work, and my life. A measure of grace awaits me.

TOMAS

Grant us amnestia my padre.

CAMACHO

Don Miguel, I finished the measurements.

DON MIGUEL

¿Ya? Then let's go work on it.

(showing TOMAS his tattoo)

Misericordia, Tomas.

(They recede into the thick smoke as the sound of hammers pounding echoes inside TOMAS.)

TOMAS

¡Misericordia mis hermanos my padre mi padre mi padre!]

(Flash bulbs explode all around him and intense white light comes on his face. TOMAS addresses "the Press".)

This family's honor is unimpeachable! My brother has done nothing wrong!

(He goes. In the foreground the WILLIS family watch TV as the others rush around. Garish camera lighting and flashbulbs.)

PEGGY

Honey, lookit this! Michael's all over the Ten o'clock!

WILLIS

Yeah, I see him.

MIKE

No comment. Please relay all questions to my attorney. No sir. No comment.--

FERNIE

As my brother's attorney, I'll move the charges be dismissed on the grounds of unlawful arrest and insufficient evidence.--

GONZALES

John Gonzalez from the US Attorney's office. We've charged Mr. Santos with racketeering, illegal gambling, conspiracy to possess and distribute illegal narcotics, and failure to renew his Texas Drivers License--

NENA

I don't like the look of that Gonzalez man. He's got a mean face.

GONZALEZ

Members of the Press, Miguel Santos has been arraigned.

FELECIA

Pappy, what's arraign?

WILLIS

Water comes from the sky.

FELECIA

You think you're funny.

JUDGE

That's right. I have just received the news that Michael Santos will be tried in my court in San Antonio.--

TOMAS

What? Benton? Judge Benton is trying my own brother?!

GONZALEZ

Today we invoked the Kingpin Statute against MR. Santos.--

FERNIE

Hey! Dirty pool!

JUDGE

Continuing criminal enterprise. Mandatory life sentence with no parole.--

MIKIE

Non comment. No comment. Excuse me. Excuse me. No comment.--

WILLIS

Ladies, Christmas comes a little early this year.

(He gives FELECIA a pretty necklace.)

FELECIA

Pappy! Are they diamonds?

WILLIS

Yep. And this is for you, darlin'

(He gives PEGGY a pearl-handled revolver.)

PEGGY

Damn, Casper, this is Christmas.

GONZALEZ

Our investigation has revealed sinister connections with the Colombian cartels and powerful underworld elements in Las Vegasw.-

VICKY

The only Colombian connection Mike has is with coffee.--

TOMAS

I am personally mobilizing the family resources for Mike's bail. He's not spending another night in jail.

GONZALEZ

I've persuaded the local magistrate to set bond at 5 million.

VICKY

5 million! It's outrageous!

GONZALEZ

We've moved the opening trial date to April 6.--

FERNIE

You can't do that! BB King's playing the Sands that night, man!--

NENA

I have begun a three-day fast in protest of my husband's arrest.

MIKE

No comment. No comment. I'm not saying a word. No comment.--

PEGGY

That Juarez dirt trash has no business with Mikey.

FELECIA

Pappy, can I have some cocaine?

WILLIS

Babydoll, you know I don't like you doing that stuff before bedtime.---

FERNIE

It's clear to me that the US Attorney's office has had extensive carnal knowledge of the bench Judge Benton is sitting on.--

JUDGE

I deeply resent any aspersions cast upon the integrity of this court. Mr. Santos' comments are not only out of line with the ABA's code of ethics, but show clear contempt for the rules of this judiciary.--

PEGGY

(firing at the judge)

Pphhrr! Say hi to Jesus, Judge!

NENA

They got the wrong guy. That's what I have to say.

PEGGY

(firing at NENA)

Pphhrr! You too, Tia Maria!

GONZALEZ

We're looking for Jesus Camacho, a bandido Motorcycle Club member and a Santos associate who disappeared recently--

MIKE

No comment. I have no comment. No comment.--

FELECIA

They're gonna nail 'im, huh, Pappy?

WILLIS

Hell, they haven't even found the charred body yet.

PEGGY

What charred body, Casper?

TOMAS

My brother will be absolved before God. I have faith in both our family and in the American Legal System.--

(The JUDGE strips off his robe revealing a tennis outfit. He produces a tennis racket. FERNIE stands holding a brief as if at a hearing.)

FERNIE

I move that bond for my client be reduced to 500,000.

JUDGE

(swinging his racket with each replay)

Motion denied.

FERNIE

I moved for a continuance until further--

JUDGE/GONZALEZ

Motion denied.

FERNIE

I move for a change of venue on the grounds of --

JUDGE/GONZALEZ/TOMAS

Motion denied.

FERNIE

I move that the judge recuse himself on the basis of prejudicial evidence!

NENA/JUDGE/GONZALEZ/TOMAS/VICKY

Motion denied!

FERNIE

SHIT!

(Everyone clears except for the WILLISES.)

FELECIA

Can you put this on for me, Pappy?

WILLIS

‘Course, honey.

PEGGY

Why don’t you put on some clothes while you’re at it? You’re a lady, not a call girl.

FELECIA

Are you bein’ spiteful just ‘cause I got a chain and you didn’t?

PEGGY

I got a gun, Felecia Lee. Don’t make me use it.

(PEGGY leaves.)

FELECIA

Whoo-ee. Who peed in her popcorn?

WILLIS

C'mon. Time for bed, eiderduck.

FELECIA

Will you come and tuck me in, Pappy?

WILLIS

Honey, it's my life's abidin' pleasure.

(They go. Lights up on two chairs and a table. MIKE, looking weary and unfocused, and FERNIE.)

FERNIE

Fuckin' redneck judge, he hates your guts.

MIKE

What do they have?

FERNIE

The horse trailer. C bought it in your name.

MIKE

Fuck. Nena?

FERNIE

Startin' to show. She's a rock. Tommy's okay, too. I got him digging through the US Attorney's files for the evidentiary hearing.

MIKE

He's good.

FERNIE

Tommy?

MIKE

US Attorney.

FERNIE

Fuckin' sellout if you ask me. He puts on a nice suit, gets a job with the government and thinks he's white as rice. How are you doing?

MIKE

Like shit. I haven't slept a wink since I got it. Next time you come back, make sure you bring Tommy.

FERNIE

What for?

MIKE

I want to see him.

(They Law Office. With TOMAS.)

TOMAS

But what for?

FERNIE

He said he wants to see you.

TOMAS

Look, can't you tell him that I'm already doing what I can? I'm doing my best, Fernie, I really am.

FERNIE

He wouldn't ask for you if it weren't important.

TOMAS

I hate jails. I don't like coming near them.

FERNIE

If you're gonna be a criminal lawyer you better get used to it.

Mira, Tomas, I'm not gonna argue with you. Mikey said he wants you to come with next time, *me entiendes?* So you come with.

(FERNIE exits as VICKY enters.)

VICKY

He's your brother. You haven't laid eyes on him since the arrest.

TOMAS

I can't go into jails. Those faces in there. Staring back at me. Giving me those looks.

VICKY

You've got to get over that, Tommy. The past is the past.

TOMAS

How can you say that? You were closer to Camacho than anyone.

VICKY

I know. That's what got him killed. From now on, Tommy, we have to know better. We've got to be cutthroats or we're dead.

TOMAS

I'm not double-crossing anyone.

VICKY

Then why did you rat?

TOMAS

I had to do something. I saw what the family was becoming. You said I was a Santos, but I don't know what that means anymore.

VICKY

Nobody's blaming you, Tommy. The damage was done way before your came. (She kisses him.) I lied when I told you that night didn't mean anything. You made my house more bearable by staying in it.

TOMAS

Your hands are shaking.

VICKY

Fernie said we shouldn't have any drugs in the house while the investigation is going on. Easy for him to say.

TOMAS

I could...score something for you.

VICKY

Don't mess up again. You're still the cream of the family.

(They kiss again as MIKE bellows from his table.)

MIKE

TOMMY! TOMMY! TOMMY! TOMMY! TOMMY! TOMMY!

(VICKY breaks away and goes. TOMAS turns toward MIKE.)

TOMAS

You got sucrose eyes, Mike.

MIKE

I don't sleep. If I sleep, I dream. I see smoke and fire. School desks around me. Burning. Camacho and my girls are charred black.

TOMAS

We're going to get you out. Soon as we raise bail. Quit worrying and get some rest, carnal.

MIKE

Why did you protect him? He was the one who narked, wasn't he?

TOMAS

He was a friend.

MIKE

I know. I know. Camachito. What do I do now?

TOMAS

Plead guilty.

MIKE

This is my fucking defense?

TOMAS

They've rejected every motion Negro's made, denied us access to the evidence and witnesses, and this judge wants you to do major time. Now, we can knock off a few years by pleading guilty on the lesser charges. You won't look unrepentant, you won't perjure yourself. You'll get ten, but you'll do seven, maybe six with good behavior. Hell, with the overcrowding nowadays, you may get out in four. The thing is you're gonna do time.

