

5-2020

Poser: The Nexus of Chicanx and Punk Cinema

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POSER: THE NEXUS OF CHICANX AND PUNK CINEMA

A Thesis

by

CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ

Submitted to the Graduate College of The University of
Texas Rio Grande Valley In partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MAY 2020

Major Subject: Creative Writing

POSER: THE NEXUS OF CHICANX AND PUNK CINEMA

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May 2020

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ABSTRACT

Martinez, Christian, Poser: The Nexus of Chicana and Punk Cinema. Master of Fine Arts (MFA), May, 2020, 127 pp., 8 titles.

By bridging together formal characteristics from Chicana and Punk cinema, my screenplay “Poser” follows the traditions of many filmmakers, including Jim Mendiola, Efrain Gutierrez, Luis Valdez, and Alex Cox. This thesis first distinguishes the traits that characterize each individual style, followed by the films that inspired my script, to finally how these techniques fit within my own work.

The creative decisions in my screenplay are thus examined through a lens informed by the underlying value of writing a story about marginalized segments of society. Additionally, I offer a close analysis behind the restrained approach of my story, along with the research I conducted to depict the farmworker plight with great care and reverence.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to migrant farmworkers. Their arduous, unceasing labor is the lifeblood of America.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, Delia and Felix, for supporting me through all my creative endeavors. To my brothers, Eduardo and Angel, who share my passion for cinema. Special acknowledgement to my thesis chair, David Carren, whose astute insights informed the way I approach the craft of screenwriting. My sincerest gratitude to Dr. Britt Haraway, whose fiction workshops shaped the way I revise and critique my work. And thanks to Dr. Christopher Carmona, whose encyclopedic knowledge of indigenous and Latinx writing broadened the scope of my appreciation for our stories and culture.

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CHAPTER I

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION: THE NEXUS OF CHICANX AND PUNK CINEMA

The dearth of cinematic representation for Chicano/a's in the 20th century left a festering void that essentially shut out brown voices from Hollywood. This artistic abyss led to a boon of filmmaking projects that coincided with the Chicano/a Civil Rights Movement, mostly consisting of independently produced films that not only gave Chicax artists a voice, but allowed them to dictate how they were being depicted, a rallying cry against the damaging stereotypes propagated by Hollywood. Operating in the margins of mainstream productions, the best examples of Chicax cinema made expeditious use of resources while also subscribing to the European filmmaking ethos of a strong authorial presence, known as "auteur theory," in which the director of a film, when allowed complete creative control, is considered the true author of a work. Predating the burgeoning punk cinema movement of the late 1970s, Chicax creative concepts shared similarities with the punk philosophy, namely the autonomous spirit of rebelling against the orthodoxy. In this way, both punk cinema and Chicax cinema promote the notion giving voices to the voiceless—the marginalized, the disenfranchised, or as the title of Luis Bunuel's seminal Mexican film best encapsulates this idea, *Los Olvidados* (1950).

On one hand, Chicax cinema focused their sights of examining the vicious plight of the working poor, along with lovingly rendered portraits of Chicax culture, perhaps best captured in Les Blank's documentary on South Texas, *Chulas Fronteras* (1976). On the other hand, punk cinema's goal to foster a bolder, more transgressive type of filmmaking paved the way for

stories that pushed boundaries, as filmmaker Alex Cox typically does through a filter of irreverence, or Bruce LaBruce's trenchant examinations of gay men navigating through the inherently homophobic punk subculture. Interestingly, an intersection between these two movements exists, where filmmakers such as Jim Mendiola of San Antonio, TX combine both punk subculture with Chicana sensibilities to weave together a type of filmmaking all his own, a rasquache-aesthetic where lack of resources necessitates a type of cinematic prestidigitation where the form is dictated by the scantily available materials. Others, like Chicano actor/producer/director renaissance man Efrain Gutierrez, told brutal and sobering tales of the Chicana experience that used DIY-style filmmaking techniques, albeit predating the emergence of punk cinema. These two cinematic movements are the formal foundations of my graduate thesis, a feature-length screenplay titled, "Poser." By bridging together these two disparate elements, I strove to explore these milieus through a lens informed by the aforementioned films, filmmakers, and chiefly, the underlying value of writing a story about those living in the margins of society.

Though these foundational principles buttress the core of my story, my cinematic influences are far more varied. In addition to this, formal techniques used by Asian directors such as Yasujiro Ozu from Japan and Mani Kaul from India shaped my more restrained approach to the story, along with the subtle metaphysical aspects that ultimately crept their way in. Aside from this, another point of emphasis was to handle the farmworker plight with great care, depicting their lives through a lens of dignity and reverence. Ensuring that the world of farmworkers would be depicted in a nuanced, complex manner superseded other artistic concerns. As a result, a great deal of my research went into farmworker work environments,

labor struggles and disputes, worker strikes, and the art that spawned from their struggle, such as Luis Valdez's creation of Teatro Campesino. Coming from a family of proud fieldworkers, their stories inspired me to honor their legacies, but at the same time, maintain enough of a distance where I never felt as though I was telling the story through an outsider's perspective. Part of my research entailed learning from previous depictions of farmworkers or migrants in film, such as Robert Young's quintessential film about the immigrant experience, *Alambrista!* (1977), or Terrence Malick's richly allegorical *Days of Heaven* (1978). Cultural identity played a large role in my script, such as themes of assimilation, dual identities, ethnic pride as well as shame, and fetishization of other cultures. Perhaps the most painstaking work was spent on the Tex-Mex dialect, with characters code-switching frequently throughout the story to authentically capture the sense of place, in this case being the Rio Grande Valley. Of the films discussed in this critical analysis, the vast amount of inspiration was found, unsurprisingly, from Chicana filmmakers such as Luis Valdez, Jim Mendiola, and Efrain Gutierrez. Taken as a whole, the disparate influences that informed the writing of "Poser" ranges from Chicana cinema, punk cinema, transcendental Asian cinema, Chicana culture, and punk subcultural trends.

Formal Characteristics of Chicana Cinema

Beginning with Chicana cinema as a baseline for my script, the formal characteristics that define this brand of film are: documenting the Chicana experience, a penchant for intertextuality, and a strong political dimension that gave them authorial control over how they were depicted on screen. According to Noreiga, "...the first generation of Chicano filmmakers emerged out of the context of the farmworkers' struggle and the student movement. In the first years of the Chicano movement, the farmworkers' struggle would in some sense define its political, class, and rhetorical orientations" (1996, p. 4). It should come as no surprise that the Chicana Civil Rights

Movement and the rise of the United Farmworkers Labor Union (UFW) led by Cesar Chavez galvanized artists to foster a Chicano cinema made by them and for them. Hotly debated within Chicano circles is what film spearheaded the cinematic movements, a discussion often tinged with vehemently opposing answers. For some, the answer is simple: Luis Valdez's adaptation of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's epic poem, *I Am Joaquin* (1969). As Treviño contends, "The first union of filmmaking with theater in the Chicano experience was probably the 1967 production of *I Am Joaquin*, a slide presentation with narration and sound effects performed by the Teatro Campesino" (1983, p. 111). For the 20-minute short, Valdez employed an amalgam of bold artistic choices, chief among them a slideshow presentation that included the artwork and mural of other Chicano artists, evoking the art film techniques of European auteurs such as Chris Marker, whose film *La Jetée* (1962) is comprised entirely of still photographs and a voiceover. In fact, Chicano films more often than not were inclined to "run the gamut from documentary to fictional narrative forms, including animation and experimental filmmaking, a historical look at Chicano cinema reveals the predominance of films" that "concerned themselves with documenting the Chicano community, its history and issues" (1983, p. 109). Combining both threads of experimental formal techniques and documenting Chicano history, one scene in my script features still photography from a farmworker march in 1978. To illuminate the internecine battles occurring within the farmworker movement between Cesar Chavez and Texas Farmworkers Union (TFWU) leader Antonio Orendain, the photographs display how "TFWU started a historic 1,600-mile journey from Austin to Washington to win more public support for agricultural workers and gain an audience with President James E. Carter," which, according to Orendain and several others' accounts, was derailed when "Chavez contacted Carter and told him that Orendain and the TFWU 'were not proper representatives of the Texas farm workers'"

(Villagran, 2019, pp. 101-102). The purpose of this scene is twofold: one, to underscore that migrant farmworkers are not a monolithic group, and that two, some Texas farmworkers were highly critical of Chavez' organization strategies, often because they put a much larger emphasis on California farmworkers over those, especially undocumented workers, in Texas.

Another characteristic of Chicana cinema involves intertextuality, or how one text or artwork shapes another. On this note, Treviño explains, "A basic form of Chicano docudrama has been the recreation of historical events through the photo-animation of historical graphics, photos, and paintings, bringing them to life with narration, dialogue, music, and sound effects" (1983, 112). On one hand, the use of other artists' work takes on a practical dimension, where a *mélange* of different artwork is stitched together into a collage, creating something new out of it, typified by the previously mentioned *rasquache*-aesthetic. However, that intertextuality plays a pivotal role in *I Am Joaquín* in particular demonstrates a sensibility shaped by a deep reverence for Chicana cultural artifacts and art. Late in my script, an acting troupe performs a production of Luis Valdez's *Los Vendidos*, which bewilders the Anglo character, Jonah. This scene pays homage to Valdez's Teatro Campesino, which was created "in order to rally striking farmworkers, developing collaborative agitprop *actos* (skits) that were performed on the flatbeds of trucks" (Noreiga, 1996, p. 5). Beyond a surface level, however, the play is symbolic of two recurring themes in my story: cultural disavowal and Chicana exploitation, giving deeper insight into the protagonist Amos' fractured relationship with his own heritage. Recognizing a dire need for a Chicana cinema, filmmakers like Luis Valdez and others wrested away control from Hollywood's caricatured version of Chicano/a's, fostering their own authorial control over how they were depicted on screen. As Keller notes, "Chicano cinema has been a response to the extraordinary efforts on the part of both Mexican cinema and United States cinema (not acting

independently, but primarily as instruments of government and/or society) to alternately repress, caricaturize, or otherwise distort or reject the authentic personae and history of an entire people” (1983, p. 48). Further, Chicana cinema also took on a politicized nature, which one would argue is inherent in their brand of films due to its close ties with the farmworker and civil rights movement that accompanied it. One major factor I wanted to explore in my script was the unconscionable exploitation of farmworkers and the hazardous, substandard conditions of their work environments, which are epitomized by “crumbling shacks hidden in the forest, rusting trailers on dirt roads, rows of concrete-block barracks” and comprised of “the most vulnerable members of American society—recent immigrants, the homeless, the rural poor—and have been consistently denied the legal protections provided to other workers” (Rothenberg, 2000, p. xviii). Without being explicit, the political dimension permeates every facet of the characters’ lives in my story—in the chapel scene where the Pastor gives a sermon dedicated to the farmworker struggle, to the ethnic pride of Goyo, the father, to both rejecting and succumbing to assimilation, and finally even the performance of the teatro near the end, which in itself, functions as its own act of resistance. To emphasize on that last point, Noreiga illustrates how “in defining the role of theater and other cultural expressions within that movement, Valdez himself made a clear-cut distinction between its symbolic politics (both theater and demonstrations) and ‘actual hard-ass, door to door, worker to worker organizing’” (1996, p. 6). As such, “symbolic politics” are intrinsic in Chicana film, necessitating a searing undercurrent that undoes the harmful and spurious depictions of Chicano/a’s in mainstream commercial films in favor of more rich and complex representations.

Formal Characteristics of Punk Cinema

Similar to Chicana cinema’s transgressive aesthetic experimentation, a framework that

makes up Punk cinema is tricky to define, particularly due to its volatile formal instincts that vary wildly over different subgenres of punk cinema, including but not limited to punksploitation, cult films that cross-pollinate genres, and cyberpunk. However, for the purpose of establishing a framework for the formal characteristics of punk films, I will focus primarily on its refusal to adhere to conventional methods of storytelling, along with its open-ended formal approaches and affinity for the irreverent. At its core, rock music, even that which predates the emergence of the punk movement, has “served to ‘expose yet another growing division in the culture and society’, highlighting and exacerbating ‘a generational split that represented the farther disintegration of the American consensus’” (Henriksen, as qtd. by Campbell, 2004, p. 211). One of the major themes in my work, inspired by the decidedly restrained work of Yasujirō Ozu, centers around generational conflicts, and of the many motifs in the story, punk is the most emblematic of them all. For one, the punk “movement’s over-arching ethos, was colored by aggression and antagonism...toward conservatism and convention” (2004, p. 217). Right from the outset of my script, Amos’ own disaffection with his cultural identity is strongly suggested—symbolized partly by his waning interest of Tejano and Conjunto, the music of his parents and grandparents’ tradition, in favor of punk, as well as his desire to abscond the farmworker life. His misguided rebellion against his own culture begins with his assimilation into more Americanized culture, which punk music, a mainly Anglo-dominated genre of music, represents. Because of this, the character of Jonah, who’s half-Anglo, embodies the aspects of American society that present Amos with a Faustian-esque predicament, best articulated by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez in his epic poem, “I Am Joaquin”: “And now! I must choose between the paradox of victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger, or to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis, sterilization of the soul and a full stomach” (1972).

Of course, this theme has been explored in countless other works, but I wanted to tell this story within a punk cinema framework, one where plot, among other commercial techniques, is immaterial to the work. As Stacey Thompson argues, “It might seem logical to assume that when punk filmmakers translate punk's aesthetic into their own medium, the movies will be paced like punk rock, which is frequently frenetic, raw, and repetitious. But this assumption discounts punk's concern with resisting the economics of mainstream music or film and with adopting an aesthetic that rejects the easy commercialization and corporatization of their products” (2005, p. 55). Therefore, unlike the Classical Hollywood notion that films should be plot-oriented and fast-paced so that the audience is never granted the opportunity to reflect on its superficial elements, punk cinema inverts this approach with meandering stories and scant plots. At multiple junctures in my screenplay, scenes diverge from the overarching plot, focusing more on characterization and establishing the mood of the piece through setting, as evident with the many flashbacks or dialogue-driven scenes between Amos and other characters. Moreover, rather than employ a straightforward, linear narrative, I decided that a fractured, non-linear narrative worked best to illustrate Amos’ episodic odyssey through punk subculture and the fields so that both worlds would be starkly contrasted. Thompson expounds on the distinction, noting “narrative Hollywood films, which attempt to guide readings along carefully described channels” diametrically oppose punk cinema, wherein “much of the labor of interpretation falls to the viewer. The film opens itself out, encouraging and prodding the spectator to shift from the position of a passive (to a greater or lesser degree) recipient to that of an active producer of the film's possible significations” (2005, p. 51). In other words, despite attempting to intellectualize and elucidate my creative decisions—the screenplay and its themes, motifs, and structure—my own reading of my work is not the definitive reading, because one of my objectives in writing

this script was to provoke different interpretations, especially the final moment of the film (more on that later). This is further facilitated by the manner in which punk “narrative devices grind the plot to a halt at steady intervals,” so rather than my script being “sped up the pace of rock,” it is “rendered open-ended, and slowed down” (2005, p. 56). As a result, an incongruity emerges within punk cinema, albeit a deliberate one that is paradoxical to its own nature.

Another defining characteristic of punk cinema lies within its fascination with the irreverent. In particular, filmmakers Alex Cox and Bruce LaBruce transgress genre and formal conventions with their films *Repo Man* (1982) and *No Skin Off My Ass* (1991), respectively. The sardonic humor in the former was a guiding principle in how I ultimately shaped the dialogue and characterization of the affluent punks in the film—Jonah, Moco, and Gabo. For instance, the suburban punks from Cox’s film speak with a disaffected nihilism despite coming from privileged backgrounds. In one scene, one of the punks robs a convenient store, only to be shot by the clerk. As he lay dying, he blames “society” for making him a derelict, while the protagonist, Otto, retorts with the bon mot, “That’s bullshit. You’re a white suburban punk.” The flatness of Duke, the character who meets his demise, and the other petty punk criminals in the film emphasized the performative rebellion of suburban kids who take refuge from their conservative upbringing in punk rock. The fact that Moco and Gabo are not three-dimensional characters is precisely because they, both being of Mexican descent, have assimilated so deeply within American society that they take on comical personas that border on the ludicrous. Meanwhile, Jonah is a more complex representation of this theme, as his relationship with his father explains his aversion to his affluent life, and why his personality, down to his sartorial choices, is performative. Cox, through his satirical look at consumerist society, frames the

ennui of rich suburban punks through an outlandish lens, albeit one that proves biting. In a similar way, capturing the voices of the punks in my film was a balancing act between the irreverent and the slightly richer human qualities lurking underneath their profane-laden tirades.