MIKE

How many of us have you fed this line to?

TOMAS

Some other judge might give you a shot, but Benton won't recuse himself.

MIKE

What if we get someone to recuse his ass for him?

TOMAS

I don't follow you.

MIKE

What if he goes down before trial?

TOMAS

Goes down?

MIKE

I'll do anything to get out, Tommy.

TOMAS

I don't even want to hear this. You're not proposing what I think you are. We go by our procedure, we trust the legal process.

MIKE

We lost faith in that a long time ago, brother.

TOMAS

Don't talk about this, Mike. It's perverse. I won't have any part of it.

MIKE

Bueno.

TOMAS

Is this why you wanted to see me?

MIKE

I just wondered how far you would go for us.

(MIKE teeters off.)

TOMAS

[*Servicio*, the will to do service, *servicio del corazón*, Papa, to do, to do in, to do in vain, to act for the heart...the heart...]

(A dark street. The JUDGE steps out in an overcoat.)

JUDGE

You come alone?

TOMAS

Yes.

JUDGE

I think often of our talk. Your vision impressed me.

TOMAS

What is it you want?

JUDGE

I come to you a divided man. My involvement in the case of The People vs. Michael Santos distresses me. A part of me urges me toward my duty and a part urges me toward you. We share the burden now.

TOMAS

My brother is no burden.

JUDGE

It's more than just him, Tomas. That evening in the parking lot, you returned something to me. Something I tried to beat back my whole life. Paloma's boy. My son, who lives in the faces of those in my court. I love you deeply troubled people, I long for you as passionately as you long for justice.

TOMAS

Then recuse yourself.

JUDGE

No. I'm going to try Michael Santos under the sign of El Broken Heart just as you would.

TOMAS

I want nothing to do with you! You used me! You used me to get to my brothers! You don't love us! You want to hang us! You made me turn them in!

JUDGE

I knew it was you. Only the good son.

TOMAS

You used me so you could try him in that kennel you call court!

JUDGE

I may be trying him, but by god, you've already judged him. In your heart, he's guilty. A dealer, a crook, a liar, a thief, a traitor, possibly even a killer. But the sin you damn him for is being Mexican. Right, Tommy? We're a pair, you and me; I loathe your kind 'cause I love them, and you love them to bury your loathing.

TOMAS

You're a sick old man, you can't see into my soul, my soul is mine, this garbage is my garbage! Keep away from me!

JUDGE

We're going to try him by your symbol before a jury of his peers, twelve three-headed versions of you, twelve manifest destinies, and YOU Tomas, my boy my son YOU will be the star witness the informant the good son with the vision here here--

(taking off his coat and rolling back his sleeve)

the whole enchilada the grandest proof see see here on my arm I have the Sign too! The gringo has a miracle!

(He reveals the heart tattooed on his forearm.)

We shall convict him with one corazón beating between us, bu-bum bu-bum bu-bum, El Corazon Americano!

(The JUDGE goes. NENA appears.)

TOMAS

[Peace now. Paz. El Paso. Everything agrees. Everything fails but family. My brother. My heart. Blood woos me to blood and it agrees.]

NENA

Tommy.

TOMAS

We're going to blow the Judge's brains out.

NENA

This is due process? I thought only in Colombia they did this.

TOMAS

Mike wants it.

NENA

Estamos bien fregados. Bueno pues, when do we bail him out?

TOMAS

We're not going for bail.

NENA

¿*Que que?* What do you mean we're not going for the bail?

TOMAS

We need the money for the contract.

NENA

No. No way. No. No, Tomas. Eso no.

TOMAS

Nena, escuchame--

NENA

No! I want Miguel out! I want him out!

TOMAS

Will you listen to me! Benton's sending him up whether we get bail or not. I know how you feel, but his is how he wants it. The Judge is a vindictive old crow with a heart full of nails and he has to go.

NENA

You don't even know him and already you're planning to kill him.

TOMAS

I know him, Nena. Better than I know myself. You have the cash from the Colombian deal?

NENA

Negro lo tiene. 2 million and a half.

TOMAS

We don't tell him anything. This is between you, me, Mike... *y una persona mas.*

(They go. WILLIS in camouflage jacket, peering through binoculars. FELECIA creeps in quietly behind him.)

FELECIA

Pappy...

WILLIS

Shhh...Slowly...over there...among the reeds...a tricolored heron...very rare for these parts...

FELECIA

Where?

WILLIS

Oh, never mind. You scared it off. What's up, darlin'?

FELECIA

Momma said to bring you this.

(She gives him a note. He reads it.)

WILLIS

Well, this is interestin'.

FELECIA

What's it say?

WILLIS

I can't tell you, Lesha doll. You might be wired.

FELECIA

You can trust me, Pappy.

WILLIS

Sure I can, but in your lamblike innocence, you might be picking up everything I say.

FELECIA

Well, then go ahead if you think I'm bugged.

(She stands with her hands raised. WILLIS pauses, then frisks her. He picks all the buttons from her clothes.)

Satisfied?

WILLIS

Your mamma's not gonna like this one bit.

FELECIA

She doesn't have to know, does she?

(He slips his hands underneath her clothes and kisses her. They go. FERNIE and PAM in the office with briefs, laptops, etc., as the JUDGE and GONZALEZ enter.)

JUDGE

What's wrong, Gomez? Come up against some snags?

GONZALEZ

No sir. The Defense is in a tailspin. But I need to grant a couple of slimeballs clemency in exchange for their testimony.

JUDGE

Real dirtbags?

GONZALEZ

Career scum.

JUDGE

Permission granted. But bump ‘em outa my state, you understand?
Send them to Arkansas.

GONZALEZ

I’ve also empaneled a Special Grand Jury and I need your sayso to broaden their powers some.

JUDGE

Meaning?

GONZALEZ

Wiretap.

JUDGE

By all mean, Ramirez.

GONZALEZ

Could you possibly make this ruling retroactive?

JUDGE

You’re bugging them already?

GONZALEZ

(producing a recorder)

Discreet surveillance. We don’t want to violate attorney-client confidentiality.

JUDGE

That’s not the way we do things around here. Procedure is respected.

GONZALEZ

Well, I thought—

JUDGE

I’m aware of the fact that you’re using me to get your plum assignments. Just use me sparingly.

GONZALEZ

I’m on your team, sir.

(GONZALEZ offers the tape player to the JUDGE, who turns it on. In the office, PAM and FERNIE.)

FERNIE

Awright. They’re due any minute. Let’s get out those files.

PAM

Got them.

FERNIE

Press packets.

Check. PAM

Judge's profile. FERNIE

Check. PAM

Trial itinerary. FERNIE

Check. PAM

Tictacs. FERNIE

Check. PAM

Gimme some. I got the breath of a truck. FERNIE

That's Fernie. The woman works there. GONZALEZ

Okay, Pam, lemme ask you somethin': how come you're sticking your honky neck out for us like this? FERNIE

Didn't you hear what Mike said? Next of kin. PAM

Awright, fuck what Mike said. Far as I'm concerned, walk out now, you walk out free, no trouble. FERNIE

Are you serious? PAM

(He nods. She thinks about it.)

No can do, Fernie. I'm like Camacho. You guys are all the family I got left. I'm beginning to feel what you're fighting for.

Coraje. Anger. FERNIE

I'm talking about something else. Something deeper. PAM

FERNIE

That's the thing about you, Pam. You may be a *gringa lesbo* with an attitude, but you got *huevos*.

PAM

I hear you do too.

GONZALEZ

This is where it gets interesting.

(TOMAS, VICKY and NENA enter.)

NENA

This better be good, calling a meeting at 10 o'clock at night.

TOMAS

Fernando, we need to talk about the Arm and Hammer cut.

FERNIE

Not now. Take a seat. Doin' okay, babe?

VICKY

Ran out of gas. You wouldn't have a gallon around, would you?

FERNIE

Don't be so wise, Vicky.

VICKY

Don't you ever run out of gas?

FERNIE

Only thing I run out of is patience.

NENA

Can we get this going? I left the girls at home by themselves.

VICKY

Hi, Tommy. Why such a stranger lately?

(PAM passes out folders for everyone.)

FERNIE

We been hashing this out all week and here's the deal. I drafted a statement for every member of the family to say whenever the stupid press gets in our face. Everybody from the local paper to El Fronterizo to fucking 20/20.

PAM

We have to watch our backs from now on. The IRS is auditing our books. Files have been confiscated. Bank accounts. Another thing: the phones may be bugged. We can't talk about this or anything related with dear old Ma Bell. Children included.

TOMAS

You really want us to say this to the press about him?

FERNIE

We're mounting a united front against these assholes.

TOMAS

Fernie, you're saying he's framed Mike for being Mexican.

FERNIE

He sent a guy up for ten for possessing two lousy joints. Another got seven for having crack pipe. And here's one got twenty to life for a few lousy marijuana plants in his backyard. Know what they got in common? Marquez, Martinez, Huerta. Sons of Moctezuma.

JUDGE

Who's he talking about?

GONZALEZ

You.

FERNIE

I've researched this racist, and *vatos*, it's ugly. Benton has buddies in the Congress, the White House, the Bohemian Grove and the Trilateral Commission. He's just a little moco in the bigger conspiracy! I'm talking ongoing colonial imperialism for our *pinchi* souls, man! Drugs are the 21st Century Conquistadores! Mikey is a victim of the International Narcotics Trade! A huge motherfucking enterprise that can't be done without

The CIA

The FBI

The DEA

The INS.

And even the Holy Church, which has realized that the opiate of the masses is OPIUM. This underground network fans out to the Texas Bar Association, the ACLU, IBM, and the Men's Wearhouse! Everybody is trying to bone us, *chavos*, like they bone us every time, 'cause let's face it, they're afraid of us, man, we represent an empire!

VICKY

Don't you think you're being a little paranoid, Negro?

FERNIE

¡La neta! We gotta get Mike out. That means bail.

(FERNIE removes his jewelry and puts it on the table.)

TOMAS

What the hell is this?

FERNIE

Everybody. Ante up. All your fucking jewelry on the table. *Ahora mismo*. Prob'ly enough gold on us to buy a racehorse.

VICKY

You've got to be kidding.

FERNIE

Uh-uh. Balls to the wall. You too, Pam.

PAM

Hey, I'm not family.

TOMAS

Hold it! You're not gonna raise the cash this way.

FERNIE

(grabbing VICKY's car keys and slamming them on the table)

Right. Then we put the car up too.

VICKY

That's my car!

FERNIE

It's out of gas, anyway, right?

PAM

Why don't you put up your car?

FERNIE

Yo, I got an image to uphold. Who's gonna trust a lawyer in a late model piece of shit?

VICKY

Depends. Is he in it or under it?

TOMAS

What about the money from the deal?

FERNIE

What deal?

TOMAS

The baking soda deal. There was over 2 mil. Where's that money?

FERNIE

We don't got that money. It's gone.

TOMAS

What do you mean, it's gone?

FERNIE

Forget it. It's gone, it's spent.

VICKY

You mean, gambled.

FERNIE

I mean, it's gone. End of discussion.

TOMAS

Dammit, Negro, are you saying you blew that money on the tables?

FERNIE

Lookit. We do the best we can. Vicky and me got this nest-egg, IRAs of 150-160 grand. We'll put it up on our end, okay?

VICKY

Those are the savings for our baby.

FERNIE

What baby? I mean, let's not kid ourselves, Vicky.

NENA

Excuse me one fuckin' minute. What am I here, a smurf?

FERNIE

No, course not, Nena, you got as much--

NENA

I feel like most of these decisions been made by you already. Now, I got great respect for you, *cuñado*, but his business is--

FERNIE

Yes, Nena, I see your point—

NENA

I don't fuckin' think so. My point is I left my two children in an empty house to sit here and listen to your bullshit and I'm getting way pissed off. Negro, *a mi no me vas a maderiar*. First of all, Tommy's right, this statement *es pura mierda*. It will hurt Miguel, bad. Do not fuck with the Judge. And don't think I'm gonna give up my jewelrey and my car for some stupid bail, either! You may not have kids, compa, but I do, and I ain't giving up not a damn thing. Why don't you try DROPPING THE *PINCHI* DICE FOR A SECOND AND DOING YOUR JOB! By the way, *muñeca*, I know you're only doing your job and Mikey really appreciates you, but you don't tell me or my girls how to use my phone. I'm not your secretary.

FERNIE

Hey, you watch how you talk to her!

PAM

Lady, you don't pay

my salary, remember that!

NENA

I'll talk to her any fucking way I please!

VICKY

Hey! Hey! C'mon!

(TOMAS slams his fist down. Everyone falls silent.)

TOMAS

This is not the Santos family. This is a fucking JOKE. Who can blame the Feds for circling over us? Nena, go see to your girls. Negro, do us a favor, get off Benton's case and get on my brother's. Everyone stands by the tribe. *¿Estan de acuerdo?*

(NENA goes.)

VICKY

I'll catch a ride with her since I no longer have a car. Oh. Here's something else for your defense fund.

(VICKY puts her wedding ring in the pile and goes.)

If you knew how badly we needed that money.

(TOMAS leaves. FERNIE and PAM remain still.)

JUDGE

(snapping the recorder shut)

Those high-talking Santos bastards, goddamn wetback crud, where do they get off calling me racist! I been on that docket longer than Jesus Christ, an' no-one's been as fair! I've redrawn district lines all over this state to make voting blocs equal! I've made appointments! Black, Women, Jews, Spanish! Racist! By god!

GONZALEZ

When this investigation is through, we'll have something on everyone, including Tomas.

JUDGE

No. I don't want him touched. The others are yours for the taking, but Tommy Santos you leave alone. You understand?

GONZALEZ

If that's the way you really want it--

JUDGE

That's the way I want it.

(They go. FERNIE and PAM finally stir.)

PAM

Not so good, huh?

FERNIE

My own brother.

PAM

These are tense times, Fern.

Fuck.

FERNIE

Don't worry.

PAM

I worry.

FERNIE

You're still the man.

PAM

Fuck.

FERNIE

Going home?

PAM

To what?

FERNIE

Vicky.

PAM

FERNIE
Shit. I don't know what's come over her. I usta touch her and burn my hand on her hood. But the last time I had her in bed, I saw the damage of indifference in her face and it sent chills down my ass.

Then lemme buy you a drink.

PAM

Uh-uh. I ain't goin' in no dyke bar.

FERNIE

Fernie, I ain't no dyke.

PAM

FERNIE
Wait a minute. Wait a minute. You're a dyke. You said--

PAM
I said I didn't care for little boys.

FERNIE
Whoa! I don't believe it! You psyched me! You actually psyched me! You are not a dyke!

PAM
Are we going for that drink or what?

(Crossfade to MIKE and NENA.)

NENA

Oye, Viejo. Sleeping any better?

MIKE

The tears...have grown over my eyes...

NENA

Miguel--

MIKE

My girls' names...I can't remember their names...

NENA

Tomas took money from the scholarship fund for this *desmadre*. Is this how you want things to be?

MIKE

Things are, Nena. You grow up, you marry, you raise kids, you light a match, you burn a man.

NENA

The other day, waiting for the elevator in the courthouse, Gonzalez came up to me.

(GONZALEZ enters and stands by her.)

GONZALEZ

Sra. Santos.

NENA

Don't talk to me. I don't got my lawyer.

GONZALEZ

I just want to say that I tried to turn down the assignment when it was presented to me. This shouldn't happen between Latinos.

NENA

Senor, I come from *La Colonia*, the poorest barrio in Juarez. The streets ain't paved, there's no *luz*, no *gas*, no running water. When I got married, I got me a big fuckin' car and a house and two wonderful girls. The local chicks look down their nose at me, but I could give a shit. I take a bath in real porcelain, my floors got real marble, my girls speak perfect English. I'm a *pinchi* American now. No fuckin' lawyer's taking that away from me.

GONZALEZ

This one's going down. I'm going up.

(GONZALEZ leaves. NENA turns to MIKE.)

NENA

It's going to be a boy. We're having a son.

(NENA turns. PEGGY and TOMAS are waiting. TOMAS carries a small bag.)

PEGGY

I need to see your purse.

NENA

What for?

PEGGY

Procedures.

(NENA gives her the purse. PEGGY searches it.)

NENA

It sure is hot.

PEGGY

Sure is.

NENA

Do you have any, like, iced tea?

PEGGY

Uh-uh. (tossing the purse back.) We don't got crumpets neither.

(WILLIS enters.)

WILLIS

Ma'am. (to PEGGY) Handbag? (PEGGY nods.) Folks, I'm not one for small talk. Can we cut to the main artery?

NENA

Senor, my husband would like you to do for him a job.

WILLIS

You want the Honorable William L. Benton whacked. That it?

NENA

Humanely if possible.

WILLIS

He's Federal, you know.

NENA

My husband wants it done.

WILLIS

Sure he does.

NENA

He said you would do him any favor.

WILLIS

That's what I said.

PEGGY

A favor is one thing, missy: this is something else. This is a judge. My honey just spent ten years in the pen. You want to send him to the chair too?

NENA

I was talking to Mr. Willis.

PEGGY

Well you're talking to me now. I watch out for my man, you see. I'm not like some people who let their good men stew in prison. You take your offer elsewhere.

NENA

We can pay.

PEGGY

Don't do it, Casper.

WILLIS

Kid, what's your opinion on the matter?

TOMAS

I'm with her. I don't think you should do it either.

NENA

Shut your mouth, Tommy.

WILLIS

Why not?

TOMAS

It's too hard. You'd never get close enough to do it, and if you did, you wouldn't get away with it. You'd blow it for all of us.

WILLIS

You don't know much about me, do you?