Bruce LaBruce's film *No Skin Off My Ass* (1991) is a prime example of punk's DIY ethos while also offering a story that is completely antithetical to conventional Hollywood cinema. Interestingly, it belongs to an offshoot of punk cinema known as Queercore, which was a movement predicated upon challenging the punk movement's inherent homophobia. LaBruce's film, aside from incorporating gay pornography with arthouse techniques, delves into something unaddressed by many other films of its ilk: punk's disturbing flirtation with fascism. To illustrate, a signifier of the punk movement is its "'sub-cultural dress,' where punks can combine workingman's boots with bits of military uniform and mix Nazi and British insignia into a new style" (Fiske as qtd by Mendik, 2005, p. 194). The film, about a gay hairdresser who fetishizes neo-nazi punks, features a sequence about the incorporation of Doc Martin boots by skinhead punks as part of their aesthetic. It was a deliberate choice on my part to have all the privileged punks wear Doc Martin's, though mostly to highlight it as a status symbol, as well as the flirtation with fascism that Moco seems swept up by, despite being a person-of-color. Because sartorial codes are so integral in this subculture, "the punk movement's unorthodox conflation of pre-existing styles and modes of performance 'signify their power to make their own style and to offend 'social betters' in the process'" (2005, p. 194). Though not exactly aiming for the same level of provocation as Moco, Amos' coveted leather jacket in the script serves as a symbol for his transformation over the course of the film. Like adding patches to the jacket, he too becomes altered, much to his detriment at the end. *No Skin Off My Ass*, perhaps more than any other punk film I've seen, explores how "the subcultural activity of such marginal movements can be

defined by the concept of 'bricolage,' whereby 'the subordinated make their own culture out of the resources of the 'other'" (2005, p. 143). Just like rasquachismo, punk sartorial codes appropriate symbols from other work, like the "rebel icon characterized by leather, muscle, and bravado of a Brando or Belmondo" (Moran, 1996, p. 19). Keeping this in mind, some filmmakers are able to bridge the gap between the Chicax and punk film, creating a work that embodies both sets of formal characteristics.

The Intersection Between Chicax and Punk Cinema

At the nexus of punk and Chicax cinema, there are two San Antonio based filmmakers who exemplify both sets of formal characteristics: Efrain Gutierrez and Jim Mendiola. This intersection most closely resembles the genre (or lack thereof) trappings of my own screenplay, as both Chicax auteurs have molded their own distinct modus operandi, characterized by their unapologetic use of Tex-Mex dialogue, rasquache aesthetics, and pugnacious narrative structures. In the case of Efrain Gutierrez, his films would not immediately be branded as "punk" because of their subject matter and the fact that they predated the punk movement. However, I argue that his films should be categorized as "proto-punk" precisely because they contain the DIY ethos synonymous with the subculture, as well as a grim nihilistic edge that shrouds his tales out of Chicax barrios. Earlier in this analysis, I made mention of the hotly debated issue of what film truly spearheaded the Chicax cinema movement. While some contest that it indisputably remains *I Am Joaquin*, others, including Gutierrez himself, unequivocally disagree with this assertion. For instance, Barrios argues that "single-handedly Efrain created the first real Chicano cinema. He is our first Chicano filmmaker. His first film, *Please Don't Bury Me Alive*, could well be his own lament in light of how his work has been passed over and ignored while others have given themselves the dubious honor of starting *el cine chicano*" (1983, p. 179).

Marketed as “The First Chicano Movie” on the film’s poster, Gutierrez’s debut film, *Please Don’t Bury Me Alive!* (1976) took a movement that had previously been largely defined by shorts films and what Melendez describes as “filmic autoethnographic works” (2013, p. 216) in a markedly new direction.

Specifically, Gutierrez’s harrowing, social realist dramas about Chicano life “are about failure. Chicano failure is always a hard reality to swallow in the face of the successful/optimistic/happy-ending syndrome we assume that all Chicano artists are obligated to express” (Barrios, 1983, p. 179). This aversion of the anodyne fuels Gutierrez’s work with a raw, bracing honesty that brings the vicious cycle of Chicano social issues to the forefront. *Please Don’t Bury Me Alive!* begins with the funeral of the protagonist’s brother, who was killed in Vietnam. As the film progresses, the film’s antihero, played by Gutierrez, becomes entangled with drug dealing schemes, ultimately culminating in a scene where he is sentenced to prison by a judge who is played by the same actor as the military general who sent his brother to die at war. The ending packs a visceral, incisive blow to the viewer, as the same Anglo power structure that sends poor Chicanos to die in war also disproportionately incarcerates them. An ending that had a similar impact felt necessary for my story, where the failure of Amos’ attempt to ingratiate himself into Anglo society comes crashing down on him. Barrios articulates it best, observing that Gutierrez’s films hold back no punches, as “the bloody aftermath that he shows us--that life...is blotted out with one-night stands, punishment for our sins, cheap highs, and a will to die and leave this *chingada vida*” (1983, p. 180). Though not exactly an “anti-hero” himself, I worked hard to make my protagonist, Amos, flawed and human. In particular, his penchant for vandalism reveals a seething anger inside of him, one that he grapples with often, recognizing his own sinful existence. At the end, when he is faced with a bitter betrayal, he only knows one way

to respond: destruction.

Similar to Gutierrez, but more deserving of the “punk” designation, Jim Mendiola’s punkera Tex-Mex masterpiece, *Pretty Vacant* (1996), revels in its masterly concoction of punk ethos with Chicana culture. The key inspiration for the character of Azucena in my script (along with Amos’ surname), *Pretty Vacant* centers around a Chicana teen named La Molly whose love for punk music bleeds over into her Chicana culture, as she discovers a possible connection between British iconoclasts The Sex Pistols and conjunto legend Esteban Jordan. La Molly also has her own punk band, Aztlán-a-Go-Go, and develops a scheme to get out of her family vacation to Mexico so she can perform live shows. This narrative bears a resemblance to Amos’ own arc, as he tries to dodge his own responsibilities (an annual voyage to the fields) so he can frolic at punk shows in Southern California with Jonah. Fitting into Thompson’s classification of punk cinema, “the audience is walked through major plotlines and also offered multiple digressions. Whether it is to inform us of the significance of Steve Jordan” or “provide a poetic assessment of the San Antonio landscape,” Molly has “some necessary backstories to share” (Ruiz, 2019, p. 187). My approach with Azucena provided a similar trajectory. As with La Molly, Azucena “rejects colonial ideology and by-products of colonialism and capitalist patriarchy— sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.” (2019, p. 187) that is prevalent not only in punk subculture but also in Chicana society. As such, Azucena, a truculent, no-bullshit, sexually fluid pocha, provides the feminist center to my script, and yet struggles with her own tenuous grasp of her mother tongue (the absence of her mother is thus both literal and symbolic). And although *Pretty Vacant* lacks dialogue (the film is comprised of a voice over by La Molly), Mendiola engages with his rasquache techniques by putting more emphasis on the quasi-slideshow structure, telling the story both through a filmed narrative and photographs of punk

flyers and pages out of zines. More than that, La Molly delivers her thoughts in Tex-Mex, adding an undeniably Chicana specificity, making the culture and setting characters itself. Prior to watching this film in my Punk Cinema course, I had seldom heard a character in a film speak in a Tex-Mex dialect that successfully depicted the essence and beauty of code-switching. To capture the essence myself, I heeded the words of the late, great Gloria Anzaldua: “Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a living language... A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves” (1987, p. 35-36). Thus, it was never a question of who I might alienate with my script, because in order to corral that cultural specificity, I needed to be unapologetic with my use of Tex-Mex and have it be its own living, breathing entity.

Reconciling a Metaphysical Ending with a Grounded Narrative

To viewers who witnessed a film grounded in a reality, an ending such as mine might be initially perplexing. The jarring shift to something metaphysical, however, is not without its moments of foreshadowing. Mid-way through the film, Jonah’s father, Abraham, alludes to the Zen garden facilitating the observer’s grasp of “enlightenment.” This narrative thread was inspired by multiple filmmakers, some of whom fall under the Transcendental Style of storytelling, such as Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu. A term coined by Paul Schrader, the Transcendental Style’s “techniques were neither parochial nor Christian nor Western. They were spiritual (related to the spirit as opposed to matter),” and by “heightening the mundane, transcendental style creates a sense of unease the viewer must resolve...The filmmaker assists the viewer’s impulse for resolution by the use of a Decisive Moment, an unexpected image or act, which then results in a stasis, an acceptance of parallel reality—transcendence” (2018, pp. 2-3). In other words, by reinforcing a grounded realism, Amos’ moment of transcendence at the film’s conclusion could only be achieved through an unexpected shift into another plane of reality, an introspective one, mirroring his own internalized state.

In regard to the Zen garden in my film, Schrader explains that “Oriental art in general and Zen art in particular aspire to the Transcendent... For thirteen hundred years Zen has cultivated the transcendental experience, and the Transcendent has found expression not only in religion and the arts, but also in a wide variety of ‘commonplace’ activities” (2018, p. 45). Another primary source of inspiration that engages with Schrader’s theory is Indian auteur Mani Kaul’s *Our Daily Bread* (1969). In the film, a lonely housewife spends each day waiting for her unfaithful husband at a bus stop to give him a loaf of bread. At the very end, when he never arrives, Kaul breaks away from the mundane into an oneiric plane of reality, where “she lingers in the dark at the bus stop. The repeated take of her veiled face is a piercing twist on the traditional shot-counter-shot. Balo looks out and sees herself. Or else she’s staring into the abyss—a lonely figure whose double is death” (Bittencourt, para. 9, 2020). Nevertheless, as previously stated, I can wax poetic about what I intended with the ending, but I would rather that its ambiguity provoke varying interpretations among readers, because to paraphrase Paul Schrader, a good movie starts when it’s over.

Conclusion

My script “Poser” developed from myriad influences: my father and tio Pipé regaling me with stories about being farmworkers in their youth; my brother Angel exposing me to punk when I was five-years-old; my insatiable hunger for unconventional cinema; my first time in a mosh pit during a Lower Class Brats concert; and of course, my Chicanx culture. All these formative events, coupled with bridging the formal structures of Chicanx and punk cinema, encompassed my creative instincts during the writing of my screenplay. From this resulted my proudest creative endeavor, a culmination of years’ worth of painstaking work, “Poser.”

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

POSER

Written by

Christian Martinez

[NOTE: All Spanish dialogue will be in brackets. Characters frequently code-switch and use Tex-Mex slang, as is the norm in South Texas dialects. Only Spanish is subtitled.]

EXT. VEGETABLE FIELDS - DAWN

Vast swaths of verdant VEGETABLE FIELDS sway in the wind, bringing life to the earth.

It's harvest season. Glistening green bushes sprouting bright BLUEBERRIES blanket acres of FARMLAND.

In the distance, APPLE ORCHARDS glow in the ethereal morning light. The fecundity on display evokes an almost Edenic scene.

EXT. LABOR CAMP - DAY

BODIES trudge across SHANTY LABOR CAMPS to the backdrop of a gigantic rising SUN.

The silhouettes of MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN amble towards the fields to start their work day.

These are seasonal MIGRANT FARMWORKERS. Families who follow the harvest and toil under the harshest of working conditions to barely eke out an existence.

EXT. VEGETABLE FIELDS - DAY

FIELDWORKERS bend down in uncomfortable positions to harvest blueberries with an ALUMINUM RAKE. Continue the same laborious motions until their BUCKETS are filled to the brim.

Among the hundreds of sun-drenched bodies is AMOS, 20, rough-hewn, with a weather-beaten face from too much sun exposure.

He continues to pull through a BUSH, digging deep into the soil. He twists his hand awkwardly when raking in a repetitive radial pattern.

AMOS

[Motherfu--]

He grinds to a halt. Loosens his hand. The bustling activity around him continues. Hundreds of Farmworkers buzz about in the oppressive heat.

When Amos takes too long to get back to work, his father, GREGORIO (GOYO), 50s, thick bushy hair, calls out to him.

GOYO (O.S.)
 Psst! Amos!
 (Amos surveys the fields)
 Over here, cabron!

Amos locates Goyo two rows behind him.

GOYO (CONT'D)
 [What the hell are you thinking?
 You can't just stop working
 whenever you feel like it. That's
 how you lose money!]

AMOS
 I just needed a little break.

GOYO
 (cupping ear)
 [What?]

AMOS
 (louder)
 I got tired so I took a break.

Goyo tosses a WATER BOTTLE in his direction.

GOYO
 [Here. Not too much. A sip.]

Amos takes a large swig from the bottle.

GOYO (CONT'D)
 [What did I say? You're not the one
 who's hungover.]

He tosses it back to Goyo. Trundles down the row of crops.

GOYO (CONT'D)
 [Put some effort into it!]
 (imitates Amos' languid
 pace)
 [What the hell is that?]

Breathing deeply, Amos musters the energy to keep working.

His younger brother, EFREN, 16, is further down the row of crops. Grinning ear-to-ear, Efren parrots Goyo. Gestures with his hand to keep on moving.

Amos responds by giving him the finger.

AMOS
 [Fucking dumbass].

The emerald green fields gleam in the sunlight, its splendor stripped away once...

CUT TO:

EXT. VEGETABLE FIELDS - DAY - WEEKS LATER

Harvest season comes to an end. The lush farmland is now in DESOLATION. Naked.

INT. LABOR CAMP - DAY

An inhospitable HOVEL. Cracks in the cheaply constructed CINDER BLOCK WALLS typify the substandard conditions of the camps.

Personal items are arranged on a MATTRESS: A CASSETTE PLAYER, CLOTHES piled into a ball, a BIBLE.

Next to the bed is a CARDBOARD BOX. Inside, a HOHNER ACCORDION with a chrome plate and matte black finish.

Amos handles it with care, treating it like a piece of art with limitless value.

Without effort, he flexes his musical muscle by squeezing an intricate series of notes from the accordion.

He puts the accordion back and carries it outside towards...

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A WHITE RINK-A-DINK VAN that has enough wear and tear for two lifetimes.

Amos crams his meager possessions into the trunk.

Using the window's reflection, he takes out a COMB to tame his thick hair. Efren appears behind him.

EFREN

[What are you combing your hair for? Won't make you less ugly.]

Like any older sibling showing dominance, Amos lunges at Efren. Places him in a headlock.

AMOS

Still think I'm ugly, pendejo?

EFREN

I was just kidding, guey! Let go!

Amos loosens his grip and playfully shoves his brother.

EFREN (CONT'D)

You think you're all big shit now
that you listen to that [trash]
that sounds like a bunch of dogs
barking?

Doing his best guttural growl, Efren imitates the lyrics to a punk song.

AMOS

Better than hearing you suck the
life out of the accordion every
night.

EFREN

You're not the only one abuelo
taught how to play.

AMOS

But I'm the only one who actually
learned anything.

EFREN

Well then teach me some songs so I
can get better.

AMOS

I'll teach you when you give me my
tapes back.

EFREN

What tapes?

AMOS

Rio Jordan. Conjunto Bernal. Los
Fantasmas Del Valle.

EFREN

Maybe. It's not like you were
listening to them anyway.

AMOS

(walking away)
I want them back.

EFREN

Where you going?

AMOS
Don't worry about it.

Amos treks across the vast acreage to reach...

EXT. SHACKS - DAY

A different LABOR CAMP. No trace of inhabitants. Everything's rifled clean.

Amos enters one of the SHACKS and calls out, in an anticipatory kind of way:

AMOS
Enoch! You still here?

He scopes out the camp for someone. His search is fruitless.

EXT. VEGETABLE FIELDS - DAY

As he walks further away, Amos stops and stares up high.

Massive in size, a PALATIAL ESTATE looms over him, a stain on these pastoral grounds.

It is the LANDOWNER'S home. A symbol of the wealth he has amassed from the backbreaking labor of farmworkers.

Amos stares daggers at the manor. Builds up phlegm in his throat, spits at the ground before walking away.

INT. VAN - LATER

Space is tight in the van. Amos, his FAMILY, and a BAND of MIGRANTS sit shoulder-to-shoulder.

Sifting through his backpack, Amos takes out a WALKMEN and MANGLED HEADPHONES. He pops a CASSETTE TAPE into the tray and presses play.

A TRACK with heavily distorted guitars and a heart-racing tempo starts to play.

TITLE CARD: "POSER"

EXT. - VARIOUS - MONTAGE - DAY/NIGHT

Their van driving across HIGHWAYS that span the Midwest to Texas.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The DRIVER, mid-to-late 40s, switches the radio on and scans the different stations.

Grogginess weighs his face down. Everyone else in the van looks just as drained. His eyes widen when he comes across a Spanish radio station.

DRIVER

[About damn time. Wake up,
camaradas! We're almost home.]

The Driver cranks up the volume on the radio. A Tejano song plays.

He belts out a roaring GRITO. This energizes the rest of the PASSENGERS, who all start to sing in unison.

Efren smiles at his brother, nudging him because he's the only one who isn't singing. Amos briefly mouths the words before putting his headphones back on.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS - EVENING

Plywood is yanked off a door with a HAMMER.

This is HOME for Amos and his family -- drab, nondescript PUBLIC HOUSING tucked away in a rural area of South Texas.

Goyo uses his leg for leverage to remove the remaining piece of wood nailed to the FRONT DOOR.

Once he does, Amos and Efren walk inside.

GOYO

Where are you going, flojos? All
the windows are still boarded up.

EFREN

You only have one hammer, apa! How
are we supposed to help?

GOYO

[With your hands!] If you apply
enough force they're just as strong
as a hammer.

EFREN

If that's true then let me use the
hammer.

GOYO

(throws hammer)

There. I'll use my hands too. [I shouldn't have to ask for my sons to help me. You should just do it.] Chicano solidarity.

Unloading luggage behind them is Amos' mother, LILIA, 40s, frizzy hair, booming voice.

LILIA

[You can't just say "Chicano solidarity" whenever you want someone to do something, viejo.]

AMOS

Can't we do it tomorrow? We just spent 30 hours in a van. [I'm exhausted].

GOYO

[From what? We worked 12 hours a day and you're tired from sitting?]

LILIA

[Stop being a pain in the ass, Goyo! Even God had a day of rest.]

(turns to Efren and Amos)

[I better not hear any whining in the morning. Be up and ready by seven. Go inside!]

Efren and Amos scurry away.

GOYO

[No wonder they're lazy. They got it made living here.]

LILIA

[You do too. Or do you want to cook your own meals from now on?]

GOYO

(beat)

[I was just kidding, amor.]

EXT. FLEA MARKET - MORNING

A crowd of SHOPPERS pay a fee to a WOMAN in a booth to enter a FLEA MARKET.

Once inside, VENDORS entice shoppers with household WARES, TEX-MEX CUISINE, ELECTRONICS, and a variety of other SUNDRIES.

As Amos and his family peruse the MAZE that makes up the flea market, they encounter a TEJANO BAND performing and stop so Lilia and Goyo can join the dance floor.

EXT. SHOE STAND - DAY

Amos adjusts a pair of PUFFY WHITE knock-off ADIDAS onto his feet.

He presses on his big toe to test the fit.

LILIA
[How do they feel?]

AMOS
A little big. [I'm gonna get blisters with these damn shoes.]

LILIA
It's better to buy a size bigger. You'll grow into them.

AMOS
What are you talking about, ama? Boys stop growing at 18.

LILIA
[Your whole life we bought a size bigger and you never complained.]

AMOS
That's 'cause I was a kid. [If I talked back you'd smack me.]

LILIA
(raising hand)
I'll still do it, cabron. Go walk around. [Break them in. Walk around a little bit.]

AMOS
(groans)
[Fine.]

Amos waddles past other VENDOR STANDS in the loose-fitting shoes.

LILIA
 [Go a little further.] All the way
 around and come back.

Amos circles the corner, eventually stumbling upon...

EXT. CLOTHING STAND - CONTINUOUS

A COAT RACK replete with LEATHER JACKETS. He approaches slowly, spellbound.

After flipping through a few jackets, Amos suddenly stops.

There couldn't be a more perfect jacket: DIAGONAL ZIPPERS, a LAPEL COLLAR, and a BELT ATTACHMENT. Its texture both rugged and coarse.

VENDOR (O.S.)
 You like it?

The VENDOR, 40s, gaudy attire, appears from the other side of the rack.

AMOS
 Es genuine leather?

VENDOR
 [Of course!] Straight from the cow.
 Try it on.

Amos removes it delicately from its hanger and puts it on.

It's a perfect fit. Kismet.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
 Fiu fiu! [A real head-turner!]
 Wanna see how good it looks on you?

The Vendor escorts Amos to a MIRROR near a table.

AMOS
 How much is it?

VENDOR
 The tag says \$100, but that's too expensive. [I'll give you a reasonable price.] I can't let you leave without it. You were meant to have this jacket.

EXT. FOOD COURT - DAY

Goyo sits on a bar stool at a FOOD COURT COUNTER.

GOYO
(to bartender)
A michelada.

The Bartender prepares a blood-orange libation for him.

Just as he's about to take a sip, Amos approaches.

AMOS
Apa!

GOYO
(choking on drink)
Bastardo! You trying to kill me?

AMOS
[I found something.] I really wanna
buy it but I don't have enough.

GOYO
Ask your ama.

AMOS
She said to ask you.

GOYO
How much it is?

AMOS
It's \$50, but I only need \$20 from
you.

Goyo explodes into a fit of laughter.

GOYO
You're gonna make me choke again.

AMOS
[Come on], apa. You don't have to
get my anything for my birthday.

GOYO
[What the hell do you wanna buy
that's \$50?]

EXT. CLOTHING STAND - DAY

Goyo stares at the object of Amos' desire, stupefied.

GOYO
[You're out of your mind.]

AMOS
It's really not that much.

GOYO
You expect me to spend our hard-
earned money, the money we slaved
over for months on this mugrero?
[Don't be stupid], mijo.

AMOS
I slaved over that money, too! I
should get something out of it.

GOYO
You are! A roof. Food in your
mouth. Or is that not enough?

Visibly upset, Amos sulks and grunts loudly.

GOYO (CONT'D)
Mira, if you can get him to bring
it down to \$35, then I'll lend,
LEND, the difference.

AMOS
How do I do that?

GOYO
You haggle.

AMOS
Haggle?

GOYO
Simón! Start low, then say the
highest you'll pay is \$35.

AMOS
Why can't you just do it?

GOYO
Do you want it or not?

Amos takes short, tentative steps towards the Vendor.

AMOS
Hi. Is \$50 the lowest you'll go?

VENDOR
I'm practically giving it away at
\$50. [You won't find it anywhere
this cheap.]

AMOS
Okay, thanks.

Head bowed, Amos walks back slowly.

GOYO
[What'd he say?]

AMOS
That's the lowest he'll go.

GOYO
[Goddammit.]

Oozing confidence, Goyo swaggers towards the Vendor.

GOYO (CONT'D)
My son wants to buy this jacket but
we can't afford \$50. I'll give you
\$25.

VENDOR
That's too low, senor. I'll lose
money if I sell it for \$25.

GOYO
[Fine. \$35, but that's all I can
give you right now.]

VENDOR
Give me \$40 and the jacket's yours.

GOYO
[Sorry. That's still too
expensive.]
(turns towards Amos)
[Let's go.]

AMOS
What are you doing?

GOYO
[Shut up. Just wait.]

The Vendor doesn't acknowledge them.

AMOS
He's not saying anything!

GOYO

What do you need a jacket for? It doesn't even get cold here, mijo.

(scoffs)

Selling it for \$40. [Fucking crook.] Nobody is gonna buy it. I can find you better one. And cheaper, too.

Bitter disappointment streaks across Amos' face.

EXT. SHOE STAND - DAY

An irate Lilia argues with the SHOE VENDOR. Narrows her eyes at Amos and stampedes towards him.

LILIA

(pointing at shoes)

[They're filthy! Now the woman won't sell them for cheaper.]

GOYO

(sighs)

I'll try to bring the price down.

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

A rural PARISH, modest and unremarkable.

Displayed on the makeshift marquee: "Services in English, Spanish and Tex-Mex."

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Even with limited sitting room, CONGREGANTS only sporadically fill the PEWS. Among them Amos and his family.

As the PRIEST, 60s, Chicano, delivers his sermon, parishoners fan themselves with church fliers.

PRIEST

[It gives me great pleasure to see] so many these familiar faces. I know for many of you the picking season is over, and work is scarce here in the Valley. But know that your grueling labor was not done in vain.

(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Take heed of what the scripture says: "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God." Leviticus 23:22.

The crowd murmurs a soft *Amen*.

A COLLECTION PLATE makes the rounds across the church. Most congregants offer what they can, mostly coins.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

The farmworker struggle is far-reaching, pero hope is not lost. My compadre Cesar Chavez said it best...

GOYO

(scoffs)

He acts like Chavez is our savior. He isn't.

LILIA

Be quiet, viejo.

PRIEST

"The rich may have money, but the poor have time."

The plate moves down the row, closer to Amos. On the way over, A TEN DOLLAR BILL swoops out of it. Hits the ground.

His eyes pinball to his family then back to the bill. Efren holds out the plate in front of Amos, who's still hypnotized.

EFREN

You gonna give anything or not?

Amos grabs the plate from Efren and donates some loose change in his pocket.

PRIEST

We may know what it is to suffer financially. Economically. The cards are stacked against us every single day. [Doesn't matter.]

(Holding up hands)

(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)

We have developed a callous, a defense from [injustices], and we will keep fighting wrongdoing and exploitation till we reap the harvest that we have sown with our movement. The harvest that's rightfully ours. Viva la Huelga!

This Farmworker rallying cry doubles as an "Amen" for the parishoners.

Amos can't focus on the sermon. The money commands his attention.

The sight of it is making him shifty. Flighty.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Goyo parks the car next to a gas pump.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

He gathers a fistful of wrinkled bills, hands them to Amos.

GOYO

[Put five in gas and the rest for a Milwaukee's Best.]

AMOS

[Pint, tall boy, or forty?]

GOYO

[The fattest bottle they have.] See if you have enough for two.

Amos exits the car and enters...

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

A convenient store. Small. Sparse.

Amos nods at the CASHIER and heads towards the freezer.

The aisle is blocked off by rag-tag group of CRUST PUNKS, three in total, all donning sleeveless DENIM VESTS and Doc Martin BOOTS.

The obvious ringleader, JONAH, 24, lanky, with teased oily hair like Darby Crash, motions the others to hurry when they see Amos.

His friends, MOCO and GABO, clumsily shove FORTIES of BEER into a backpack. Amos waits near the freezer door they're occupying.

MOCO
(noticing Amos)
The fuck you looking at?

Dumbstruck, Amos doesn't know how to respond.

JONAH
Nah, nah. He seems all right.
(to Amos)
You cool?

Amos nods, uncertain.

Gabo starts towards the exit before Jonah stops him.

JONAH (CONT'D)
What the fuck you doing?

GABO
Running. That's why it's called a
"beer run."

JONAH
We can't just jet, shithead. We
won't be able to steal from here
anymore if we just run. We'll be
burned.

GABO
What the fuck should I do instead?
Just walk casually past the owner
with bottles clinking in my bag?

Jonah studies Amos.

JONAH
Were you gonna pay for something?

AMOS
Uh...

MOCO
You speak English? Probably from
beanerville.

JONAH
(to Moco)
You gonna start talking like a
skinhead now just 'cause you got a
pair of Docs?
(MORE)

JONAH (CONT'D)
 You're browner than him!
 (to Amos)
 Were you getting a beer?

AMOS
 Uh, yeah. Beer and gas.

JONAH
 What kind of beer?

AMOS
 Milwaukee.

MOCO
 Shit's nasty.

JONAH
 I got it. Don't worry about the
 beer.

AMOS
 Wha...I don't know what you mean.

GABO
 How do you not understand?
 (to Jonah)
 Let's just go, man. What the fuck
 we talking to this sucio for?

JONAH
 Stop fucking talking.
 (to Amos)
 Have you paid for the gas?

AMOS
 (clearing throat)
 Um, no. Not yet.

JONAH
 Go pay and then meet me out by the
 dumpster. Around the corner, by the
 alley. I'll give you the beer
 there.

AMOS
 That's okay. You really don't have
 to do that. I'll just get it--

JONAH
 Save your money. I got it.
 (Amos hesitates)
 It's fine. Don't worry. Go.

Amos stutter-steps towards the Cashier. Nerves jangling.

AMOS
Five on four.

The Cashier rings him up, unsuspecting.

Behind them, Jonah and his posse breeze out of the store.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

A regular alleyway. Littered in trash. Spray-painted walls.

Jonah and the others have already begun drinking.

Around the corner, Amos keeps a safe distance at first. Waits around.

Slowly he heads their way. Exercises caution with every step.

JONAH
(to his friends)
Told you he was all right.

AMOS
(nervously chuckles)
Uh...

JONAH
Yeah! The beer. Right.
(grabs beer from bag)
That for you?

AMOS
For my dad.

JONAH
Right on. My dad's a drunk too.

AMOS
Thanks, for this.

JONAH
Yeah, 'course. What's your name?

AMOS
Amos. You?

JONAH
I'm Jonah.
(pointing behind him)
That's Gabo, and the brown white supremacist over there is Moco. He goes by Moco.

AMOS
Jonah. Like the prophet.

JONAH
Prophet?

AMOS
From the bible. The one who was
swallowed by the whale.

GABO
You a bible humper or what?

MOCO
It's bible thumper, idiot.

JONAH
(to Amos)
I like the sound of that shit. My
dad says I'm blind to reality so
jokes on him for naming me after a
prophet.

AMOS
(laughs)
Guess so.

JONAH
What kind of music you listen to?

GABO
Gospel, probably.

AMOS
(beat)
Uh, different stuff. I like punk.

MOCO
Bull-fucking-shit.

JONAH
(considers this)
No joke? That's fucking rad. You
ever go to any of the shows around
here?

MOCO
Pretty sure we would've noticed
someone like him.

AMOS
Nah. I've been gone the past few
months. Just got back from
Michigan.

JONAH
You go on vacation or something?

AMOS
Something like that. Family trip.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS - DAY - FLASHBACK

The heat sapping Amos of his energy as he lumbers down a row of crops. A sheen of SWEAT covers his face, heavy and filmy.

BACK TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY - PRESENT

Unlike his dismissive friends, Jonah holds Amos' gaze.

JONAH
Come by a show sometime. I'm actually throwing one this Friday. Bringing in a bunch of bands from L.A. It's gonna get fucking crazy.

AMOS
You mean--like you're throwing it? Where at?

Jonah rummages his pockets for a FLIER, handing it to Amos as if it were a business card.

JONAH
I'm a promoter. Address is at the bottom. You'll come by?

Faintly echoing in the background:

LILIA (O.S.)
Amos! [Where the hell are you?!]

AMOS
For sure, yeah. I'll see if I have money by then.

JONAH
Use the money you saved from the beer. It's only five bucks.
(walking away)
You're fucking all right, Amos.

The Punks hang FLIERS in the alley before turning a corner. As they do, Amos DARTS to the car.

INT. AMOS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stretched across his bed, Amos checks on Efren, whispering:

AMOS
You asleep yet?

Efren's out like a light.

Amos slides off the bed. Kneels down to get his accordion. He opens a TINY COMPARTMENT on it, concealed from the naked eye.

Reaching for a BULGE in his sock, he removes the TEN DOLLAR BILL he swiped from church. Shoves it inside the compartment.

Contrite, he remains on his knees, repenting:

AMOS (CONT'D)
Our father, who art in heaven...

He makes the sign of the cross once done. Gets up, then kneels back down to recite it in Spanish for good measure.

EXT. CLOTHING STAND - DAY

The leather jacket STAND. In a frenzy, Amos sorts through the rack to see if the one he wants is still there.

It's missing. He double-checks, determined to find it.

VENDOR
You came back.

AMOS
Do you still have the jacket?

VENDOR
(picking it out)
You're looking in the forty dollar rack. I moved it with the premium jackets. When I saw how...passionate you were about it, [I thought that maybe it was worth more.]

AMOS
(fumbling to get cash)
I have the money now. The \$40 we had agreed on.

VENDOR

That offer is no longer valid. [I'm sorry.]

AMOS

But--my dad... he negotiated the price down--

VENDOR

Your dad was trying to low-ball me. I didn't appreciate that. [That vato wanted to rip me off.]

AMOS

No, [I--I swear. He didn't mean anything by it.] We just don't have money.

VENDOR

[Look, young man], this is how I make my money. [Understand?] I was trying to help you out and only ask for forty for the jacket, but your dad thought I was being unreasonable. \$50 is still a great price. So, do you have that or not?

AMOS

Well-right now I...

VENDOR

I'm not open to negotiations.

AMOS

(wracking brain)

I can pay you \$40 right now. In a couple of days I'll pay you the rest. I promise, senor. Hand to God.

VENDOR

I don't accept layaway on my items. Either you pay in full or I can't sell you the jacket.

Amos' voice cracks. He knows he's lost. Is this God's way of punishing him for taking the money from church?

Dejected, he lurches forward, past the Vendor.

VENDOR (CONT'D)

I can't guarantee it'll be here next time you come.

EXT. CLOTHING STAND - LATER

From a distance, Amos observes the jacket Vendor. Only peeks intermittently. A calculating stare.

At the stand, the Vendor delivers his spiel to a CUSTOMER. Ushers the Customer over to a mirror.

With the Vendor's back to the racks, Amos swoops in. Ducks, then crab-walks while he searches for the jacket.

He checks his surroundings. Clear. SNATCHES it from the hanger and trots off. Right now, a sense of triumph masks his Catholic guilt. But only momentarily.

EXT. BUS STOP - EVENING

A WOODEN BENCH, crudely built. Wearing his new jacket, Amos waits for the next BUS.

Breaks squeal as the city METRO arrives. Amos boards it.

 AMOS (O.S.)
 (to BUS DRIVER)
 Is this address on your route?

 BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
 I'm headed that way.

EXT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

A SEEDY DIVE BAR. Formerly a VFW Township Post. Now repurposed as a MUSIC VENUE.

U.S.A. COLORS and a PATRIOTIC MURAL adorn the outside walls.

Before approaching, Amos mentally maps out the geography of the road. It's a ways from home.

A GAGGLE of PUNKS smoke cigarettes by the entrance. Unnerved, he journeys into the bar. Avoids eye contact.

He's immediately stopped at the door by a BOUNCER, brawny and menacing.

 BOUNCER
 It's \$5.

Amos can barely hear him over the music BLARING on the P.A. SYSTEM. He grabs a wad of ones from one of the zippers in his jacket, pays the fee.

BOUNCER (CONT'D)
 (impatiently)
 Your hand!

AMOS
 What?

Annoyed, the Bouncer aggressively grabs his hand and SLAPS on a RUBBER STAMP. Motions him to go inside.

INT. MUSIC VENUE - CONTINUOUS

The trashy trappings inside the bar are the inverse of the outside decor. BAND STICKERS and POSTERS swallow up the walls. A BEACON SIREN LIGHT bathes the bar in A FIERY RED GLOW.

Within seconds, someone spills beer on Amos' new jacket. He isolates himself in a corner, recoiling as far back as he can.

If it wasn't for his outfit, he would be out of his element.