TOMAS

I know you did time, which means you were stupid enough to get caught somewhere along the line. Once you fuck up, you fuck up again, and then again, until it becomes part of your P.O. This job can't be done unless it's done right. You may have been the man for a poor defenseless fuck like Camacho, but you're not the gun for this job.

WILLIS

Maybe nobody is.

TOMAS

Then I'll do it myself. I'll whip up the meanest combination dish and force-feed it to him till he croaks of Montezuma's Revenge.

(WILLIS gets up and crosses to TOMAS. Glares at him.)

WILLIS

Consider him whacked.

TOMAS

Commission.

WILLIS

Hundred grand. Up front.

TOMAS

(tossing him a bag of cash)

Ten up front. The rest after.

WILLIS

(tossing the bag to PEGGY)

I don't work that way.

TOMAS

Make this an exception.

(WILLIS considers this as PEGGY counts the cash.)

WILLIS

I choose the date, location, and method.

TOMAS

Just keep us apprized.

WILLIS

I want a guarantee of secrecy.

TOMAS

Granted.

WILLIS

I'll need his address, color and make of car, recent photos of him and family members.

TOMAS

No problem.

WILLIS

A schedule of his daily and weekly routine, caseload, lunch breaks, appointments, and so forth.

TOMAS
You'll have it next week.

WILLIS
No backing out after today.

TOMAS
It goes both ways.

WILLIS
And I deal with one person only and only one.

TOMAS
You deal with me.

PEGGY
It's all here. 10 thou.

WILLIS
Mrs. Santos, you can tell your husband to ease his soul.

NENA
He goes to trial April 6.

(Everyone leaves but TOMAS.)

TOMAS
[Pay money and someone dies. Respect. Power. I am the FBI, CIA, all the governments, their armed forces, Wall Street, the Mob, the High Court, and the Holy Ghost of the Mother Church. I am power. Money is justice. Good money is death.]

(TOMAS goes. VICKY packs an open suitcase. NENA stands over her.)

VICKY
Make it fast, Nena. I'm busy.

NENA
Where are you going?

VICKY
Mexico. What is it?

NENA
(holding out VICKY'S ring)
You left this at the office.

VICKY
I don't want it.

NENA

Here.

VICKY

No keep it.

NENA

It's yours, *Victoria*.

VICKY

[Mine what's mine what's the point there's no future no mañana everything comes hasta mañana as if mañana could make everything right]

NENA

He's an asshole, but he's your husband.

VICKY

[No mañana no baby no baby room no hope so what? Hope is a chain hope is our sickness our hell]

NENA

You made your vows to him.

VICKY

I said no! Listen to me, Nena! I've had it with Santos & Santos! I'm sick of the store, the furniture, the house, I'm through with this shit.

NENA

You got to see past this, see your way through to the things that make life good.

VICKY

What? BMWs? Wide-screen TVs? Designer shoes?

NENA

What's wrong with that? Back where I come from, we didn't even have shoes. Now I got thirty pairs.

VICKY

So do I, Nena. They just don't mean as much to me.

NENA

They would, if you had children.--

VICKY

I knew you were going to say that.

NENA

It's the truth. Once my babies came, everything changed. I began to care for the quality of things, to want the best for--

VICKY

Don't lecture me about your kids. I know what you're bringing them up to be. Good for you, Nena, just make sure they don't find out their mommy's Juarez trash.

NENA

¿Y tu? ¿Que eres tu? A born stuck-up bitch with only a birthright to be proud of. American chick. Big Deal. You're not whiter than I am. You just act like it. Too good for the things that dazzle us. Go to Mexico, see how they treat you there. You think I got it bad here, there you're worse than a pinchi gringa. Lookit you now. Lookit you.

VICKY

What happened to me? I was something. I was like PROMISED this great life. I thought I could ride high on the Santos name.

I thought

oh god

I was something

NENA

Ay, mijita. Better get your ass clean right away and hold on to this.

(placing the ring in her hand)

Our kids deserve a chance to fuck up their lives, too, don't they?

(NENA goes. TOMAS has been watching as she stand over her open suitcase.)

VICKY

[Hope is our only possible hell]

TOMAS

Hi.

VICKY

I must have left ten messages on your machine.

TOMAS

Sorry. I was out of town. Vicky, I need some money.

VICKY

Why ask me? Negro's the one with the cash.

TOMAS

The furniture store's in your name. You could go to the bank and borrow against the store. I need at least 90,000.

VICKY

¿Para que? Are you in trouble? (No response.) That's your father's store. His soul is in it.

TOMAS

You don't have to tell me that.

VICKY

What's happening to you? Why are you keeping yourself from me?

TOMAS

Vicky, don't ask me any questions. Just I need the money.

VICKY

Look at us, Tommy. A couple of scarecrows with all our needs coming out at the seams. Is this what we wanted to be?

TOMAS

Your phone's ringing.

(FERNIE, naked, draped in a bedsheet. Music.)

FERNIE

Yo, Vick.

VICKY

Where are you calling me from?

FERNIE

The office. I'm gonna be home late. Don't wait up for me.

VICKY

What's that I hear in the background?

FERNIE

Fax machine. It's acting up. Love you. Gotta go.

VICKY

Fernando, I got Tommy over here right now and he wants me to--

FERNIE

Great. Why don't you two rent a movie? I gotta go.

(FERNIE begins a long slow march off.)

FERNIE

Get your ass ready. Your body's about to know Raza. It's about to drink gold. You gonna plumb the depth of my race and suck the long dick of history. Fuse yourself to the glories of Aztlan. The million gods of invasion are gonna swarm on you and turn your flesh to fire!

And remember, tonight, baby, your name is Victoria!

(He goes.)

VICKY

How much do you need?

TOMAS

90 K.

VICKY

Are we gonna see any of it back?

(TOMAS looks away.)

What do I care? It's not my business. I'll get it. But don't leave me alone tonight, Tommy. This night the thing I need most is you.

TOMAS

You're my brother's wife, remember?

(VICKY slams the suitcase shut and stands apart as WILLIS, MIKE, PEGGY, FELECIA, GONZALEZ, and the JUDGE enter. MIKE stands with a deck of bingo cards. During the following sequence, PEGGY and FELECIA provide props for the JUDGE as WILLIS observes the action with stopwatch and binoculars. The JUDGE walks to the designated areas to indicate movement within time and space.)

WILLIS

This is the Day of Whack.

TOMAS

Phase one.

PEGGY

The Judge wakes at 6:00 every morning.

JUDGE

But today, a vivid dream stirs me at 5:57.

TOMAS

The exact time I open my eyes.

PEGGY

He gets up, fetches the paper from the slot in his door.

FELECIA

He showers, dresses, makes breakfast for him and his biddy.

JUDGE

I read my daily passage from the Book of Psalms.

TOMAS

I read mine from the Judges.

WILLIS

And he goes to his car. He uses an automatic garage door opener.

JUDGE

I drive in silence, the faint remembrance of the dream filtering through my mind.

TOMAS

As he drives south, I drive north to Vicky's house for the money.

MIKE

In the jail, Camacho and me wager for our souls in a game of *Loteria*.

GONZALEZ

I prepare the opening statement for the trial.

TOMAS

Phase two.

PEGGY

He goes down Broadway and arrives at the parking garage downtown at 7:45.

FELECIA

And he ain't wearing no bulletproof vest.

JUDGE

On this day a comely young creature is bending over the open hood of her car. The security officers are helping her out.

VICKY

I bring the money in my suitcase and we count it.

PEGGY

He parks in his assigned space and goes through an underpass to the Federal Courthouse.

FELECIA

While the cop is with me, Pappy slips inside and goes to his car.

WILLIS

I quietly break in and take the batteries from the garage door opener. Then I replace it, lock the car, and stroll away.

MIKE

LA CORONA.

PEGGY

His first case is at 8:00. He comes five minutes early every day, barring weekends and holidays.

WILLIS

He sees both misdemeanor and felony cases all morning long.

JUDGE

There is a faint ringing in my ears during some hearings.

TOMAS

It's the breach. I hear it again getting louder.

GONZALEZ

I am going to win this case.

MIKE

EL CATRIN.

TOMAS

Phase three.

FELECIA

At 9:32 I fly out to Midland where I check into a Best Western.

WILLIS

(as PEGGY enters with a rifle and ammo)

And I prepare the hardware Peg bought me three weeks before.

PEGGY

This here's a Mauser 98 Bolt-action Rifle. Mostly used for deer, this baby has a sweet-as-pie adjustable trigger. It's real light, real smooth, and real strong. It's chambered for the 7mm Magnum cartridge, and I bought me the 100 grain hollow-point. I also picked out a top-of-the-line Leupold 10x Silver scope. With these crosshairs you can shoot the head off a sparrow at 300 yards.

WILLIS

Peg, you know I would never do that. Birds are sacred.

PEGGY

You know what name I bought it under? Ida B. Lyon.

WILLIS

Damn, I dunno which I like better: my guns or my women.