CHEERS from the crowd reach a fever pitch when a PUNK BAND takes the stage.

PUNK SINGER
 We're Fig Leaf from L.A. This is
 our first time here in the RGV.
 Thanks to Jonah for bringing us
 down. 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4!

Distorted guitars scorch the stuffy room. Bodies swarm the stage, undulating to the lightning tempo of the song.

Amos sees no sign of Jonah. In the middle of canvassing the building, he locks eyes with AZUCENA, 22, leather-clad with half black, half peroxide-blonde hair. She exudes a devil-may-care energy.

He holds the stare for too long, averts his eyes. When he looks back up, she's already been sucked up into the WHIRLPOOL of the MOSH PIT.

The roughhousing reaches the back, where Amos is hiding. He's jostled and pulled into the mosh pit, drifting into the SEA of BODIES. There's no escape.

He's being shoved in all directions. Everything becomes a blur. He balances himself on a BODY, pushing back and letting the chaos overtake him.

The first song ends. Adrenaline has reached its zenith inside Amos. He prepares himself for pandemonium when the next song starts.

PUNK SINGER (CONT'D)
(in faster tempo)
1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4!

A mass of bodies all ricochet against one another. Amos is all in. For him, it's a primordial release. Catharsis.

Azucena is nearby being manhandled by much bigger MEN. She holds her ground and shoves back violently. One of the Men BULLDOZES her to the ground.

EXTREME LOW ANGLE: FROM THE BOWELS OF THE MOSH PIT, FRANTIC BODIES ARE TRAMPLING HER.

Amos muscles his way through the crowd, adrenaline pumping. Extends his hand to pick her up. Once he helps her off the ground, Azucena forcefully nudges Amos, who's taken aback. She smiles and turns back to mosh.

EXT. MUSIC VENUE - LATER

The crowd files out the venue. The high-intensity from earlier seems to have worn off. Exhaustion replaces it.

Amos, leaning against the wall, catches his breath. Whatever just happened awoke something inside him.

A screeching HUM impedes his hearing. After a few seconds, a WOMAN'S voice slices through the high-pitched ringing.

To his side, Azucena awaits his response.

AMOS
Sorry, what?

AZUCENA
I said I like your jacket. You fit the part.

AMOS
The "part"?

AZUCENA
I'm Azucena. And before you say it, don't even fucking think of calling me Suzie. Or any or other anglicized gringo name. Hate that shit. It's A-zu-ce-na.

AMOS
I have a prima in Mexico with that name.

AZUCENA
What do people call you?

AMOS
Oh, uh. Amos.

Azucena grabs his hand. Doesn't loosen her grip right away. She proclaims, quizzically:

AZUCENA
You have the roughest hands I've ever felt.

Reaching for her bag, she grabs a box of SAFETY PINS. Unhinges one and STICKS Amos' hand with it.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)
Feel anything?

AMOS
Not really.
(re: box of pins)
What are those for?

Lifting her leg, she directs his attention to her TORN STOCKINGS.

AZUCENA
I'm falling apart. These hold me together.
(takes a long look at Amos)
I've never seen you at a show before.

AMOS
It's my first one.

AZUCENA
(stunned)
Bullshit! [For real?]

AMOS
Yeah, the promotor invited me.

Azucena sneers.

AZUCENA
You mean The Imposter?

AMOS
Wh--who's that?

AZUCENA
Who else? Jonah.

AMOS
Why do you call him that?

AZUCENA
Just don't believe the [bullshit]
that guy tells you.

AMOS
So...this isn't his show?

AZUCENA
He'll take credit for it. Why don't
you ask him?

Behind them, Jonah greets everybody like a politician. A
cigarette dangles from his mouth, posse in tow.

He leaks disproportionately high levels of energy as he
approaches. A cocaine-fueled jauntiness.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)
Smug asshole.

JONAH
(shouting)
Amos! You made it!

AMOS
The show was fucking amazing, man.
I never heard that band before.

JONAH
(jaw clenching)
Fig Leaf? Yeah, they're the shit.
L.A. fucking punk royalty.
(turns to Azucena)
Good to see you, Sucia.

Amos' face scrunches. He wants to ask why Jonah just called
Azucena "dirty." Before he can, she retorts with:

AZUCENA
Hope you actually paid the bands
this time. Or did you just promise
them exposure and pocket the money?

With a lopsided smirk, Jonah laughs off her comment.

JONAH

(to Amos)

Hey man, so we're having a thing at my house right now. Wanna come?

AMOS

Uh, well--

(looks at Azucena, then
back at Jonah)

I mean, yeah. I just need a ride there.

Jonah SPINS around and points at himself, chortling.

JONAH

There's room in the back of my pick-up. It's the shitty White Ford. Meet me in the parking lot in five.

He zooms away, back to his underlings.

AMOS

Why'd he call you "Sucia"?

AZUCENA

Because I'm brown? A woman? Poor? Take your pick. Go to the party. You'll see what I mean.

Grabbing his hand once more, she sticks the safety pin into his skin.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)

They'll never accept you. No matter how hard you try to force your way in.

Pierces his hand DEEPER until she breaks the skin.

AMOS

Ow!

With the same smile she gave him in the mosh pit, Azucena leaves a lingering impression on Amos as she departs.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Jonah's bulky TRUCK barrels through the empty ROADS.

In the BED of the truck, Amos sits across Gabo and Moco.

Every time Jonah makes a sharp turn, Amos crashes against a mountain of BEER CANS, crunching the aluminum with his body.

Gabo and Moco are laser-focused on Amos. Like two muggers scouting their next victim.

GABO
(to Amos)
I want that jacket.

Unsure whether to take this as a compliment, Amos hesitates:

AMOS
I, uh...got it from the flea
market. It was--

GABO
I want yours.

Amos' eyes nervously shift to the back window. Hopes Jonah will look back.

MOCO
What's your name again?

AMOS
Amos.

GABO
What happened to your face?

Self-conscious, Amos raises his hand to cover his weather-beaten skin.

AMOS
Uh, too much sun.

Gabo whispers something to Moco. They burst into laughter.

MOCO
You got a new name. You're
Leatherface now.

Amos diverts his focus to the lines on the road. Anything to take his mind off this vicious razzing.

EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - LATER

A BILLBOARD-SIZED SIGN with the words "THE PLANTATIONS" greets them at an ELECTRIC GATE.

Jonah punches the code to enter.

AMOS
Where are we going?

GABO
To Jonseing's place.

AMOS
Who's that?

MOCO
The fucking guy who invited you.

When they gate opens, they enter...

EXT. THE PLANTATIONS - NIGHT

A portal to a different DIMENSION.

All around, PALATIAL ESTATES and MINI-MANSIONS line up neighborhood after neighborhood. Each house boasting an immaculately-manicured LAWN and a bevy of LUXURY CARS.

Amos soaks everything in. His concentration is broken when Jonah swerves into a DRIVEWAY of a COLOSSAL WHITE BRICK HOME.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Amos back in the fields. The Landowner's imposing WHITE PALATIAL ESTATE towering over him.

BACK TO:

EXT. THE PLANTATIONS - NIGHT - PRESENT

Keeping his eyes fixed on the abundance of wealth surrounding him, Amos hops out of the truck.

At his front door, two bedraggled GIRLS, CORIE and WREN, late teens in fishnet stockings and unruly punk hairdos, smoke cigarettes.

CORIE
Took you fucking long enough.

JONAH
How'd you get here before me?

Amos follows Jonah and his posse, crossing the threshold into...

INT. JONAH'S HOUSE/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

The lives of the PRIVILEGED. A CAVERNOUS space. Rooms beyond the eye can see. Each one roughly the size of Amos' entire house.

Eyes ablaze, Amos tries to digest what he sees. ORNATE CHANDELIERS. BIG SCREEN TV. A ceiling that touches the sky. It's a staggering sight.

While in the FOYER, Amos notices everyone else taking off their SHOES.

JONAH

You too, Moco! Don't fucking stain my carpet again. I'll tell my dad it was you.

MOCO

(removing boots)

If you want it to smell crusty as fuck in here, your choice.

WREN

Keep your grody ass feet away from me, Moco. I'm serious.

Jonah motions to the floor when he turns to Amos.

JONAH

Just this dumb rule my dad has. No shoes on the carpet. Some Japanese shit he's into or something. I don't really get it.

AMOS

(beat)

It's uh--I think my socks...I mean, I'm pretty sure they got torn at the show. They're kinda old.

JONAH

Did you see Moco's socks?

An onslaught of angst garbles Amos' speech:

AMOS

There's just--I mean, it's kind of a big hole near...you can see my toes and I just don't want--

JONAH

Amos, relax dude. Let me see.

As if exposing a part of himself, Amos removes his shoes. One SOCK is torn to hell. The other just around the big toe.

Jonah unlaces his DOC MARTINS, slides them off his feet. Tugging at his SOCKS, he tears an even bigger hole than the one Amos showed him.

JONAH (CONT'D)

There. My clothes already look like
I snatched them off a bum. My socks
should, too.

For the moment, he coaxes Amos into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sprawled across PRISTINE LEATHER COUCHES, Jonah and his punk coterie shoot the shit. Sip on BEERS.

Corie and Wren are forced to sit at the edge of the sofas because they take up most of the space.

GABO

Fuck off, Jonseing. At least your
dad lends you his Beamer for shows.
(turns to Girls)
Can you believe these assholes went
to see The Vandals without me?

The girls are bored to tears. Jonah tries to corral Amos into the conversation.

JONAH

Who do you listen to, Amos?

AMOS

(caught off-guard)
What?

JONAH

What bands do you like?

AMOS

Oh, uh--I like Los Crudos.

MOCO

Who the fuck are they?

AMOS

This hardcore punk band.

JONAH
Some obscure shit. Alright. Who
else?

AMOS
Um... The Clash.

Groans from Gabo and Moco reverberate around the room.

GABO
That ain't even punk. It's poser
shit.

JONAH
The first album is kinda punk.
After that they just did that
reggae bullshit.

Amos glues his lips shut. He's flushed with embarrassment.

JONAH (CONT'D)
(shakes beer)
Gonna get another one. You want
one, Amos?

Amos nods, timidly.

MOCO
What about me, asshole?

JONAH
You didn't pitch in for the pack.

MOCO
Neither did he!

JONAH
At least he paid for the show.

Jonah disappears into the kitchen.

MOCO
(to Amos)
Hey Leatherface, you a virgin?

CORIE
Don't be an asshole. Leave him
alone.

MOCO
Why, you wanna fuck him or what?

WREN
The fuck is wrong with you, dude?

MOCO
Jesus, I'm just fucking around.

Jonah returns with the beer. Tosses it to Amos.

AMOS
Can I use the restroom?

JONAH
Yeah, use whichever one you want.
There's one down the hall and some
upstairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Caught in a labyrinthine CORRIDOR, Amos peers into multiple ROOMS to look for the bathroom. One door leads to...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jonah's ROOM. Stockpiles of expensive MUSICAL GEAR and PUNK ALBUMS clog the immense square footage. Curiosity whetted, Amos sorts through the CD's tossed carelessly on the ground.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Grazing the MARBLE SINK with his finger, Amos can't help but laugh at the bathroom's opulence. He reads the track titles of TWO PUNK CD's he swiped from Jonah's room.

He hears footsteps outside the door. Scrambles to hide the albums.

Jonah sneaks in, closing the door quickly.

AMOS
Sorry.

JONAH
Why are you saying sorry? I should
be apologizing. You could've been
taking a shit or something.

AMOS
Force of habit.

Jonah digs into his pocket for a DIME-SIZED BAG. He unties it, pouring COCAINE onto a HANDHELD MIRROR.

JONAH
Speaking of habits. You partake?

AMOS
No, I'm goo--

Jonah begins snorting before Amos can even finish his sentence.

JONAH
Didn't wanna tell those fuckers I was holding. They'd snort it all. Fiends. Told them I was gonna go look for you.

He snorts another line.

AMOS
Before I forget, I was wondering if, uh--you could give me a ride home later.

Gesticulating wildly, Jonah blurts:

JONAH
Too early right now. Once the crash hits me then we'll go. Where do you live?

AMOS
(hesitates)
Um, in Edcouch. Kinda out there.

Snort.

JONAH
How out there?

AMOS
In, uh, some housing projects by the outskirts.

JONAH
What are housing projects? Know what? Doesn't fucking matter. I'll take you wherever you want. Let's go back down.

AMOS
I still need to pee.

JONAH
Shit, man. Sorry. Take a piss. I'll finish my last line.

Amos stands still, waiting for Jonah to snort it all.

JONAH (CONT'D)
You afraid I'm gonna look?

AMOS
No, I just--

JONAH
Just pretend I'm not here. I wanna
finish this before we go back.

Fidgety, Amos turns his back to Jonah and tries to pee. Jonah huffs up the remaining line and rubs the residue on his gums.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Woo! Alright. You ready?

He drags Amos by the hand, shutting the door behind them.

INT. JONAH'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Hours later. A boneyard of beers lay waste on the living room floor.

Weary, Amos flaps his eyelids every time Moco and Gabo's seismic SNORES rattle the couch.

He lifts himself up, gravitating towards...

INT. JONAH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A LIGHT FIXTURE shaped like an ATOM. It's shining down on a KITCHEN ISLAND. He finds Jonah leaning on it, gulping down a glass of water.

AMOS
Crashing?

JONAH
Bad. Can't sleep?

Amos nods his head.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Shit, man. You're a drinker.
Outlasted us all.

AMOS
Hanging on by a thread right now.

JONAH
That beer I took from the store,
was it really for your dad?
(MORE)

JONAH (CONT'D)

Part of me thinks you guzzled that
shit as soon as we left.

AMOS

I wish. Coulda helped.

JONAH

Helped with what?

AMOS

Y'know, just like--with shit I'm
not proud of. Sins.

JONAH

So you like to pray and all that
shit? Sorry. That isn't very
Christian. "Stuff."

AMOS

It helps.

JONAH

Can't blame yourself, man. We're
just fucking, like, genetic
mutations of everything screwed up
and shitty our parents ever did.

AMOS

"Visiting the inequities of the
father upon the son."

JONAH

Yeah, that! Knew it was some
biblical-type shit. You memorize
bible versus or something?

AMOS

I read it a lot in the fields.
Whenever I had free time.

JONAH

Fields?

AMOS

I'm a farmworker.

JONAH

Like, Cesar Chavez farmworker?

AMOS

(smiling)

I would say yes, but my dad
wouldn't like that.

JONAH

Why not?

FLASH TO:

STILL PHOTOGRAPHS OF FARMWORKERS MARCHING ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

AMOS (V.O.)

He always talks about marching over a thousand miles to Washington D.C. The Texas farmworker union he was in was supposed to meet the President to talk about some bill. Something about helping Texas workers get more rights. He says Chavez told the president not to meet with them. Even asked churches on the way to deny them shelter during the night. All 'cause Chavez's didn't agree with the way his union organized.

END MONTAGE.

JONAH

That's fucked. Thought he was like the God of Farmworkers or something.

AMOS

That's the problem. People treat him like a God. But he's just a man. Full of faults.

JONAH

Back in SoCal, you couldn't turn a corner without seeing him painted on a mural.

AMOS

SoCal?

JONAH

Southern Cali. Best fucking punk scene in the country. Second to none.

AMOS

Why'd you move here?

JONAH

'Cause over there my family was well off, but here, we're *rich*. My dad kept calling this place the Magical Valley. Only go back there once a year, during the summer.

AMOS

Fig Leaf's from there?

JONAH

Yeah man, but that's just scratching the surface of SoCal punk. You gotta go sometime.

AMOS

Do they need farmworkers there? That's the only way I could go.

JONAH

That's why you're all wound up, man. You live to work. Where have you always wanted to travel?

AMOS

It's just--I can't really afford to think about that.

JONAH

What do you mean you can't afford to think about it? Come on, first place that comes to mind.

AMOS

Uh, I don't know. Some place where they speak Spanish, I guess.

JONAH

Fucking go, then. What's stopping you?

AMOS

'Cause it's impossible. There's no way I could ever pay for a trip like that. I could barely pay for your show.

JONAH

(thinking for a second)
Wanna come to SoCal?

AMOS

W-what do you mean?

JONAH

Like, with me. My family. In the summer.

AMOS

I mean--you barely know me.

JONAH

Every year Gabo or Moco invite themselves and annoy the shit out of me. The way you and me are talking--just like, real fuckin' badass--that's impossible with those guys. All we do is call each other "pussies" or "fags."

AMOS

That sounds like it would be awesome, but I work summers. My family depends on me to help.

JONAH

Just tell them you need a break. It's the truth.

AMOS

Yeah, but, they wouldn't get it.

JONAH

Just sleep on it. Offer will still be open. I think you'd really dig it.

AMOS

Thanks. I really do need sleep.

JONAH

Yeah, for sure. Just need my stomach to settle a little bit.

AMOS

You have a coke?

Jonah opens the FRIDGE, grabs TWO COKES.

JONAH

Want one?

AMOS

I only drink Mexican coke.

JONAH

There tequila in it or something?

Amos grabs a lime from the table, slicing it open and squeezing it into the coke.

AMOS

We use real sugar cane in our Coke.

JONAH

So? Probably tastes the same.

AMOS

Tastes way better. Mexicans have superior taste buds. That's why we make the best food.

JONAH

(laughs)

You don't talk like a farmworker.

AMOS

What's a farmworker supposed to sound like?

JONAH

You know what I mean.

AMOS

(handing him coke)

Here. For your weak gringo stomach.

JONAH

(taking sip)

Half gringo, fucker.

AMOS

My mom gives my dad this remedy whenever he's hungover.

JONAH

Wanna get some food before I take you home?

AMOS

I spend all my money at the show.

JONAH

Don't fret, man. I'll spot you. Where do you wanna go?

AMOS

I could go for some McDonald's.

JONAH

What happened to "Mexicans make the best food?"

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

The ride home in Jonah's truck gives the lay of land:

Upscale trappings of Jonah's insular suburban world transmute into RURAL LOCALES lacking infrastructure.

Amos strains his eyes staring at the rising sun, drifting in and out of consciousness.

CUT TO:

INT. LABOR CAMP - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Sunlight creeps through the crumbling cinder block foundation. Still in bed, Amos tries to shield his face from the blinding sunlight.

GOYO (O.S.)

Amos! [Get your ass up!]

AMOS

I'm awake!

He walks across the sparse shack, to a TABLE where Efren and Goyo inhale their breakfast. Lilia kneads small MOUNDS of FLOUR, flattening them with a cast iron TORTILLA PRESS.

She heats them on a GRIDDLE, plopping two squares of butter over the tortillas. She hands them to Amos on a NAPKIN.

LILIA

[Careful, they're hot.]

AMOS

Thanks, ama.

LILIA

[Don't thank me. Give thanks to God.]

Before taking a bite, Amos prays. Gives sign of the cross. He scarfs each tortillas down, almost whole.

AMOS

[Is there any more?]

LILIA

[I told them to leave you some. Efren and your apa are worse than pigs.]

Amos turns to them, agitated.

AMOS

[Why didn't you leave me anything?]

GOYO

[You're a stick! You can last the whole day with just that. I'm bigger. Need more calories.] Es scientific, Amos. [I'm also hungover like hell].

AMOS

(to Efren)

And you, guey?

EFREN

You're the huevón who wants to sleep late. Snooze, you lose.

LILIA

[Stop whining, Amos. I'll ask that cabron that works for the jefe, what's his name...]

AMOS

The contractor?

LILIA

That pendejo. [Takes out ten dollars from our pay whenever I ask for flour.]

GOYO

[Fucking gringos. Just want to screw us over any chance they get.]

AMOS

(to Efren and Goyo)

It's not the contractor's fault you and Efren ate everything. I'm starving.

GOYO

[You're making the hangover worse. Come on, we gotta go.]

Amos quickly changes his CLOTHES. Washes his face in a BASIN. Before he can step outside, Lilia blocks his path.

LILIA

(touching his weatherbeaten face)

[Come here. You need to keep putting on the myrrh oil. If not sun is just gonna make it worse.]

Lilia grabs for a SMALL CLEAR VIAL filled with a DARK RESIN.

AMOS

Nambre, ama. It makes my face look
all waxy. Hasn't even made it
better.

LILIA

[It will. It has healing
properties.]

AMOS

Ama, you say that about everything.

Lilia's stony, impenetrable stare registers a *You're gonna do what I say* look.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Knee deep in crops, Amos grabs a BANDANA from his pocket and wipes away the myrrh his mom dabbed on his face.

He takes a whiff of it, flaring his nostrils like he smelled something noxious.

EXT. WATER STATION - DAY

An enervated Amos lumbers to a WATER COOLER, stopping behind a LINE of FARMWORKERS filling their cups.

As he waits, a MAN with a protective MESH BALACLAVA shielding his face walks towards him. This is ENOCH.

ENOCH

[What's up], punkero?

AMOS

Enoch?

Enoch uncovers his face to take a sip of water. He's rugged, about 40, but with a youthful vigor about him.

ENOCH

You gotta cover your shit up, man.
This sun will age you like a prune.
Fuckin' accelerate death.

AMOS

I don't know where to get one of
those.

ENOCH

(blows air)

Shit, y'all don't have a [flea market] back in the South Texas or what?

AMOS

[Of course we do].

ENOCH

Then you're not looking hard enough. It's a farmworker commodity. Swing by tonight if you have time. I prolly have an extra one somewhere.

AMOS

I already have too much of your stuff--

ENOCH

That's material shit. Who cares? Just give it [a quick rinse] 'cause it prolly smells dank as fuck. Both from my stinky ass and the bud.

AMOS

I'm probably gonna get secondhand high wearing it.

ENOCH

(laughing)

I know you know all about that now.

(reaches into pocket)

Yo, before I forget, got some more contraband for you.

Enoch pulls out a cassette tape.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

Turn down the volume when you listen to this. Fucking band will give you tinnitus.

AMOS

Is it more hardcore?

ENOCH

Fuck yes. Sounds like what doing blow feels like. Which, don't do that shit. Best of all, it's Latino fronted. None of that white boy rail-against-your-parents-and-the-"system" pendejadas.

(MORE)

ENOCH (CONT'D)

Those rich pricks wouldn't know the first thing about revolution if it bit them en sus pinches huevitos. But this--talks about injustices you and I face. The Chicano plight. Just make sure to read the liner notes 'cause you're not gonna understand what the fuck they're singing.

Enoch hands Amos the tape, then shields his face.

AMOS

Gonna listen to it right now. Make the day go faster.

ENOCH

That tape's like 15 minutes. You're gonna have to listen to it like 80 times in a row to make the time pass.

AMOS

It'll accelerate the day, like the sun will accelerate my death.

ENOCH

(laughs)
Fucking morbid. [Well, alright. Catch you later], punkero.

Amos glances at Enoch as he goes back to work, then down at the cassette tape.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

A beige BUCKET swells with BLUEBERRIES. Amos plucks the fruit from a bush to the velocity of the songs coming from his headphones: an unrelenting and breakneck tempo.

Parched, he smacks his lips, scooping up a handful of blueberries from his bucket and shoving them into his mouth.

Instant relief. He savors every drop of this divine nectar touching his lips.

A pattern emerges: Amos shakes blueberries into his bucket from one bush, then eats a generous amount from the next.

Down the row of crops, Goyo bellows, incredulously:

GOYO

Amos!

The deafening songs cancel out Goyo's voice.

GOYO (CONT'D)
Efren, [call your damn brother.]

Efren, who's in close proximity to Amos, shouts:

EFREN
(to Amos)
[Hey, ugly ass.] Apa's calling you.

AMOS' POV - Efren's mouth moves in front of him, but his voice is drowned out by the music.

Instead, he flicks Efren off, blueberries slipping through his fingers.

EFREN (CONT'D)
[He can't hear me over that stupid music he listens to.]

Incensed, Goyo grabs an APPLE from a SACK slung on his shoulder, flinging it at Amos. Bull's-eye.

AMOS
[What the hell], apa?!

GOYO
Why are you acting like a pendejo?

AMOS
What are you talking about?

GOYO
(pointing at Contractor)
You think he's gonna turn a blind eye if he sees you eating berries?

Their kerfuffle begins to cause a scene. Other FARMWORKERS look on, including Enoch. From the next row of crops, Lilia wedges herself into their argument.

LILIA
(under breath)
[Both of you, shut your mouths!]
(to Amos)
[And you, stop it! You're not a little kid.]

AMOS
(eats more berries)
[All I ate today was two tortillas with butter].

GOYO
Amos, I'm warning you.

AMOS
You're the one who's always saying
it's better to eat food you picked
straight from the Earth yourself.

GOYO
You think I'm playing, cabron?

AMOS
No, pero I'd rather you [smack me]
than collapse from hunger.

EFREN
[You're a fucking idiot], Amos.

Any sense of decorum from Goyo is now gone.

GOYO
(raising voice)
[Oh yeah? You wanna act like a
tough guy? I'm gonna go over there
right now and show you I'm not
fucking around, mamon. Gonna make
you wish you collapsed instead--]

CONTRACTOR (O.S.)
You! With the mustache.

The CONTRACTOR, an intermediary for the landowner, late 40s,
Anglo, wearing sunglasses, motions for Goyo with his hand.

CONTRACTOR (CONT'D)
(in fluent Spanish)
[Come here.]

Goyo's face is still locked into a scowl. He stands, setting
down his basket, quickly approaching him.

CONTRACTOR (CONT'D)
[Is there a problem?]

GOYO
Sorry, senor. I didn't mean to
cause a disturbance.

CONTRACTOR
Too late for that now. Control
yourself and your family or I'll
have to tell the jefe about this.

The Contractor points to the Landowner's estate.

GOYO

No need to do that, compadre. I'll give you my word that it won't happen again.

CONTRACTOR

I'm not your compadre. I'm your jefe.

GOYO

I know. I just meant--you're out here in the fields too. Watch us work. You know how hard it gets sometimes in this heat.

CONTRACTOR

I watch over you every day. Notice your lazy son slacking.

GOYO

Wait a second, jefe. That's my family you're talking about.

CONTRACTOR

I look out for your familia. That's why I haven't told the patron anything.

GOYO

You do? Because my wife tells me your charge her ten dollars for a bag of flour. That doesn't seem like you're looking out for us.

CONTRACTOR

Listen "compadre," all it takes is me telling him you're a union type who causes trouble and your whole family is gone.

GOYO

(chuckles)

You threaten my or my family's wages again, then I really will have to be a union type and report you, and your jefe, for wage theft. It's not like I can't already do it.

CONTRACTOR

You better watch your mouth, peon.

GOYO

You really want to get my labor union involved in this? 'Cause I don't think you do.

Their voices fade out when Amos notices the LANDOWNER walking out his estate with a PAIL. His features are indiscernible.

His DOG orbits him, leaping toward the pail.

The Landowner's face is obscured by the mirage effect caused by the heat. He hurls RAW CHICKEN on the ground, which is ravaged by his dog.

Amos becomes fixated by the dog chomping the meat to shreds.

The Landowner looks towards the fields, face still blurred.

CUT TO:

INT. AMOS' BEDROOM - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

A DOG's incessant barking rouses Amos from his sleep.

Buried underneath the barks are discordant ACCORDION notes.

The notes become louder when Efren places the accordion next to Amos' face.

AMOS

[Get the fuck away.]

EFREN

It's almost 3 P.M., guey.

AMOS

So?

EFREN

So wake up and finish teaching me "Soy de Tejas."

Face glued to his pillow, Amos motions for the accordion.

AMOS

You're playing it too slow.

He props himself up, demonstrating his virtuosity.

EFREN

[Fuck me]. I can't move my fingers that fast.

AMOS

You think about how fast your hands
are moving in the fields?

EFREN

[Well, no. But I've been doing that
all my life. It's different.]

AMOS

It's not. Just muscle memory. Keep
doing it over and over, till it
comes as easy as picking berries.

EFREN

And if I never get as good as you?

Amos tosses the accordion on the bed.

AMOS

[What the hell does that matter?]
Not everyone has to be good at
something to enjoy it.

EFREN

Then what's the point if you're not
good?

AMOS

Only reason abuelo taught me was to
pass down tradition. But don't
force yourself to learn just 'cause
of that. [Sometimes] we're better
off without it.

Efren appears disheartened.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Amos rummages the FRIDGE. The front door SLAMS behind him.
With his back turned, he is startled when Lilia exclaims:

LILIA

[Where the hell were you last
night?]

Amos tightens up, hiding his LEATHER JACKET inside a BAG.

AMOS

[Why are scaring me], ama?

LILIA

[Me? You're the one who kept me up
worrying about you.]

A stray CAT that snuck in the house starts to rub himself against Lilia's leg, which intensifies her ire.

LILIA (CONT'D)
 [Get this fucking cat out of here!
 Who let it in?]

Amos grabs the stray cat, shooing it out the door.

AMOS
 I'm gonna go out for a little bit,
 ama.

LILIA
 [Wait a second], cabron! You keep
 trying to sneak out and the cat
 keeps trying to sneak in. Who you
 were with last night?

AMOS
 With a friend.

LILIA
 [What friend?]

AMOS
 Jonah. You don't know him.

LILIA
 [I'm gonna call your apa].

AMOS
 Ama, don't--

LILIA
 Goyo!

Goyo enters the kitchen.

GOYO
 (to Amos)
 Where were you last night?

AMOS
 With my friend, Jonah.

GOYO
 [Who's that?]

AMOS
 Someone I met at a show.

GOYO
 (looking at Lilia)
 Show? [What the hell is that?]

AMOS
 I don't know how to explain it.
 Like a concert. With bands playing.

LILIA
 Like a baile?

AMOS
 No, not a baile.

LILIA
 Are people dancing?

AMOS
 Well, yeah.

LILIA
 Sounds like a baile to me.

GOYO
 Where does Jonah live?

AMOS
 Harlingen Plantations.

GOYO
 (scoffs)
 Where all the rich gringos live?

AMOS
 Yeah.

GOYO
 Mijo, never trust a gringo.
 Especially one who lives somewhere
 called "The Plantations."

AMOS
 (walking towards door)
 Okay, don't worry. I won't come
 home late again today.

GOYO
 [You better not.] I mean it.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

A METRO BUS makes a scheduled stop. Amos disembarks and walks
 towards...

EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - CONTINUOUS

...The Plantations. Amos reaches the gate, but doesn't know the code. He scans the fence for any vulnerabilities, looking for a part of the it to scale. Nothing.

He sits on the curb, sun blazing. Waiting.

An AUDI CONVERTIBLE pulls up to the gate. The DRIVER punches in the code, driving inside the community.

Amos has found his way in.

INT. AUDI CONVERTIBLE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

An older CAUCASIAN MALE, late 50s, well-groomed, salt-and-pepper hair, drives. Riding with him is a HISPANIC WOMAN, early 50s, conservatively dressed. Both appear straight-laced and uninviting.

They pull into Jonah's palatial home. These are his parents-- ABRAHAM and SARAHI.

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY

When they get out of the car, Abraham rushes to his ZEN GARDEN, meticulously designed with wave patterns in the gravel.

The garden's centerpiece, a ROCK FORMATION of FIFTEEN LARGE STONES, brings him great solace as he genuflects to it.

His concentration is broken by PUNK MUSIC blasting from inside the house. Rising from his garden, he walks in on...

INT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY

...Jonah cleaning the clutter left by his guests last night.

ABRAHAM

(shouting)

I can't hear myself think in here!

Jonah swerves his head, nonplussed. He turns down the volume dial on the stereo as his parents enter.

JONAH

Sorry, dad.

SARAHI

Come give your mom a kiss, honey.

It's clear who the disciplinarian of the two is.

ABRAHAM

How many of your wayward friends
did you invite last night?

JONAH

Just a couple of the guys.

ABRAHAM

Remind me of their off-putting
names again. Isn't one of them
called "Fetus"? How's he doing?

JONAH

Moco and Gabo.

ABRAHAM

Right. Either of them have jobs
yet?

JONAH

I don't--not right now, I think.

ABRAHAM

Of course not. Why don't you help
them find work in--what is it you
do again? Concert planner?

JONAH

Music promotor.

ABRAHAM

Well, my mistake.

(to Sarahi)

Looks like we've raised a veritable
patron of the arts. An impresario.

Sarahi wants no part of Abraham's snide remarks, walks away.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

That's what we'll tell everyone at
Thanksgiving. That our Jonah
curates live performance art where
spoiled miscreants dress like
they're poor. How remarkably
transgressive!

SARAH I (O.S.)

Jonah, dear. Can you help me with
the groceries?

Jonah and Abraham glare at each other. Without saying a word,
Jonah walks toward the kitchen.

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Drenched in sweat, Amos finally reaches Jonah's house. He goes up to the door, rings the bell.

A few seconds later, the blinds part open. Abraham peeks outside.

ABRAHAM
 (waving hands)
 Sorry, someone already does our yard work. We don't need another one.

Amos stares quizzically, at a lost for words

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)
 (in choppy Spanish)
 [There's no work here.]

AMOS
 Uh--I'm looking for Jonah. Do I have the right house?

ABRAHAM
 (taken aback)
 How do you know Jonah?

AMOS
 I'm a friend of his.

Riddled with suspicion, Abraham studies Amos intently.

ABRAHAM
 Wait here. I'll go fetch him.

INT. JONAH'S ROOM - DAY

Resting on his bed, Jonah removes his headphones when he sees Abraham opening his door.

ABRAHAM
 There's a dark-skinned boy outside who says he knows you.

JONAH
 Black leather jacket?

ABRAHAM
 Appears so.

JONAH

That's Amos. He went to my last show.

ABRAHAM

Who knew your music was so progressive?

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Circling the Zen garden, Amos and Jonah examine its austerity.

AMOS

How is this a garden? Where are the plants? Or crops? It's just rocks.

JONAH

It's a Zen garden.

AMOS

[What the fuck does that mean?]
 (Jonah looks bemused by
 Amos speaking Spanish)
 Uh, sorry. What's 'Zen'?

JONAH

I think you're supposed to look at the rocks and contemplate shit.

AMOS

Like, all your fuck-ups or something?

JONAH

The way my dad explains it is weird. Fucking hurt my head when he first told me. Said something like--

CUT TO:

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Hovering over the Zen Garden, Abraham speaks passionately to Jonah:

ABRAHAM

Let me explain something. There's nothing arbitrary about the placement of the rocks. It's meticulously arranged. Fifteen of them.