(NENA comes on to take the suitcase from VICKY.)

TOMAS

Phase four. When we are done counting, Nena comes over and takes the load.

NENA

Me pongo mis sunglasses and catch me a plane to Midland.

MIKE

EL PAJARO.

GONZALEZ

I am going to bring down Santos & Santos.

FELECIA

I lie in bed in my panties eatin' fajita-pitas and watchin' HBO.

PEGGY

At 11:30 he breaks for lunch to Joseph's Deli, usually in the company of other jurists or big-time city politicians.

JUDGE

I take a chance on the combination Mexican plate.

WILLIS

He has two cocktails with lunch and tips like a woman.

PEGGY

He goes back at 1:00 and resumes his hearing and the like, until 3:00, which is when he's done for the day.

JUDGE

This dream is nagging me on the way to my car. It has bedeviled my whole day.

TOMAS

Phase Five. Vicky closes the store early and joins me at her house.

MIKE

LA MANO.

GONZALEZ

The only way now is up. I'm going to score.

WILLIS

He drives back Alamo Heights way to the Country Club, where he's a standing member, and suits out for a game of tennis.

PEGGY

He plays hard with any one of a small circle of geezers with overdeveloped calves. Judge definitely likes to win.

JUDGE

But this day I lose when a face from the dream seizes me for a flash and makes me miss the ball. My insides are burning.

TOMAS

Phase six.

FELECIA

At 4:00 I get a call. Then a knock at 4:05.

NENA

(with the suitcase)

Where's your father?

FELECIA

Out.

NENA

I'm supposed to leave this with you?

FELECIA

That's my understanding.

NENA

The key's inside.

FELECIA

How'm I supposed to open it?

NENA

You're not.

(NENA drops the suitcase. FELECIA takes it.)

PEGGY

I get a call shortly thereafter.

TOMAS

Phase Seven.

WILLIS

At 5:30 he showers and phones his wife from the lobby.

PEGGY

By 5:50 he's headed home. Takes a left out of the driveway, goes right, then right again, then left, then straight, then left.

TOMAS

In the evening with all the lights in the house out, we sit in front of a TV neither of us have the nerve to turn on.

MIKE

EL DIABLITO.

WILLIS

He pulls into his garage at 6:00 on the nose. A creature of meticulous habit.

JUDGE

The garage won't open. Push the pad again and wait.

TOMAS

We wait.

PEGGY

The second he pushes the garage door opener, I'm packing our stuff into the car.

FELECIA

I'm over Ft. Worth on Southwest Fl. 401.

WILLIS

I'm on the roof of the Victory Arms Apartment Complex aiming the Model 98 Mauser rifle with the high power telescopic sight across eight clean manicured suburban lawns.

JUDGE

The garage won't open. Then in a great fit of gas, it occurs to me. The entire dream.

WILLIS

He gets out of his car. An abstract look on his face that I really hate to mess up.

PEGGY/FELECIA

He walks to his front door.

GONZALEZ

Then I hear it on the news.

MIKE/NENA/VICKY

EL CORAZON.

TOMAS

Now.

JUDGE

The dream. The middle of this narrow street, cobbled with greasy stones that shine like exposed ulcers in the green light of the streetlamp. Overhead the night opens its mouth to me with a sound like steam. Old crumbling buildings with the shutters drawn. No one out. One doorway has a sheet draped over it. I peer inside. There, on a stinking mattress, lit by a candle, Paloma. Her knees drawn up to her chin, her black hair falling over her face. She's young all over again. With a look, she draws me to her and we are in each others' arms, kissing and groping under worn sheets. I am aware only of her muffled cries, but when I finally come, I feel something like a single burning heartbeat shoot through my spine, shoot, shoot right through, and it comes out the small of my back and I am suspended in air. Then I look up beside me, and standing over me, I see him. I see him with the eyes of judgment pressing into me.

TOMAS

What time is it?

VICKY

I don't know.

TOMAS

Don't turn the light on.

VICKY

What's happened?

FELECIA
The phone rings.

TOMAS
Final phase. Yes.

WILLIS
To-weee. To-weeee.

TOMAS
Is it done?

WILLIS
I rang his bell. Once for you.

(WILLIS fires his rifle. A tremendous crack. The JUDGE falls to the floor with a cry.)

And once for me.

(He fires again. The JUDGE groans and is still.)

It was a pleasure to serve you.

MIKE
La muerte.

(Everyone goes, but VICKY, TOMAS, and the JUDGE.)

VICKY
Who was it?

TOMAS
Judge Benton is dead.

VICKY
Is this...what I paid for?

(He starts to take his clothes off.)

TOMAS
These are the wages of brotherhood.

VICKY
Tommy....have you....murdered this man?

TOMAS
(moving toward her half-undressed)
These are the wounds that bind us.

VICKY

TOMMY!

TOMAS

Our blood is now blood of the house.

VICKY

WHAT DID YOU MAKE ME DO! DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN!

TOMAS

(taking her in his arms)

Now we are fully made. Familia, Santos.

(BLACK OUT. She cries in the darkness. End of Act 2.)

SANTOS & SANTOS

Act 3.

(GONZALEZ at the press conference. Flashing bulbs of cameras.)

GONZALEZ

This is a grievous day. The brutal slaying of this fair-minded man who devoted his life to the Texas Court, cut down like a dog in his own front yard, is a crime which deepens our shame. But mark my words: from this shame I draw fire. I will not rest until the person or persons responsible for this outrage are apprehended, tried, and convicted.

(He steps glumly out of the light, pauses, then unleashes *a grito* of jubilation.)

AAAAAAAAAAAAA-HOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO-AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

(NENA, more visible pregnant, enters.)

NENA

What are you so happy about?

GONZALEZ

If you had anything to do with this killing, lady, God bless you. Your family has just clinched my fame!

NENA

What are you talking about? The Judge is dead.

GONZALEZ

Between us, *senora*, I hated the man. Crusty old fart was a bully, a bigot, and he never remembered my name. But now, without lifting a finger, I've moved from a routine narcotics probe to the crime of the decade. That's what I call upward mobility!

NENA

You talk like you're the one who shot the Judge.

GONZALEZ

(producing a set of tapes)

Not me, *senora*, but as Benton's grieving avenger, I should warn you: one word of murder in these Santos sessions, and I'm gonna try you, dry you, and fry you till you're black as beans. God, I love this country!

(He goes. NENA turns to the table where MIKE, haggard and weak, waits.)

NENA

To hell with him and his stupid tapes. The new judge has a lenient face.

Tommy ain't been seen much. Vicky's the last one he talked to. *Que bueno que hicieron* postpone el trial. Fernie needs the time.

Viejo, remember that whole mess of cash from Santos Furniture we used? We couldn't pay it back. The bank took over the business. After thirty years in this dumb town. When Fernando found out about it, he hit the roof. And then the *pendejo* hit his wife.

(FERNIE drags VICKY in, her face swollen and bleeding.)

FERNIE

What the fuck were you thinking? That store's been in our family for years!

VICKY

Let me go!

FERNIE

We entrusted you with that business. My old man signed it over to you. How could you do this? What did you do with the money?

VICKY

I gave it away to charity, just like you big boys.

FERNIE

Don't fuck with me Vicky! I'll knock you teeth across the room!

VICKY

All right! All right! Let me go.

FERNIE

Orale. Level with me. Where's the money?

VICKY

In the judge.

FERNIE

Say what?

VICKY

Half went through his heart. The other half through his spinal column.

NENA

She told him everything, but it didn't do her no good.

(FERNIE drags her out as she screams for help.)

He beat the hell out of her, *Viejo*. The thing was she was pregnant, and she lost the baby. Your brother he killed his own kid. *Lastima*. That woman used to be the pride of the Lower Valley. Otherwise, things are back to normal. I bought the girls some new clothes for school and the baby's almost done.

(MIKE nods slowly and rises.)

MIKE

Nena, all these months in this shithole have made me see things clearly. You know what we need to do as a raza? We need to learn to ski. That's right. And play a lotta polo! We gotta drink bottled water and eat bland foods. Fuck, we gotta learn to speak English.

NENA

We do.

MIKE

Yeah, but not as good as the Muppets. We gotta think different, we gotta think mini-series! I see it so clearly. Jail is just the thing we Mexicans need!

(MIGUEL charges off. NENA crosses herself as VICKY enters shaking with rage.
FERNIE enters separately.)

FERNIE

Vicky. I know what's what.

VICKY

What are you talking about?

FERNIE

That kid wasn't mine. We haven't slept together in months.

VICKY

What do you want, a prize?

FERNIE

Whose was it?

VICKY

Get off my case, Negro. You never told me about your little flings!

FERNIE

Whose kid was it!

VICKY

First you tell me who you've been seeing on the side.

FERNIE

Are you listening to that talk again? Who's been feeding you this line?

(PAM emerges from the other side.)

PAM

Me.

FERNIE

You told her?

PAM

What was I supposed to do? She looked at me with those swollen eyes and asked for the truth. I told her the truth.