(MORE)

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Modeled after the Ryōan-ji garden in Kyoto and placed in a such a way that no matter what angle you're viewing the garden from, all fifteen stones will never be visible all at once.

JONAH

Why not?

ABRAHAM

Because there's a clearly defined order contained within this box. Every grain of sand painstakingly raked to perfection, circling the rocks like the rivers that flank mountains. But the movement is illusory. Tricking the mind to see the impression of motion. When we get lost in its simplicity, it creates a mindfulness of spirit. A cleansing. Everything becomes clearer because we're forced to view life differently against the stillness of time. It makes us more meditative about our own journeys, and only at the stage of enlightenment will we ever be able to see all fifteen rocks.

JONAH

So, it's like...supposed to represent life?

ABRAHAM

That's an oversimplification of everything I just said.

JONAH

I thought you said the garden was about simplicity.

Somewhat flustered at first, Abraham retorts:

ABRAHAM

Here's what I'm getting at, Jonah. Life is full of distraction. Frivolities that disrupt the natural order of things. Don't just aimlessly wander through life with juvenile abandon. This cannot be all that you are.

(MORE)

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

You can't just passively dismiss your own spiritual growth, because as far as I could tell, that growth is stunted beyond comprehension. Maybe you can achieve enlightenment if you weren't so pig-headed. And guess what? This garden facilitates that growth.

(stares at Jonah's tattered clothes)

But only if you shed yourself of those abominable diversions that makes everyone think you're just some pathetic ne'er-do-well.

Jonah nods, disengaged.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

No longer interested in the garden, Amos turns to Jonah.

JONAH

(distantly)
Some shit like that.

AMOS

So have you found enlightenment?

JONAH

All I discovered was that my dad's a bigger asshole than I thought he was.

AMOS

Maybe the garden will help me decide if I should take you up on your offer. I mean, y'know, if you were serious.

JONAH

About coming to SoCal?

(Amos nods)

No bullshit. I know a lot of drunks and coke heads make plans when they're fucked up and it doesn't end up happening. Not me. That's why my dad couldn't be more fucking wrong about me. I know exactly who I am.

AMOS
I'm tired of being who I am.

JONAH
So who would you rather be then?

AMOS
(beat)
Wanna know something? This jacket,
I didn't even buy it. Fucking stole
it.

JONAH
No shit? You klepto.

AMOS
Poor people don't buy nice things.
Even if we could. I just, I don't
know, would rather be someone who
didn't have to worry about stuff
like that.

JONAH
If you come to SoCal with me, money
won't be an issue. That's what my
prick of a dad is for.

AMOS
If I could go, I really *really*
would.

JONAH
There's another band from SoCal
playing soon. Swear to you that
once you hear them, you'll agree to
come. There isn't anything like
SoCal punk. Coming with me will be
the best fucking decision you'll
ever make.

AMOS
(contemplating)
When's the show?

EXT. - MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

Caught up in the maelstrom of SLAM DANCERS, Amos ping-pongs
between convulsing to the music of a SOCIAL PUNK GROUP and
discussing brass tax with Jonah, who shouts over the music.

JONAH

What are you still thinking about, man? I know you wanna come with me.

Amos mulls it over. An impulse races suddenly over him:

AMOS

Fuck it. I'll go! Just tell me what I need to bring.

JONAH

You don't need to take shit. Just that jacket on your back. Maybe add some patches on that fucker. Looks too naked right now.

AMOS

Patches? From where?

INT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

Roaming around while the next band sets up, Azucena appears bemused.

AZUCENA

He told you that?

AMOS

Yeah, said you can make patches and sew them on my jacket.

AZUCENA

Well, I can. Professional grade, too. Just don't like him bandying my name around like he's a fucking pal or something.

AMOS

So...will you do it?

AZUCENA

Depends. What patches you want on it? Better not be something lame or fascist.

AMOS

Well, I wanted The Clash, but--

AZUCENA

A bunch of white boys that stole Jamaican rhythms. Lame.

AMOS

Is that bad? Conjunto music took rhythms from German polkas. Norteño, too.

AZUCENA

Aren't conjunto and norteño the same?

AMOS

Conjunto is all about the accordion player. Norteño is a little faster and the whole band is just as important. Pero both styles came by German music.

AZUCENA

Okay, my bad for talking shit about The Clash. Any other patches you want?

AMOS

What about Los Crudos?

AZUCENA

(surprised)

How'd you go from them to Los Crudos? Those guys would probably hate Joe Strummer's pasty gabacho ass.

AMOS

How much do you charge me?

AZUCENA

Seeing as how my only source of income is my seamstress work, I'll charge you like...thirty bucks.

Amos' eyes gouge slightly.

AMOS

I can pay you twenty once you're done, and the other ten later on.

Azucena consider this, respecting a good haggle.

AZUCENA

How about this? I'll do it for twenty, but you get me some blow from The Imposter.

Her counteroffer tempts Amos.

INT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

Downing a beer, Jonah talks between gulps.

JONAH
I thought you didn't fuck with
coke?

AMOS
It's for Azucena.

JONAH
Sucia?

AMOS
Yeah. She'll lower the price of the
patches for some coke.

JONAH
Knew her self-righteousness was
phony. All those high-and-mighty
punks are just as sleazy as the
dirtbags. Tell Sucia--

EXT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

Playing mediator, Amos relays the counter-counter offer:

AMOS
"I'll let her have some of my high-
quality coke..."
(Azucena rolls her eyes)
"...in exchange for some of the...
benzos she's prescribed." I don't
know what that is.

AZUCENA
Seizure meds. Fucking junkie.

AMOS
How does he know you get that
prescribed?

A rush of memories make Azucena's face flush.

AZUCENA
Just, uh, some shit went down at a
show last year. I had to go to the
hospital. Long story. Then that
puto Jonah had the nerve to feign
concern and ask what meds they gave
me. If they're the kind to "get you
wired."

AMOS
What should I tell him?

AZUCENA
Tell him... "vete a la chingadera."

AMOS
(stumped)
You mean "vete a la chingada?"

AZUCENA
Yeah, that! I get pocha dyslexia
sometimes.

AMOS
(laughs)
What?

AZUCENA
It's when you mix up words in
Spanish 'cause you're a pocha.

INT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

A veil of smoke permeates the venue. Amos weaves through the
miasma till he reaches Jonah.

JONAH
What did Sucia say about the
benzos?

AMOS
(hesitantly)
To go fuck yourself.

JONAH
Bitch. Alright, I want you to get
those patches. Just tell her that I
ran out and if she wants some blow,
she has to come to the after at my
place.

EXT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

Azucena snickers. Then, with unwavering resolve:

AZUCENA
I'd rather get chlamydia than go to
his house. Actually, I shouldn't
stigmatize chlamydia. That can be
cured. But Jonah will always be a
dick.

AMOS
How do I leave you my jacket then?

AZUCENA
Just give it to me now.

AMOS
(shifty)
I already agreed to go to Jonah's.

AZUCENA
[So what?] You can't go without
your jacket?

AMOS
It's just...I'm more comfortable
with it. But what if you come with
me, [just for a while]. I'll give
you my jacket when you leave.
You'll get the coke plus my twenty,
tonight. [Better than nothing].

Azucena sighs. Her noncommittal stance is becoming shaky.

AZUCENA
If I go, which is still a big
fucking if, and don't get any coke,
I'm not doing the job till you pay
the thirty.

INT. JONAH'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Confined to the couch, Amos and Azucena steer clear of the
BACCHANAL encircling them.

The living room is teeming with DRUNK STRANGERS shot-gunning
BEERS, exchanging party favors, blaring punk songs.

AZUCENA
Been here for a fucking hour. And
still nothing. My sinuses are still
clear. [What gives], Amos?

AMOS
Didn't know it was gonna a fucking
borlote.

AZUCENA
What's that? "Borlote?"

AMOS
How do I explain it...like,
desmadre. A big fuss.

AZUCENA

I know what desmadre means. Okay,
I'm fucking out of here.

AMOS

Wait up, just a little longer. I'll
go look for Jonah.

AZUCENA

I don't wanna be by myself.

AMOS

Want a chela? I'll get you one.

AZUCENA

I'm booking it if you don't come
right back.

Catapulting off the couch, Amos gets sucked into the depths
of the party.

INT. JONAH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A cluster of PARTYGOERS are huddled around the KITCHEN
ISLAND. All their attention directed at Jonah.

Amos maneuvers himself into the crowd, who congest the
kitchen.

AMOS

Jonah!

Jonah continues recounting a story.

AMOS (CONT'D)

Yo! Jonesing!

Jonah turns, his usual dynamo self.

JONAH

Amos! Been looking for you.
Confused Moco for you earlier. He
didn't like that. You hammered yet?

AMOS

Not yet.

JONAH

Indulge, motherfucker!

AMOS

I am. Azucena wants to know if
you...

(MORE)

AMOS (CONT'D)
(makes sniffing noise)
Y'know?

JONAH
Damn, and I thought I was a fiend.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An arm reaches out to hand Azucena a beer.

JONAH (O.S.)
Heard you were itching for a bump.

AZUCENA
Fucking making me wait around. Shit
better be as good as you claim.

JONAH
Usually people say "Thank You" to
free drugs.

AZUCENA
You expect me to exchange
pleasantries after you dragged my
lifeless body outside the venue
while I was having a seizure?

Jonah smirks.

JONAH
Fair enough.
(holds up tiny coke bag)
Truce?

Azucena follows him into another room. Amos takes a seat,
sips a beer.

Later, he gets up, mills around the living room until he's
stopped dead in his tracks. Someone shoulder checks him. It's
Moco.

MOCO
What, you're all punk now or what,
Leatherface?

AMOS
Uh...I don't--what do you mean?

MOCO

(pulls Amos' collar)

Put on your little jacket, come to shows, think you're welcome here 'cause Jonesing, for some fucking reason, let's you hang around like some gnat flying in shit. Charity case motherfucker.

AMOS

(frazzled)

Uh...I-I just like coming to shows. Same as you.

MOCO

Fuck out of here with that. Ain't nothing like you.

AMOS

Why give me shit, Moco? You mad cause Jonah confused you for me?

MOCO

I don't look like a fucking spic.

AMOS

(nervous laugh)

We're...both of us are dark, man. Why am I a spic but you're not?

MOCO

Because my family isn't a bunch of wetbacks on welfare.

AMOS

Neither is mine.

MOCO

Are they illegals?

AMOS

Man. Fuck you, Moco.

MOCO

Bet I'm right. They're fucking government moochers, aren't they?

AMOS

You can't get welfare if you're not a citizen. But you'd know that if you weren't such a dumb shit.

A typical hothead, Moco shoves Amos into a group of PUNKS.

MOCO
Fuck with me again, pussy!

Before Amos can retaliate, Azucena and Jonah emerge from a crowd.

JONAH
The fuck is your problem, Moco?

MOCO
Your ghetto ass amigo called me a
"dumb shit."

JONAH
And? You are.

MOCO
Fuck you.
(looks Amos' direction)
And this fucking spic.

AZUCENA
What'd you just say?

MOCO
Of course you would butt in. La
Sucia. Dirty ass beaner.

Reflexively, Azucena sideswipes Moco directly in the jaw.

Chaos breaks loose when Moco lunges at her. Fucking pandemonium.

Jonah tries to de-escalate things. Restrains Azucena.

AZUCENA
(wriggling herself away)
Don't fucking touch me!

By this time, Moco is already being held back by Gabo.

JONAH
(yelling)
No fucking fighting at my house!
Everyone chill out.

AZUCENA
Racist ass pendejo fucking deserved
it.

JONAH
Not saying he didn't. Just don't
start shit.

AZUCENA
Me, start shit? You being for real?

AMOS
Jonah, it's not her--

JONAH
Amos, you're good. But all she had to do was let it go. Brush it off.

AZUCENA
Nuh-uh. I don't "brush off" fuckheads who view me as subhuman.

JONAH
If you can't calm down, maybe you should call it a night.

AZUCENA
You're kicking me out? Not your fucking coconut manservant over there.

MOCO
Suck my dick.

AZUCENA
(to Moco)
Why don't you ask your white master to do it?

JONAH
Okay, everyone get the fuck out.

No one moves a muscle.

JONAH (CONT'D)
Get the fuck out!

Azucena jostles Amos.

AZUCENA
[Let's get the fuck out of here].

INT. AZUCENA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

PHOTOS of a YOUNG AZUCENA and her MOM hang on her living room WALL. Each picture PLAYS OUT in the form of a SUPER 8 VIDEO before becoming STATIC. A wistful snapshot of her past.

As they freeze, all photos either crop out her mother's head or body. They are framed sporadically in the housing unit.

The HANDLE on the FRONT DOOR wiggles forcefully.

AZUCENA (O.S.)
[Dammit]. I don't have my key. Hold
on.

A WINDOW gradually slides open. Climbing through the opening, Azucena thrusts herself into the kitchen. After regaining her balance, she heads to the door. Unlocks it for Amos.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)
So...this is my [place].

AMOS
Looks a lot like mine.

AZUCENA
[No shit]? What projects you live
at?

AMOS
Edcouch. Go Yellow Jackets.

AZUCENA
(smirks)
That like sports or something?

AMOS
Football. You never go to games?

AZUCENA
(shrugs)
I already deal enough with
testosterone fueled shit-for-brains
at shows. Don't need more of that.
(walks to kitchen)
You hungry?

AMOS
Yeah. A little.

Azucena opens the FRIDGE. The bulb is out. She feels around for food, finds a pack of WIENERS.

AZUCENA
All I got is weenies. No bread.

AMOS
Chale. Better without bread. [Just
heat 'em up on the stove and there
you go]. Some hor'dourves right
there. Barrio style.

Igniting the STOVE with a match, she cooks them over the fire. A latchkey kid delicacy.

She squirts MUSTARD on two NAPKINS. Emphasis on presentation.

AZUCENA

We can't have hor'dourves without
an authentic barrio artisanal
spread.

They laugh. Azucena puts the charred weenies on a plate.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)

Let's eat in my room.

Amos follows suit.

INT. AZUCENA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bathed in NEON VIOLET BLACKLIGHT, the silhouettes of Amos and Azucena have a ruddy hue to them. The color of a bruise.

Azucena breaks WEED BUDS with her hands, scrupulously. Spritzes it over ROLLING PAPER as Amos takes off his jacket.

AZUCENA

Help me break the weed?

AMOS

What do I have to do?

AZUCENA

Just remove the stems and seeds.
(demonstrating)
[Look, easy]. Nothing to it.

AMOS

Reminds me of pruning vines.

AZUCENA

What do you mean?

AMOS

We used to travel to North Carolina during winters to prune grave vines. Cut dead branches, tangled stems. Buds from the old wood. Chingos of work.

AZUCENA

Back, uh...when I was like 12, maybe 13, me and my mom went to work in the fields with my tio.

(MORE)

AZUCENA (CONT'D)

It was one of those Midwest states where everyone stares at anyone who's brown with hate in their eyes. Couldn't understand why. Now even my own raza, [assholes] like Moco, look at me the same way. Fuckin' vendido up the ass, man.

AMOS

(clears throat)

What kind of fields you work in?

AZUCENA

We picked plums. I remember one time, I bit right into the pit of one and chipped my tooth. My mom said it happened because I wasn't allowed to have it. Called me "Chimuelita" after that.

AMOS

Those pictures in the other room...is that your mom?

AZUCENA

You mean the brujeria shit my dad pulled? With her head cut off? Yeah, that's her.

AMOS

Why did he do that?

AZUCENA

[Because he was a machista dickhead] and she fucking left his ass. Once it hit him that she wasn't coming back he started cutting her out of pictures, saying it was brujeria so she wouldn't return. Pretending like he had control over her decision, when really he couldn't accept that she wanted a life far away from him.

AMOS

Do you ever talk to her?

AZUCENA

Sometimes. She lives out of state.

Azucena has finished rolling a tightly-packed JOINT. She lights it up, takes a puff.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)

Don't have anything against her.
She did what she needed to do. I
kinda envy what she did, honestly.

She passes the joint to Amos, who rejects it.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)

You gonna make me smoke this whole
joint by myself?

AMOS

I've only ever gotten second-hand
high.

AZUCENA

Come on, this comes straight from
the earth. I thought you of all
people would appreciate that!

Amos politely declines.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)

What if...I gave you a power hit?

AMOS

I don't--What's that mean?

Azucena takes a long hit from the joint.

AZUCENA

(holding breath)
Open your mouth.

AMOS

What?

She presses her lips against his, exhaling into his mouth.

AZUCENA

See, that wasn't so bad.

He laughs, coughing up a cloud of smoke.

AMOS

Oh fuck.

AZUCENA

Want another one?

AMOS

Pass it to me, then I'll pass it
back.

The rolling paper burns rapidly as she takes another hit. She passes it to Amos, who gestures with his hands.

AMOS (CONT'D)
(choking on words)
Lift your head up.

When she does, he exhales into her nostrils.

AZUCENA
Why'd you blow it up my nose?

AMOS
That's how God created life. By
breathing into Adam's nostrils.

Azucena giggles uncontrollably. The laugh of a stoned person.

AZUCENA
Then I guess that makes me Eve.
Giving you a taste of the forbidden
fruit. You like being a sinner,
don't you? Wanna confess to me?

AMOS
What do you wanna know?

Azucena adjusts the way she's sitting. Turns sideways.

AZUCENA
Hold on, I gotta sit like a priest
in confessional. Okay, um, how many
times have you had sex?