VICKY

Everything.

FERNIE

Orale, Vicky, this ain't so bad. We'll see a counselor.

VICKY

You see a counselor. I'm seeing a lawyer.

PAM

Man who does that to his wife, I want no part of.

FERNIE

Shut up! You're fired!

PAM

(throwing her balled up resignation in his face)

Too late! I'm gone! Write your own memos, counselor.

(Pam goes. TOMAS enters and watches.)

VICKY

Get out of my house.

FERNIE

Orale, Vicky--

VICKY

GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

(FERNIE goes. VICKY sits and holds herself steady.)

TOMAS

[*mi carnal*. the aztec god of bullshit. four hundred years of degenerate blood. his own kid on the altar. offered up to America. the miscarriage of justice.]

VICKY

About time you showed up. Where have you been hiding? You missed the show.

TOMAS

There were some things I had to clear up.

VICKY

Do you know about my miscarriage?

TOMAS

Yes, I was— god, what did he do to you?

VICKY

Don't, Tommy. Please don't look at me like that. It doesn't help.

TOMAS

Shithead.

VICKY

Quit it, Tommy. I'm over it.

TOMAS

How could he do this to you!

VICKY

I'm leaving him.

TOMAS

Where are you going?

VICKY

Away from here. I don't have to live in a house of someone else's effects. I want my own furniture. As far as I'm concerned, this is the year one and you are all gone.

TOMAS

You can't leave now, Vick.

VICKY

Just watch me.

TOMAS

What about the family?

VICKY

You're the family now. You've taken the Santos name to new lows.

TOMAS

What about us? We started something. You walk out on me and everything blacks out.

VICKY

At one point...in the kitchen...I was curled up against the trash compactor as Negro kecked the shit out of me...and I started to black out. My body started to fill with this thick liquid and a calm that I have never felt before swept me out of my pain. With all my being I invited death. I wanted to close my eyes and die. I wanted not to be this woman, this hurt not to hurt, and my blood not to bleed on the linoleum. But then this scream rose from my womb and tore through my lungs.

(in the faintest whisper)

tommy

Negro just looked at me. Couldn't do nothing else but look.

TOMAS

You leave him to me. I'll fix him.

VICKY

I wouldn't blame Fernie too much. It wasn't his baby. It was yours.

(The JUDGE enters.)

TOMAS

Mine?

JUDGE

Your son. Flesh of your flesh.

VICKY

You got death on you like a frost, Tommy.

JUDGE

Corpus delicti.

VICKY

So long. I don't want any of your glorious Santos fucks coming near me ever again.

(She goes.)

TOMAS

[My son.

JUDGE

Conceived on the day of my slaughter.

TOMAS

No. It couldn't be mine. I wouldn't let my baby...I would have taken care--.

JUDGE

Denial. Trait of a nation with its roots in treason. Michael screws his community, you screw him, he screws the biker, and you screw the whole kitnkaboodle. Cycles of betrayal.

TOMAS

Right after the shooting, I went across the border to J-town. La Mariscal. I drowned myself in whores and tequila in celebration of your death. On my last night, they brought in the dregs. A withered stalked of an old whore, with painted eyes and the yellow teeth of a monkey. Dressed in the tattered bathrobe of an old john. She told me her name in this cigarette voice as she slipped her bones over my leg. That's when I knew. This was your symbol, the one you cherished. Your Paloma.

JUDGE

My symbol never ages. She just moves on to the next one. From my arm...

(showing him his forearm, where the tattoo has disappeared)

...to yours.

(TOMAS rolls back his sleeve, discovering the tattoo of the bleeding heart on his arm. The JUDGE goes.)

TOMAS

Branded on my forehead the sign of Mexican descent the heart taken from its vault sense severed from sense la vida worth a few centavos forever on me now.

(WILLIS enters, gazing at the ski. The sound of surf.)

WILLIS

I like coming to the beach. There's a great variety of sea birds along the Gulf coast. Gulls, terns, bitterns, sandpipers. They know where the feeding is...Where you get the tattoo, kid?

TOMAS

In Juarez. Do you have it?

WILLIS

(producing a small paper bag)

Indeed I do. You ever pop one of these?

TOMAS

No.

WILLIS

Basic handgun. Won't go off unless you fire it. You sure this ain't a job for me?

TOMAS

(taking the gun out of the bag)

No. This is an affair I take care of myself.

WILLIS

(as he hands him the ammo)

I'm entitled to know who you're whackin', kid.

TOMAS

(loading the gun)

It's a family matter.

WILLIS

You ever done one, Tomboy? It's a high. Very few vocations confront you with the Great Void, if you see my meaning. For a second, you're right on the cusp of a great tension between the powers of life and death. You can almost see the bare tissue stretchin' in the air before you, like a muscle. And then bam, it's over.

TOMAS

I know what it's like.

WILLIS

You only think you do.

TOMAS

(aiming the gun squarely at him.)

Okay, wiseass, tell us about dying. Or don't you know what this end of the gun is like?

WILLIS

Hey now.

(TOMAS produces from his pockets CAMACHO's teeth.)

TOMAS

Open wide. AAAAAAHHH!

(WILLIS opens wide. TOMAS crams the teeth in his mouth. WILLIS gurgles.)

Remember these? They're Camacho's. The teeth of a man with no cause to die.

(WILLIS gags and spits them out.)

TOMAS

You may pull the trigger, Casper, but I will it. I live it down. That's the power a cheap gun-for-hire like you will never understand. I assume responsibility. I assume the guilt. There's power in that.

WILLIS

I reckon there is.

(TOMAS turns away. The hammering sound.)

TOMAS

Hear it? The breach. I got the doom beating on me like a drum.
Bu-bum bu-bum bu-bum.

WILLIS

Bottle it up, boy. You don't want to vent that. I suggest you get yourself a hobby. Like rare coins, or fossils. Or birds.

(TOMAS goes. WILLIS dusts himself off and turns to PEGGY and FELECIA reveling over the open suitcase overflowing with dollar bills.)

FELECIA

WOOOOOeeee! Money money money money money!

PEGGY

It sure is pretty, Casper.

WILLIS

Reap and ye shall sow, saith the lord.

FELECIA

Does this mean we can get cable?

WILLIS

Sure does, baby. (to PEGGY) What'd you do with the rifle?

PEGGY

It's gatherin' fish shit in Lake Ray Hubbard.

FELECIA

Can I have my cut in hundred dollar bill denominations, Pappy?

WILLIS

Not just yet. We're stashin' it away for the time bein'. Peg, you put this in our shed. I'm drivin' to Lubbock and El Paso to invest the rest. Send a check to the Audubon Society while you're at it.

FELECIA

Bye, Pappy. Give me a kissy-hug.

(He drops a handful of bills down her shorts and goes.)

Lookit what he gave me! Five hundred smackers!

PEGGY

Give it here.

FELECIA

Uh-u! These are mine.

PEGGY

Felecia Lee, you're not spendin' any of it till things settle down. Now, you let me put that--

FELECIA

NO! I'm goin' to Neiman's and buyin' me a new dress and some new flats with this.

PEGGY

You're doin' no such a thing. Give it!

FELECIA

What, and let you blow it on another bad hairdo? No way Jose.

PEGGY

Four your information, that's part of our vacation fund. We're going on a Caribbean cruise.

FELECIA

I don't want to go on no cruise.

PEGGY

Who said you were? You're going to school, missy, and learning you some manners. Casper and me are going by ourselves.

FELECIA

Fat chance. Pappy's not going anywhere without me.

PEGGY

What makes you say that?

FELECIA

He's just not, least of all on some boring old boat with you.

PEGGY

You have got a liberal mouth on you, girl.

FELECIA

He loves me in a deep and everlastin' way.

PEGGY

Pipe dreams.

FELECIA

Ain't no pipe dream he's pokin' me with, Momma.

PEGGY

Come again?

FELECIA

You might as well know. We're in love.

PEGGY

What the hell are you saying?

FELECIA

We're lovers. Been so for six months now.

PEGGY

You're lying.

FELECIA

We done it every time you been out. He even told me, the best part about being with you was being with me. We're lovers. You got no choice in the matter.

PEGGY

I reckon I don't.

(Pause. Then PEGGY calmly rises and goes to the phone.)

Hello, FBI, please.

FELECIA

What are you doing!

PEGGY

An extension will do, thank you.

FELECIA

(rushing up and snatching the phone from her)

Stop it! Hang up!

PEGGY

I want to report--

FELECIA

Momma! No! No! Hang up! Hang it!

PEGGY

Hold on. There seems to be some interference...

(They fight for the phone. PEGGY finally slaps FELECIA down. She retrieves the receiver as FELECIA cries.)

Now. Let's have us a little talk about this judge.

(GONZALEZ marches in as PEGGY drags FELECIA off. He stands with the tape recorder. The following sequence represents taped telephone exchanges involving TOMAS, VICKY, NENA, FERNIE, and WILLIS. They speak in rapid agitated tones.)