AMOS
That's not how confession works.

AZUCENA
It's not? I've never done it.

AMOS
I tell you my sins. So, uh, I've
stolen, a lot. Vandalized. Lied to
my parents. Taken the Lord's na--

AZUCENA
So...no sex?

AMOS
Uh--well...no. Not yet.

Azucena turns back, once again facing Amos.

AZUCENA

People always like, bug out about sex. Especially Chicano men. They always ask [how many dudes I've fucked] then call me a puta when I tell them. Some even got pissed when they find out I've been with women too. Say I'm a [dyke] and that I'm gonna burn in hell. You think that's true?

AMOS

(beat)

People like that, they twist God's word. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

Joint dangling in mouth, Azucena extends her hand to his earlobe.

AZUCENA

You ever been pierced before?

AMOS

(nervously)

No. Never.

AZUCENA

Getting a piercing is kinda like having sex for the first time. It's messy and painful and doesn't last long. Would you let me pierce your ear?

AMOS

I, uh--

AZUCENA

I'll give you another power hit.

AMOS

Have you ever done it before?

AZUCENA

Chingos of times. Lay back.

In a dither, Amos shuffles in bed, uncertain how to position himself.

Azucena pushes him until he's flat on his back, then straddles him. She takes the deepest drag of her joint yet, leaning in for an interminable lip-lock. Smoke escapes through the side of their mouths.

She sits upright, grabbing her set of SAFETY PINS.

AZUCENA (CONT'D)
Distract yourself. Think of
something else.

After sterilizing his ear, she pricks it with the pin. Amos expels a painful moan.

The marijuana smoke swirling inside the room...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

...vaporizes into floating EMBERS of a BONFIRE.

Under the starless sky, FARMWORKERS unwind after a long day at work. All oppressive barriers are absent; NO contractor; NO unrelenting sun scorching the earth under their feet.

The convivial surrounding sweeps away their worries. For now, they drink. Sing. Enjoy the company of one another. Cook FAJITAS and CHICKEN and SAUSAGE on a GRILL.

Many of the MEN take turns playing the ACCORDION that was passed down in Amos' family. When it finally reaches him, Amos clacks a few notes, halfheartedly. Something else has commanded his attention.

Lit by the smolder of the bonfire, the LANDOWNER'S MANSE creeps in the periphery. The flames grow larger, more menacing. Until it touches the heavens.

INT. LABOR CAMPS - DEAD OF NIGHT

A VEIL OF DARKNESS descends on the fields. Rhythmic melodies of CICADAS and the WIND work in concert, a sedate dialogue.

At various LABOR CAMPS, a tangible torpor. FARMWORKERS slumber, many FAMILIES crammed inside cinder-block shacks.

The SCREEN DOOR to one camp staggers open.

EXT. FIELDS - NIGHT

Illuminated by moonlight, Amos exits the shack with a MESH BALACLAVA covering his face. Trods down a dark road. In his path: the MANSE.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - NIGHT

Scores of CHICKENS spiral into a frenzy as Amos searches around for EGGS.

EXT. LANDOWNER'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Through steely eyes, Amos stands in front of the GARGANTUAN ESTATE. He fidgets, internally debating with himself.

He reaches for the ground for an EGG, hurls it as the FRONT PORCH. *SMACK!*

A beat, then, a choked up laugh. Vandalism suits him well.

He picks up another one. *SMACK!* And another.

MAN (O.S.)

Hey!

Amos freezes. Paralyzed with fear. He's been caught.

Out from the darkness appears Enoch, a smile plastered on his face.

ENOCH

Had you for a second, didn't I? You almost shit yourself, cabron.

AMOS

(exhales)

[That's fucked up], Enoch!

ENOCH

[Calm down], punkero. [I could give two shits] if you wanna trash this puto's ivory tower. But what if someone else had seen you? [Stay alert].

AMOS

Where'd you come from?

ENOCH

I was smoking my nightly [roach] when I heard the chickens going batshit. Then all of a sudden I see you hauling ass like you just pulled a diamond heist or some shit, wearing the face mask I gave you. The one everyone's seen me in before.

AMOS
 (pulling down mask)
 Sorry. Didn't think of that.

ENOCH
 How many eggs you steal?

Amos holds up all his fingers.

ENOCH (CONT'D)
 That's just a waste, vato. Those
 eggs are fresh. [Our sustenance].
 If you really wanna fuck up the
 jefe's shit up, you need something
 as rotten as his black fucking
 soul.

Amos perks his brows, piqued by this suggestion.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANDOWNER'S ESTATE - LATER

Enoch drops a batch of SPOILED FRUIT on the ground. The
 noxious odor triggers Amos' gag reflex.

ENOCH
 You can scrub off dried egg, easy.
 But this, [forget it], does real
 fuckin' damage. You take moldy,
 nasty-ass fruit and projectile that
 shit till it splatters in every
 nook and cranny. It's a bitch to
 clean and reeks like dead [possum].
 But wanna know the best part?

AMOS
 What?

ENOCH
 Fruit flies are gonna infest his
 porch like locusts. He's gonna have
 to deal with his own little plague.

Enoch grabs a fruit, handing it to Amos.

ENOCH (CONT'D)
 Wanna do the honors?

With zero qualms, Amos chucks the fruit with all his might
 towards the manse. Hits it dead center.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

Goddamn! Now that's fucking chingon right there. The patron must've pissed you off bad, carnalito.

Amos' latent rage cannot be articulated into words. Instead, he lets the spoiled fruit speak for him.

One by one, the fruit EXPLODES as it strikes PILLARS, the PORCH, a BENCH, ROCKING CHAIRS, the FRONT DOOR, a LIGHT FIXTURE.

A DOG's BARK echoes in the darkness. They leave the mess as they flee the scene, exalted.

INT. LABOR CAMP - NIGHT

Providing a sole glimmer in the abyss of night, Enoch's TENT is positioned by one of the LABOR CAMPS.

INT. ENOCH'S TENT - NIGHT

Inside, the glimmer emanates from a RELIGIOUS CANDLE of TONANTZIN, Aztec Goddess of the Earth.

Hemmed in by the tent's compact size, Amos and Enoch drink BEERS next to each other. Enoch switches a CASSETTE TAPE on a STEREO, hits play. Blasts a searing HARDCORE PUNK song.

AMOS

I haven't heard this one.

ENOCH

[Tell me something], punkero. When you gave the patron's house that first [strike], what'd it feel like?

AMOS

[Honestly? It felt [fucking incredible]. Like if...I don't know, I had jumper cables hooked up to my chest or something.

ENOCH

I know that feeling. Like your veins work overtime to keep up with your blood circulating en chinga. As fast and merciless as the tempo to a hardcore song. [Am I right?]

Amos finds his analogy amusing.

ENOCH (CONT'D)

Savor that shit. Because moments like that only last as long as the provisions we have. [A job here. Some quick money somewhere else]. Then we move on, because farmworkers are nomads by nature. Shit, I haven't had a fixed address in over a decade. Our raza was born wandering. Forever crouched down in crops that rise over our heads and hide the way the white man exploits our labor and bodies. What they don't realize is I found a way to benefit from it.

AMOS

I haven't. And I don't think I ever will.

ENOCH

(laughs)

You're still a chavalon. If this isn't what you wanna do, you have time to change course. But what those hijo de puto patrones are blind to is our dignity. I know my value. Ain't no pendejo contractor gonna tell me my worth when I know my skillset keeps him and his jefe filthy fuckin' rich. You just gotta learn to exploit their blind spots.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY - MONTAGE

Enoch at several different VEGETABLE FIELDS, hard at work.

ENOCH (V.O.)

I work as much or as little as I want. I'm not bound to nothing or no one. If the patron at one job stiffes me, then fuck 'em. I'll take the [cash] I earned, live off that till I can't no more, then go to the next job. They don't control my labor. I take what I need from them, then...

Enoch DISAPPEARS from the field while all the other workers remain.

ENOCH (V.O.)
 ...poof, I'm gone. [Like a ghost].
 Because to them, it's like I never
 existed. And I prefer it that way.

INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY/NIGHT - MONTAGE

Every step of AGRICULTURAL FARMING that MIGRANT WORKERS
 perform to prepare PRODUCE/FRUIT for commercial sale:

- In a BARREN FIELD, FARMWORKERS plant CROPS.
- Once the crops have sprouted, Farmworkers irrigate fields.
- As the VINES of the crops begin to gnarl, Farmworkers facilitate the growth by pruning their stems.
- The most vital component: hand picking FRUIT and VEGETABLES once the crops are in harvest.
- Farmworkers sorting the fruit, followed by cleaning it.
- The fruit and vegetables being shipped in TRUCKS to SUPERMARKETS.
- Inside the SUPERMARKET, HANDS grab a batch of GRAPEFRUITS.
- Later, they are placed in...

INT. JONAH'S KITCHEN - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

...a BOWL located on Jonah's KITCHEN ISLAND.

EXT. JONAH'S ROOM - DAY

Sprawled across a BEANBAG, a shirtless Jonah strums a guitar.

Across him, Amos, sans jacket but accessorized with a SAFETY PIN on his ear, peruses Jonah's extensive CD collection.

Despite the lull, a rapport remains. The stage of friendship where dawdling together becomes the norm. Then, unhurriedly:

AMOS
 Yo, I'm gonna get something to
 drink.

JONAH
 Bring me a coke.

INT. JONAH'S KITCHEN - DAY

With a smorgasbord of BEVERAGE options inside the FRIDGE, Amos finally settles on a GATORADE. Gulps it down quick.

He sets it down on the ISLAND, near a FRUIT BOWL. It draws him in.

The EXOTIC FRUIT elicits bewilderment from Amos. Even to him, it looks strange. Eventually he just settles on a GRAPEFRUIT.

Opening several DRAWERS, he chances upon a KNIFE to cut it. Searches several more cabinets for a bag of GRANULATED SUGAR.

Sugar liberally sprinkles on the grapefruit. Amos scoops another spoonful, eats it raw.

ABRAHAM (O.S.)

You want a key to the house, too?

Amos coughs out some sugar, startled by Abraham.

AMOS

Sorry?

Abraham approaches the kitchen island, briskly.

ABRAHAM

I couldn't help but notice how cavalier you were about pilfering that grapefruit. Do you think we're some kind of food bank?

AMOS

Jonah sent me to get a coke and--

ABRAHAM

Am I talking to Jonah? Is he here right now? I'm addressing you. Nobody else. You know, Jonah made mention about extending an invitation to our Long Beach summer home. That a stranger he met named Amos would luxuriate in a vacation that he had no hand in planning. A wastrel who has no job, no money, and seemingly no future, simply handed the keys to our good fortune without any discussion whatsoever. All because our Jonah bases every decision he makes off a series of perverse whims. I'm only going to explain this to you once, without equivocation.

(MORE)

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

I have no issue with Jonah bringing company on our vacation. That's fine. However, I'm not, and will never be, amenable to being bamboozled by Jonah's ragtag group of friends who believe they can leech off me with zero consequence just because they revolve in his orbit. Either you make arrangements to purchase your own plane ticket, or I'll personally see to it that your invitation gets rescinded.

Shell-shocked by the barrage of information that just mauled him, Amos stands silently.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Was that clear enough for you, or should I spell it in terms even you can understand?

From the other room, Sarahi exclaims:

SARAHI

Abraham, get over here! Right now!

ABRAHAM

(to Amos)
Enjoy my fruit.

Walking out of the room to speak to Sarahi, Abraham stands his ground as she chides him for his lack of hospitality.

Alone again, Amos stares at his sugar-coated fruit. Appetite gone completely.

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS - DAY

Azucena approaches Amos' housing projects, LEATHER JACKET in hand.

She knocks on Amos' housing unit. Lilia answers the door.

AZUCENA

Hi. Is Amos home?

LILIA

[He'll be right back, mija. I sent him to the store.]

Azucena enters...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

...the unit, where Lilia folds LAUNDRY.

LILIA
[Are you a friend] of Amos?

AZUCENA
Si, senora. [My name is] Azucena.

LILIA
[Such a pretty name. Sit down,
mija.]

Azucena thanks her, takes a seat at the TABLE. Lays down Amos' jacket, now with PATCHES of punk bands sewn on it.

LILIA (CONT'D)
Would you like something to drink?
We have Jumex de peach and papaya.

AZUCENA
Uh, I would love some. De payaya.
(in choppy Spanish)
[I walked here from the bus stop.]

LILIA
(pouring glass)
[Wearing all that black clothes? In
this heat? You have to be more
careful, mija].

As Azucena slakes her thirst, she attempts mental gymnastics to try to translate what Lilia just said. Nods awkwardly.

Goyo shouts from the other room...

GOYO (O.S.)
Vieja, have you seen my shirt from
Sears...

...before he lowers his voice when he walks in and sees Azucena.

GOYO (CONT'D)
...[the good brand? Oh, sorry. I
didn't know we had company.]

LILIA
[She's a friend of Amos.]

AZUCENA
(standing, hand extended)
Azucena.

GOYO
 [Like my niece from Rio Bravo.]
 (to Lilia)
 [Have you offered her a drink?]

LILIA
 [It's right in front of your face,
 viejo.]

Goyo seats himself next to Azucena, taking a keen interest in her relationship with Amos.

GOYO
 How do you know Amos?

AZUCENA
 [I met him at a show.]

GOYO
 [Again with the "show." I still
 don't know what the hell that is].

AZUCENA
 (struggling to articulate
 herself in Spanish)
 [I'm a...how do you say... a
 seamstress.]

GOYO
 It's okay, mijita. We speak
 English.

AZUCENA
 (relieved)
 I do seamstress work, and Amos
 asked if I can make patches for his
 jacket.

She displays her work. Goyo's face drops. He realizes this is the jacket from the Vendor at the flea market.

GOYO
 Funny, I've never seen him wearing
 that jacket before. Did he tell you
 where he got it?

AZUCENA
 I'm not sure. But he always has it
 on when I see him. Never takes it
 off.

The FRONT DOOR swings open.

AMOS

Ama, they didn't have frijoles...

He cuts himself off abruptly when he sees Goyo and Azucena looking at his jacket.

GOYO

You have a pretty visitor.

Amos is rendered insensate. Can barely move a muscle.

LILIA

What's wrong with you, guerco?

AMOS

Nothing, ama.

AZUCENA

I finished making the patches.

Amos grabs the jacket. Grazes the patches.

AMOS

These look amazing.

AZUCENA

Earring looks good too.

GOYO

You like it? [I think he looks like a queer].

LILIA

[Goyo! Don't talk like that in front of guests.]

Frazzled, Amos looks in Goyo's direction. His face is stuck in one expression: Silent fury. He can smell Amos' guilt.

AZUCENA

Told you the patches were professional grade.

(stands up)

I should go before the next bus leaves.

LILIA

Mija, do you need a ride back home?

AZUCENA

I mean, that would be great. But I don't wanna ruin your plans.

LILIA

[It's nothing]. Me and Goyo are just going to a baile. Do you and Amos wanna come?

AMOS

Ama, that's okay...

GOYO

[Why not? Come with us.] Take your jacket. Azucena says it's your favorite.

AZUCENA

A baile?

INT. TEJANO BAR - NIGHT

A BUSTLING BALLROOM. Middle-aged COUPLES two-step on the DANCE FLOOR, keeping rhythm with the TEJANO BAND on STAGE.

Some couples have a puzzled look on their faces. Glowering as they spin to the music.

Their raised eyebrows are aimed at Amos and Azucena, who isolate themselves at a corner of the bar. Both clad in PUNK GARB, an aberration in this environment.

Azucena shoves Amos onto the dance floor, creating a two-person mosh among them.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Goyo's car turns into Azucena's neighborhood.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

In the backseat, Azucena fiddles with Amos' earring.

AZUCENA

You gonna be at the show next weekend?

Amos routinely keeps checking the REAR VIEW MIRROR, where he locks eyes with Goyo.

AMOS

Uh,--yeah, probably. I don't have money right now. Jonah said he'd be able to get me in.

AZUCENA
Seems like you two are getting
pretty serious.

AMOS
(laughs)
[Fuck off.]

The car stops in front of Azucena's housing projects.

LILIA
Is this it, mijita?

AZUCENA
Right here. Gracias, Senora
Mendiola.

LILIA
[God bless you].

AZUCENA
Uh-huh. Bye, Senor Mendiola.

GOYO
[Come visit us soon, Azucena.]

Azucena shuts the door once she's out of the car.

LILIA
[So polite. I like her.]

GOYO
(leering at Amos through
rear-view)
[Very nice girl. But at home we
only get disrespected.] You should
spend more time with her, cabron.
Maybe she'll rub off on you.

Amos averts his gaze.

EXT. HOUSING UNIT - NIGHT

Goyo parks the car in an ALLEY behind their housing projects.

Lilia opens her door, walks to the neighbor's HOUSING UNIT.

LILIA
[I'm gonna go get Efren.]

Her absence lights a fuse within Goyo. Amos knows this. Steps out of the backseat with a stiff gait. As if wading deeper and deeper into choppy waters.

GOYO
How long have you had the jacket?

AMOS
I went back, I don't know, like a few days later to buy it.

GOYO
With what money?

AMOS
[The man brought down the price].

GOYO
Don't lie to me, baboso. [That guy] wouldn't go down to thirty-five. How'd you get it?

AMOS
I'm not lying, apa.