VICKY

Answer the phone, dammit. Answer the phone. Answer it.

NENA

Diga.

VICKY

Nena!

NENA

What?

VICKY

You alone?

NENA

Yeah.

VICKY

Nena, the Feds know.

Fuck. NENA

You gotta split to Mexico, man. Go. VICKY

I'll deal with it. NENA

Go! Get your kids and your ass to J-town, NOW! VICKY

I'm not going. I'm not going back to Mexico. I'm not a Mexican! NENA

Nena! VICKY

Vicky! TOMAS

What! VICKY

I just got the word that-- TOMAS

I know already! I know! VICKY

Deny everything! Deny it! TOMAS

What are you gonna do! VICKY

Later! Call nena! TOMAS

I did already! VICKY

Call Fernie. TOMAS

Vicky! FERNIE

VICKY

That's him on the other line!

TOMAS

Bye!

VICKY

Fernie, it's me.

FERNIE

Malas noticias, Vick.

VICKY

I know, I know.

FERNIE

Shit meets fan. Fan turns. Shit flies. End of story.

VICKY

What are we gonna do?

FERNIE

Honey, your problem. I didn't have squat to do with this.

VICKY

Then clear off the line. Nena!

NENA

No. I'm not going anywhere.

VICKY

There isn't time to argue, Nena!

NENA

Someone's on the other line.

TOMAS

Nena!

NENA

Olvidalo, Tomas. I'm staying right here with Michael.

TOMAS

Hold on, I got another call.

WILLIS

We're in trouble, kid.

TOMAS

Your wife is a rat, Casper. Where are you?

WILLIS

Not staying. I recommend the open road.

TOMAS

I don't know you.

WILLIS

I don't know you.

TOMAS

Get off the line! Nena!

GONZALEZ

Hello, Tommy.

(A pause. TOMAS is distressed at this new voice.)

Hello.

(TOMAS slowly backs away.)

NENA

Tomas, answer the phone.

FERNIE

De volada, bro. Answer.

NENA

I know you're there, Tomas.

VICKY

Answer, dammit. Answer the phone.

(All disperse except NENA who turns on a vacuum cleaner and VICKY who goes to MIKE, CAMACHO standing by him. They sit still a moment. The vac goes off.)

VICKY

It was awful, Mike.

(NENA looks down at the vac in

Bewilderment.

She was cleaning 'cause the Maid had quit a week before.

(She flips the switch to make it come on again, to no avail.)

That's when they came for her.

There were cops everywhere, all Over the house, but it was

(She turns around to see

Gonzalez walking in.)

GONZALEZ who came in to serve her. (GONZALEZ produces a document which he hands to her.)

That Willis woman fingered

(NENA scans the document in

her along with Tommy. Silence.)

VICKY

All he said was...

and touched her elbow, when she cut loose.

GONZALEZ

I thought you should know. I come from La Colonia too.

(With a cry, she raises the stem of the vacuum cleaner over her head and swings it at him, striking him hard. She struggles to get away, but he chases after her, grabbing her by the legs. She collapses, kicking and swinging her fists at him.)

But then something happened.

(NENA hunches over in great pain as GONZALEZ holds her down.)

VICKY

It took hours, a shitload of doctors, and a *rosario* at Nena's house, but it came through fine. The baby came through fine.

MIKE

This is our ascension! (standing) To be born at the precious moment of his mother's arrest! The child is vindication!

(going to NENA and GONZALEZ who are still on the floor)

WATCH THIS BABY! THIS BABY MUST BE NURSED ON PURE HOMOGENOUS MILK! NO CHILE, NO PAN DULCE, NOT A SINGLE PINTO BEAN! IF HE IS TO BE A TRUE AMERICAN HE MUST LIVE, HE MUST CATCH THE DISCO FEVER, HE MUST SET HIS BROS AFIRE!

(He reaches in his pocket and produces a match.)

I'll light a *vela* for him.

(He charges off.)

VICKY

Yeah. Nena's okay, too.

(TOMAS enters carrying the painting of Zapata, as VICKY, NENA and GONZALEZ recede.)

TOMAS

[tomas santos, revised bilingual edition. first generation. born in el piso del norte. ex-tex-mex

(Placing it on the table, he scrapes off the cocaine with a letter opener and rubs it against his gums. DON MIGUEL appears.)

DON MIGUEL

Tomas Tomas Tomas. Finally my youngest leaves for his American life.

TOMAS

Papa, I don't know what to do. Everything leads to death.

DON MIGUEL

I finished just in time for you to see. This one I made special just for me. See how Concordia erupts from the wood?

TOMAS

Tenemos nada. This world is nothing. People are as thin as lies.

DON MIGUEL

Before you go, hazme un favor, mijo. The only thing I ask of you.

TOMAS

Anything.

DON MIGUEL

Promise to betray me. When the time comes, promise to turn against your father. It is what anyone who wants to succeed in this land must do. I did it to *mis padres* and your children will do it to you. But in the end, remember this. You are the first law.

TOMAS

The first law.

DON MIGUEL

Mira, my finest piece. I'll be buried in it like a king.

FERNIE

(off)

TOMMY! YO!

DON MIGUEL

(as he fades)

Dios te bendiga, hijo mio.]

(FERNIE enters.)

FERNIE

Where the hell you been, man? Everybody's been lookin' for you.

TOMAS

I know.

FERNIE

What are you doin' here?

TOMAS

Look, Negro. The whole place dusted for prints and they missed Zapata.

FERNIE

C'mon, bro. Let me get you out of here.

TOMAS

Did they get the others?

FERNIE

All except you.

TOMAS

Even ol' Casper?

FERNIE

Hell yeah. He was easy.

(WILLIS staggers in, shirtless and in shorts, carrying a gym bag and a loaded gun.)

He was goin' 90 on Interstate 10 in his T-bird with a shitload of cash and cocaine. Vato estaba todo paranoid.

WILLIS

How could I not be paranoid? My own women betrayed me. They revealed me to the Law and brought ruin on my head.

FERNIE

He was so coked up that when his muffler started backfiring, he thought the Feds had put a tracer on him.

WILLIS

They bugged my car! I had no choice but to pull over in the middle of the desert and get out my gun and stand over my T. I said Kyrie Eleison over the shiny red hood and Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! I sent the ol' girl on like a lame horse.

FERNIE

He ruined a perfect good car.

WILLIS

I wiped a dusty tear, reloaded my gun and then my nose, and started walking east on I-One-Oh.

TOMAS

What a maniac.

FERNIE

He's waving a gun in hundred degree heat in the middle of Bumfuck, Texas, trying to flag down passing cars, when who comes along?

WILLIS

The posse!

FERNIE

El Highway patrol. Soon four cars are circled around this *gringo* lunatic with a gun and a gym bag full of cash.

TOMAS

So what did they do?

WILLIS

(putting the gun under his chin)

Don't come any closer! I'll put a blowhole through my head! No-one's taking me alive!

FERNIE

Fool started ranting all sorts of shit.

WILLIS

On behalf of my avian brothers, I bequeath my body to the open air where the birds may pick my bones clean! I shall be part and parcel of the fowls above! Kreee! Kreee!

TOMAS

I don't believe it.

FERNIE

Bull all of five minutes later--.

WILLIS

(throwing his hands up)

Aw, forget this. It's just too damn hot. Any y'all gotta Big Red?

TOMAS

Did he confess?

FERNIE

Oh yeah.

WILLIS

Hey now, I never touched the judge, but I confess unto God, I'm the Grassy Knoll. I popped Jack Kennedy. I popped Marilyn too. And JR Ewing too! Pit-a-zee! Pit-a-zee!

(He exits.)

FERNIE

You're the only one left. You been bad, *ese*. The community is like major disappointed in you.

TOMAS

I bet they are.

FERNIE

What the hell are you doing here?

TOMAS

I'm mourning the death of my child.

FERNIE

Say what?

TOMAS

The breach has rattled its little bones to mush. And I come to mourn.

(They gaze at each other. Crossfade to GONZALEZ in full light. Press conference.)

GONZALEZ

In the spiraling events since the tragic slaying of Judge Benton, our office -in conjunction with the FBI- has spent millions on dollars and thousands of man-hours conducting its most thorough probe in history. I'm announcing today the arrest of several suspects allegedly involved in the assassination. These include:

(formally parading his suspects)

Casper Thomas Willis, professional hitman

(WILLIS trots by waving his handcuffs to the cameras.)

His wife Peggy Tomlinson

(PEGGY rushes past with her face hidden.)

Her daughter who is a minor.

(FELECIA, distraught and weeping, goes by.)

Michael Santos who is in custody and awaiting trial on drug racketeering charges.

MIKE

¡Mexicanos! ¡Pochos! Hear what I say! Give up your *Virgen*, go Scientology and listen to the Beach Boys! Dye your hair blond and sin no more! ¡DISNEYLANDIA!

GONZALEZ

His wife Magdalena Ruiz Santos

(NENA is quickly conveyed in a wheelchair.)