GOYO
How much did he sell it for?

AMOS
(flustered)
I think--uh, it was...

GOYO
What? Did he just give it away?

AMOS
No, he went down to thirty.

GOYO
Mijo, [don't make an idiot out of me]. You don't think I can spot a [lie] when it's right in front of me?

AMOS
I swear I paid for it, apa.

GOYO
Take it off.

AMOS
What? Why?

Goyo yanks at one of the sleeves of the jacket.

AMOS (CONT'D)
You're gonna rip off the patches!

GOYO

[I don't give a fuck, Amos! I'll rip off every single one. Wanna know why?] Because it's not your fucking jacket! I know you stole it. You didn't even want to haggle the price when I was with you. You expect me to believe you convinced him to sell it cheaper?

AMOS

I don't care if you believe it.

Goyo's fuse erupts. It's no longer a flame, it's an inferno.

GOYO

[Never talk to me like that again, you little faggot!]

Amos wriggles himself out of Goyo's grip. In full-on tears.

AMOS

(at the top of his lungs)
You couldn't fucking give me twenty dollars so I could buy something I wanted. When I never ask for shit and go with you and ama to Michigan every year, killing myself like a pendejo just so you can keep all my money.

GOYO

You think I keep your money? Do you pay rent? Do you pay for food? Gas? [Tell me what the fuck you pay for in this house]. You and Efren don't have to worry about any of that, [thank God], because we all work hard and make sure the money lasts till next harvest.

AMOS

I know, but twenty dollars is nothing. You couldn't lend it to me at least?

GOYO

What do you mean "it's nothing?" That money is going towards my green card]. Or do you not want me to get it?

AMOS

[Of course I do], apa. But I'm letting you know right now: I'm not returning the jacket.

GOYO

[You think you're some lowlife criminal? Stealing from other poor people who are just trying to make an honest living? No shame at all]. I think you've been around those rich gringos too much. [They fill your head with nonsense.]

AMOS

They're actually nice enough to buy me stuff.

GOYO

[Oh yeah?] Well why don't you go live with them then?

AMOS

They invited me to go on a trip with them. And I'm gonna go.

GOYO

[What the hell are you talking about?]

AMOS

My friend Jonah, he offered to take me to California with him and his family in the summer.

GOYO

Tell them you can't go. You're gonna be working to pay that jacket off because tomorrow I'm gonna go pay the vendor his money tomorrow.

AMOS

I'm not going to Michigan.

GOYO

[Is that a fucking joke?]

AMOS

No. I'm going to California. I won't be back till August.

Goyo laughs, softly. Then belts out a thunderous howl.

GOYO

You wanna do whatever you want?
Where are we gonna get the money
we're gonna miss out on because you
wanna go be [a bum and waste time
with] gringos?

AMOS

I honestly don't know.

GOYO

Working in the fields is beneath
you now? Is that it? [All of a
sudden you're too good for it? Go
if you want. But don't bother
coming home when you get back.]

Goyo bulldozes his way inside. Amos leans against the car,
wiping his tears.

EXT. CORNER STORE - DAY

Outside a TUMBLEDOWN MINI-MART, Amos feeds a PAY PHONE
quarters. The line rings.

JONAH (V.O.)

Hello?

AMOS

Sup, Jonseing.

JONAH (V.O.)

Who's this?

AMOS

It's Amos.

JONAH (V.O.)

Oh, hey man. Caller ID gave me some
weird number.

AMOS

I'm at a pay phone. Can't call long
distance from my house.

JONAH (V.O.)

Right on. What the fuck is up?

AMOS

Uh, so--I just was wondering if...
has your dad said anything about
me?

A beat. Then, with a sigh:

JONAH (V.O.)

Yeah, he did. Prick said you have to pay for the plane ticket. He always has a rod up his ass, man. Nothing I can do. But look, I want you to come. If you can somehow get that, any other money won't be a problem. I'll take one of my dad's credit cards once we're there. I got you. Straight up.

AMOS

But--I mean, did he say how much?

JONAH (V.O.)

Five hundred.

AMOS

(stunned)

Five hundred?

JONAH (V.O.)

I know, but man, I'm telling you... It's not like that money's going to waste or anything. Once you're there, you'll forget all about that five-hundred.

AMOS

How am I supposed to get that much money?

JONAH (V.O.)

You got anything you can sell?

INT. JONAH'S ROOM - DAY

In his corner of the room, Efren flips through homework assignments. Next to him, a RADIO plays a TEJANO station.

Amos barges in. Quickly kneels beside his bed to grab the CARDBOARD BOX that stores his ACCORDION. Before he can hightail it, Efren lowers the volume on the radio.

EFREN

Where are you taking abuelo's accordion?

Amos keeps his back towards Efren. He fidgets as he talks:

AMOS
Just uh--some guys in a conjunto
band invited me to their practice.

EFREN
[Really? Can I come?]

AMOS
Doubt it. I don't really know these
vatos.

EFREN
Then how did you meet--

AMOS
Efren, I have to go. I'll be back
later.

EFREN
How long are you taking it for?

AMOS
(turning around)
[You're such a pain in the ass!] I
don't need your permission whenever
I wanna take the accordion. Abuelo
left it to *me*. Stop acting like
it's yours.

EFREN
[Don't start with that shit], Amos.
He left it to both of us.

Amos ducks out the room, rankled.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - DAY

Azucena's VENDOR LOT. A punctured blue TARP hangs overhead.
DRESSES in CLEAR GARMENT BAGS blanket a FOLDING TABLE.

There's a SIGN that reads: "Seamstress Services/Servicios de
costurera."

The table's centerpiece, however, is Amos' accordion.

AZUCENA
How much are you selling it for?

AMOS
It's a Hohner.

AZUCENA
What does that mean?

AMOS

It's like...the gold standard of accordions. El mero mero.

AZUCENA

Oh, so like, the Selena of instruments?

AMOS

You like Selena?

AZUCENA

Not really. But what kind of Mexican would I be if I said I didn't? I'd probably get flogged in public.

AMOS

I hope I can get \$500.

AZUCENA

What do you need that for?

AMOS

I'm going to Long Beach with Jonah for the summer. He's gonna take me to a bunch of shows over there.

AZUCENA

(shudders)

Que asco. You couldn't pay me to be around that many suburban punks at the same time.

AN OLDER MAN approaches the table.

OLDER MAN

[How much for the accordion?]

Doing her best sales pitch:

AZUCENA

It's a Hohner.

EXT. FLEA MARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

Amos, appearing to have sold the accordion, counts a wad of TWENTY DOLLARS BILLS. Five hundred. It's all there. Once he's done, he counts again.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

A PATCH of LAWN in a nearby FIELD, repurposed into a COURTYARD.

A handful of FAMILIES schmooze, fire up a GRILL. Some faces look familiar: FARMWORKERS who embarked on the journey back home with Amos and his family.

It's a cause for celebration. Goyo is the guest of honor. The CAKE has been adorned with SMALL U.S. FLAGS because he's been granted his Permanent Residence card.

Amos and Azucena each grab a slice of cake. She moans after taking a bite:

AZUCENA

Yo, this cake is fucking delicious.

AMOS

Right? My ama made it.

AZUCENA

I'm gonna eat the whole thing.
Sorry.

AMOS

Save a piece for Jonah.

AZUCENA

(grimacing)
Why the hell is he coming?

AMOS

We're gonna go over the details for
the trip.

Lilia and Goyo sneak up behind them. Azucena turns around, frosting smeared on her face. Amos dodges Goyo, moves out of the way.

AZUCENA

Congratulations, Senor Mendiola!
You're a citizen.

LILIA

Permanent resident, mija.

GOYO

It's just a piece of paper. My
nationality is Chicano. [My people
are from Aztlan].

LILIA

Really? Then why didn't you tell them that when you were taking the oath?

GOYO

I was just saying what they wanted to hear, vieja. [I'm not all of a sudden gonna adopt the gringo way of life just 'cause I'm a resident now. I'm Chincano now and forever].

LILIA

Don't pay attention to him, mija. Are you staying for the play?

AZUCENA

Play?

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - LATER

CHAIRS have been set up for a performance. A banner that reads TEATRO CAMPESINO hangs overhead like a proscenium arch.

Some FARMWORKERS are near the MAKESHIFT STAGE, rehearsing lines.

Amos slouches on a chair, alone. Azucena is getting another plate.

An ARM touches Amos' shoulder.

JONAH (O.S.)

Patches look fucking sick.

Amos looks up, straightens his posture.

AMOS

Jonesing! Haven't seen you in a while, man.

JONAH

(taking a seat)

I know. Been fucking swamped planning the trip.

Amos rummages through his pockets.

AMOS

Before I forget, I got the five hundred.

JONAH

Oh shit, wasn't sure if you got it or not.

AMOS

Do you need it now?

Jonah considers it for a beat, then, with a shrug:

JONAH

(taking money)

I mean, might as well. I'll tell my dad so he can get your ticket.

AMOS

Already started packing my shit. What time are we leaving?

JONAH

So change of plans. Instead of Friday we leave on Saturday now. Be at my house early.

AMOS

How early?

JONAH

Crack of dawn. My dad'll get pissed if you're late. Knowing him he'll probably say something racist about Mexicans being lazy or some shit.

Azucena takes a seat in front of them.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Sup, Sucia?

AZUCENA

Sup, Imposter?

A BALD CHICANO MAN, LORENZO, addresses the CROWD:

LORENZO

[How are you], raza? We're gonna take a break from the pachanga to perform a teatro for everyone. I met Goyo in 1968, back when we both had Mestizo [hair braids]. He and Lilia came to see our troupe one night. [And ever since then, I've been by their side, through good and bad.] We marched together during the onion strike in Raymondville.

(MORE)

LORENZO (CONT'D)

In every huelga, walk out, boycott,
labor dispute, I was with them.
[Because we know that the fight
continues. Always]. I dedicate this
to you both. So, without further
ado, I present "Los Vendidos."

Raucous applause from the crowd. The TROUPE takes the stage.

JONAH

What's a vendido?

AZUCENA

(turns around)

A sellout. A Mexican who wants to
be white.

In the play, an ASSIMILATED MEXICAN WOMAN who works for
Ronald Reagan shops for "used Mexicans." One of the Mexicans
for sale is a FARMWORKER. The SALESMAN commands the
Farmworker to act out stereotypes with the snap of his
finger. The crowd erupts with laughter.

JONAH

Why is everyone laughing? Isn't
this making fun of farmworkers?

AMOS

No. It's making fun of Mexican
stereotypes.

Jonah shakes his head, perplexed.

After the play is over, Lorenzo walks over to Amos.

LORENZO

[Amos! You ready for the harvest?]

AMOS

[I'm actually not gonna go this
year.]

LORENZO

[Oh. Your apa hasn't said anything.
Everything okay?]

AMOS

[Yeah, I'm gonna go on a trip with
my friends.]

LORENZO

(turns to Azucena)

[Oh, sorry. How rude of me. I'm
Lorenzo, Amos' godfather.]

AZUCENA
 (in broken Spanish)
 [Hi, Lorenzo. It's nice meeting. My
 name is Azucena.]

He turns to Jonah after he shakes her hand, who tells him, in refined, fluent Spanish:

JONAH
 [It's a pleasure meeting you,
 señor. I really enjoyed the play. I
 like how you make fun of
 stereotypes.]

Dumbstruck by his mastery of Spanish, Amos and Azucena both stare at Jonah.

LORENZO
 We're about start playing loteria
 soon, if you all want to join.

Lorenzo walks away. Jonah turns to Amos and Azucena, faces stuck in one mode: disbelief.

AZUCENA
 You've gotta be fucking kidding me.

JONAH
 What? I went to a private school.
 Spanish was a requirement.

Over at the LOTERIA TABLE, everyone has their BOARDS ready, a pile of BEANS beside them. A WOMAN hands Amos, Azucena, and Jonah four boards each as they approach.

She announces each LOTERIA CARD:

WOMAN
 El nopal. El diablito. La araña. El
 alacran.

INT. AMOS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Crack of dawn. Amos hasn't slept a wink. He slides out of bed, careful not to rouse Efren awake.

He kneels, mouths a silent prayer. Then he reaches underneath the bed for his BACKPACK. It's packed to the seams with clothes.

He tip-toes towards the door, until:

EFREN

[What's up?] Where are you going?

Amos grinds to a halt.

AMOS

I'm uh--gonna take a trip.

EFREN

What do you mean?

AMOS

(turning to Efren)

To California. With a friend.

EFREN

What kind of work do they have over there?

AMOS

It's not that kind of trip.

EFREN

How long are you gonna be gone?

AMOS

Probably--at least until August.

EFREN

[And what about Michigan?]

AMOS

[I decided to take the summer off.]

EFREN

(sitting up)

[I don't understand what you're saying]. We've been off work since last harvest. You can't just not go.

AMOS

I just--I want a summer where I don't have to spend every day wondering if I'm gonna pass out from being in the sun for 12 fucking hours.

EFREN

Do apa and ama know?

AMOS

I told apa. [He was fucking pissed].

EFREN

He should be. You're being selfish.

AMOS

Why? Because I'm tired and don't want to do it this year?

EFREN

Sounds like you're just thinking of yourself.

AMOS

Okay, and? You think ama y apa were thinking of me when I didn't graduate high school? [All because I kept missing class to work? I don't fucking think so.]

EFREN

[That's your own fault for being a dumbass]. I'm not behind in school. I can do both.

AMOS

You think that way because you don't know any better. Because ama and apa put that in your head.

EFREN

[Fuck off with that shit]. I am who I am because I'm a migrant. Ama and apa have done chingos for us. The least I can do is try to give back what they've given me. But you're too spoiled to care about that.

AMOS

Do what makes you happy, Efren.

Amos begins to walk when Efren cuts him off again.

EFREN

Are you leaving the accordion?

AMOS

I'm taking it with me.

EFREN

Why are being such an culero? What's the point of taking it with you?

AMOS

It's at my friend's place.

EFREN

Come on, guey. Please. Just leave it so I can practice. Can you at least do that?

AMOS

Sorry, Efren. Our plane leaves in like, three hours. If I could, I would. But there's nothing I can do.

EFREN

Alright, whatever. Keep it. Fuckin' hogger.

Efren lies back down. Turns his body the other way.

AMOS

I'm really sorry.

Efren doesn't respond.

AMOS (CONT'D)

Okay. I have to go. Tell ama and apa I said bye. [I'll pray for you all. Have a safe trip to Michigan. God bless.]

Still nothing.

Amos opens the door slowly so it doesn't creak. Walks out, shuts it behind him.

EXT. THE PLANTATIONS - DAY

Quietude lingers inside The Plantations. The SUN peeks through the clouds as the world awakens.

Full of vim and vigor, Amos draws near Jonah's house. There's an airy bounce to his step. Like he's floating down the road.

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - DAY

As he reaches the FRONT DOOR, he rings the DOORBELL. After a few seconds, he rings it a second time.

No answer.

His mirthful countenance morphs into that of slight concern.

He starts to KNOCK. A few solid pounds. Maybe it wasn't loud enough. He tries again. Harder. With greater force.

The door just stares back.

He cuts through the side of the house. Peeks into WINDOWS.

AMOS

Jonah!

(taps on window)

Jonah! You home?

Gives it another shot with a different window, to no avail.

CUT TO:

EXT. JONAH'S HOUSE - EVENING

Hours have passed. Twilight sets in. Amos sits in the driveway, expressionless.

There's still no sign or Jonah or his parents.

Under his gloomy spell, Amos turns towards the ROCK GARDEN.

At first, he pays little mind to it. But upon further inspection, something about it seizes his attention.

From his vantage point, he spots something unique about the stone formation.

He keeps surveying it. Spellbound by its simplicity.

Then it dawns on him: **ALL FIFTEEN STONES ARE VISIBLE.**

The clouds have parted open. Amos sees everything clearly.

Enlightenment.

Amos rises from an ash heap of his former self. Everything looks different now.

He walks over the rock garden, at a leisurely pace.

Below him, the garden is bordered by a TROUGH filled with BLACK STONES.

Bending down on one knee, he scoops up one of the stones. Turns it over in his hand, transfixed by it.

Like a land mine triggered underneath the surface, Amos stands, exploding as he HURLS the stone at the house.

It CRASHES through a LARGE WINDOW. Shattered glass sprays everywhere.

As a newfound wisdom washes over him, he seethes with rage.

One after another, he lifts stones from the garden. Torpedoes the remaining windows until it's RAINING GLASS.

Once there's none left to smash, he falls to his knees, panting heavily. His shaky breathing mixed with sobs.

Face in hands, he wipes away spittle. He turns around with a distant, penetrating gaze.

His eyes are rheumy. Glassy. He's now a husk.

Looking back at him from the edge of the driveway: A manifestation of his ENLIGHTENED SELF.

FADE TO BLACK.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Christian Martinez was born and raised in Rio Grande Valley, where he still resides. In 2017, Christian graduated with his Bachelor's in English from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. During his time as an undergrad, two of his short stories, *Bruised Fruit* and *Spineless*, were awarded 1st Place in Fiction by the 2017 and 2018 editions of Gallery Magazine, respectively. Another short story, *Talismans*, can be found in the 2019 edition of South Texas College's Interstice Literary Journal. He continued his studies at UTRGV, earning his Master's in Fine Arts for Creative Writing in May 2020. He specializes in screenwriting and film studies.