Pamela Hanson, who works for the Law Office of Santon & Santos

(PAM strides by like a model wearing sunglasses.)

And Tomas Santos, considered by our office to be the mastermind.

(TOMAS crosses by, betraying no expression.)

He is also charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of his brother Fernando, who was found dead in their law office. We're questioning other possible accomplices to the assassination.

(VICKY appears.)

VICKY

No.

GONZALEZ

Let me rephrase the question: Did you help kill the judge?

VICKY

I'll rephrase my answer: Fuck no.

GONZALEZ

Tommy asked you for the money.

VICKY

He didn't tell me what for.

GONZALEZ

It was shipped in your suitcase.

VICKY

Which I'd given Tommy the weeks before.

GONZALEZ

You and Tommy seem to be pretty intimate.

VICKY

What is this shit? Just because you're the man of the hour, you think you can say whatever you want to my face? Excuse me, Batman, I've got a husband to bury.

(She gets up.)

GONZALEZ

Sit down. I said, SIT DOWN.

(VICKY sits.)

Don't try your Rottweiler act with me 'cause I will meet you halfway, ruca. I'll charge you with withholding evidence and put you away for YEARS. Since this case started, I've been shunned, slandered, and called a *vendido*. My family has received death threats. But that's business. I know what I am, and I know what I sacrificed to be what I am. I live the life I want. I just want to know what motive Tomas would have for shooting your husband.

VICKY

Tommy loved his brothers. He'd never sacrifice them for a career.

GONZALEZ

Have you ever seen this man?

(WILLIS, in prison greys, and FELECIA at the table.)

WILLIS

Lesha doll.

FELECIA

They let me out, Pappy.

WILLIS

That's good.

FELECIA

They said they didn't have enough on me. The lawyer said he might could get me off if I testify against you.

WILLIS

Well, you know better than that, don't you?

FELECIA

Uh-huh. I'm so mad at her, Pappy. I can't believe she turned us in.

WILLIS

Your momma has a mean streak.

FELECIA

It just riles me. She did it to keep us apart, you know.

WILLIS

Yahweh will punish her.

FELECIA

They said, when they caught you, that you were driving back to Dallas to kill us both.

WILLIS

I wouldn't do a nasty thing like that, would I?

FELECIA

I s'ppose. Oh, Pappy, I miss you. All 'cause of that judge. You should'na killed him.

WILLIS

I didn't, honey pie.

FELECIA

You didn't?

WILLIS

Well, I admit I shed his grace all over his front yard, but until they find the rifle, they have the wrong man. Now, why'nt you slung over and let me feel the sweetness of you for Pappy's sake?

FELECIA

Here? We can't do it here.

WILLIS

Nobody's watching. Slung over and lemme dip my chip.

FELECIA

Later, Pappy. When you get out.

WILLIS

That be a while. Felecia Lee, don't vex me. Lean in.

(FELECIA slumps in her seat toward WILLIS. He slips his hand under the table between her legs.)

Oh, honey. I been missing you so bad. I feel like bustin' wide open with--

(WILLIS withdraws his hand, producing a small button with a long thin cord attached from under her dress.)

The hell is this?

(GONZALEZ steps forward with the tape player.)

FELECIA

Sorry, Pappy.

(GONZALEZ plays it. WILLIS' VOICE broadcasts loudly over speakers: "Well, I admit I shed his grace all over his front yard, but until they find the rifle, they have the wrong man.")

WILLIS

You? You wearin' a wire?

(FELECIA quickly retracts her bug and scrambles away. WILLIS pounds the table like a madman.)

YOU LITTLE BITCH! YOU GOT A WIRE! DAMN YOU! YOU TREASONOUS LITTLE TART! YOU DONE HANGED ME BY A WIRE! YOU HEAR! YOU HANGED ME! GOD! THESE WIRES! THESE GODDAMN WIRES! HELL WILL BE A PLACE OF WIRES!

(He stomps off, tearing off the buttons from his shirt and ranting to himself. GONZALEZ turns to VICKY.)

VICKY

No. I've never seen him.

GONZALEZ

You're free to go, Mrs. Santos...for now.

(He goes. VICKY puts on her veil and slowly crosses the stage toward TOMAS.)

VICKY

Cordero de Dios, que quitas el pecado del mundo,
Ten piedad de nosotros.
Cordero de Dios, que quitas el pecado del mundo,
Ten piedad de nosotros.
Cordero de Dios, que quitas el pecado del mundo,
Danos la paz.

(She joins him at the table.)

VICKY

Fernie was buried this morning.

TOMAS

Dios ten piedad.

VICKY

I was only one at the graveside. Everyone else is in jail.

TOMAS

How's Mike?

VICKY

He's up for the chair. Nena just wants her shoes.

TOMAS

The baby's okay?

VICKY

He's fine. He comes into my custody tomorrow.

TOMAS

What about the Willises?

VICKY

All but the daughter are getting charged. She's the star witness. Everybody's testifying against each other. Except you. Nobody wants to sell you out.

TOMAS

It's good to see you, Vicky. Even in your weeds.

VICKY

I thought all my feeling for Fernando was gone. But right when they started to lower him into the ground, out of nowhere, these tears came spilling down my face. I couldn't make them stop. I cried

all the way home for a worm who treated me nice only as an afterthought. The heart just never gives up, does it?

TOMAS

That's what makes it a heart.

VICKY

What happened with you and Fernie, Tomas?

TOMAS

There is no point in trying to--

VICKY

You haven't told me. I want to know. Did you kill my husband?

(TOMAS looks toward the conference table for a moment.)

TOMAS

I came to mourn the death of my child.

(FERNIE comes out of the shadows.)

FERNIE

Say what?

(TOMAS rises and joins him. VICKY watches.)

TOMAS

The breach has rattled its little bones to mush.

FERNIE

Are you tripping?

TOMAS

Carnal, I am gonna level with you. The child Vicky lost wasn't yours. It was mine. My baby.

FERNIE

What are you talking about?

TOMAS

That was my baby you beat outa her.

FERNIE

You...and my wife?

TOMAS

That ain't the half of it. If you knew the shit I been up to.

FERNIE

Then fuckin' tell me.

TOMAS

That bust at Gila Stables, I made that call. I'm the nark. I got Camacho killed, put Mikey in jail and ruined his family. I had the Judge killed with money from Dad's store, and then I boned your wife and caused my own kid to die.

(He produces the gun.)

Soy traicionero, Negro.

(slowly advancing on FERNIE with the gun)

Santos & Santos. Sons of La Malinche. *Hijos de la chingada madre*. Poor bitch. I know how she feels.

(He puts the gun in FERNIE'S hand.)

Orale. Whenever you're ready.

(FERNIE aims the gun at TOMAS, then drops it.)

FERNIE

You're my brother.

TOMAS

Negro, you have to do this.

FERNIE

Wise up, *ese*. This is what they want you to do. They want you to rise above the family, to think above the family, NOTHING is above the family. We die without it. Our father left Concordia to carve a new life for himself and his family. And he made it, *ese*, he got his bitchin' American house, but he couldn't have done it without the guts of Aztlan. I'm talkin' heart. The heart knows what borders are crossed. It knows sacrifice. Am I right?

TOMAS

You're right.

FERNIE

We are good people. If we fuck up, it's 'cause we're fuckups. Like anyone else. But you are the only law, the real law, you, *carnal*. Here. You take the damn gun.

(He places it in TOMAS' hand.)

Aim the thing at my head. Aim it.

(TOMAS aims it.)

Can you shoot your brother in the head? That's what you asked me to do. Check out this profile, man. Aztec fucking nose. Dark indio tone. The hair. The thick tongue of my people. We're beautiful, *ese*. *Chingones*.

VICKY

No, Tommy.

(MIKE comes out, dressed as he was in the beginning.)

MIKE

Are you capable of that betrayal?

TOMAS

I don't know.

FERNIE

So?

MIKE

You're gonna be the most famous one of us.

FERNIE

Gonna shoot or not?

MIKE

Your good makes us shine.

TOMAS

We're bastards.

FERNIE

We are princes.

TOMAS

Mongrels.

MIKE

Sons of Gods.

TOMAS

Alone.

MIKE

Never alone.

TOMAS

False.

FERNIE

True as our mother's heart.

VICKY

Don't do it.

I feel the breach.

TOMAS

Do you?

MIKE

Tommy...

VICKY

Do you, brother?

FERNIE

(TOMAS keeps the gun aimed at his head.)

TOMAS
[oh Victoria i aim this 45 caliber guilt right into the face of my bro until i see on my arm the sign the holy sign our justice greater than us tattooed with GRACE i aim at my bro the kind of grace that forgives us all forever forgives us for America forgives us for the blood that runs that will always run i aim grace at my *carnal* Victoria]

FERNIE
(grinning)
You see? It's not gonna happen. It is not gonna happen.

(They remain in this tableau as the lights fade out.)

CURTAIN.
END OF PLAY